

The « Oiseau-Course d'Hiver d'Altitude » (OCHA)

This is the winter and mountain birdwatching event, with a purely social focus (long live the Saturday evening fondue!) and barely any scientific pretensions.

The dates for the **2027** edition are **23–24** and **30–31 January**, as well as **6–7 February**.

The idea behind the OCHA – which literally translates as the « **high-altitude winter bird race** » – is to identify, in January-February, as many bird species as possible in 24 hours at altitudes above 1,000 metres, simply to have a bit of fun as a team and to show an interest in these extreme birds, which are often overlooked by traditional birdwatchers or twitchers, and are consequently little known! The fundamental principles of the OCHA are as follows:

- Over the weekend, you – that is, **at least 2 people** – will choose when to start the **24-hour** countdown based on your route, your schedule, the first interesting species you spot, or whatever else takes your fancy, but the chronometer must be started whilst out in the field and not retrospectively.
- Speaking of your itinerary: as an alternative event, the OCHA offers unrivalled freedom – as long as you're observing at an altitude of **over 1,000 metres**, go wherever you like! The Jura or the Alps for the traditionalists, the Himalayas or Sudan for the extreme adventurers! (And don't panic if you're obsessed with the rankings – we'll have categories...)
- One fundamental rule, however: once the countdown has begun, it is absolutely, categorically, indisputably and without exception forbidden to use any means of transport that relies on **energy** other than that produced **by your little mitochondria**! No cars, no public transport, no ski lifts, no hitchhiking, no motorised scooters! On the other hand, cross-country skiing, cycling, snowshoeing, skateboarding and, of course, your own two feet give you more than enough options to explore your route...
- There you have it – you've been warned. The OCHA isn't for the faint-hearted, but for the brave and the adventurers! What's more, the organisers accept no responsibility for teams lost in the snow and vanished forever... On the other hand, you're allowed to pop into a bistro to warm up. Nice, isn't it?
- Another key feature of the OCHA: the Saturday evening **fondue**!! Pure bliss after a day in the snow and the icy wind, and there's nothing like it to restore the strength of a frozen team! Well, if you don't have a fondue, we won't disqualify you, but we'll still be a bit disappointed...
- It's worth noting in passing that team members are expected to stay together throughout the observation periods and that at least two people from the team must observe a species for it to be counted.
- After your race, the organisers would be delighted to receive a **short team report** recounting your adventure (technical difficulties, race strategies, memorable encounters, etc.) and, above all, your **list of species sighted in Word format**, including the necessary details (specific comments, names of the team and participants, route, snow conditions, etc.), as well as **captioned photos** (with photographer's name and title) from your race!
- All of this will be published in the GdJ's magazine, « Le Héron », along with the team rankings, of course! To take part, please send us your report **by the end of March** to the following address: yannick.pochon.2@gmail.com