

# The 53<sup>rd</sup> Thunderbird Rally

January 31-February 1, 2026



Paul Eklund and Yulia Smolyansky, winners of TBird 2025

Photo by Eric Berard



Presented by West Coast Rally Association



The Thunderbird is a winter driving adventure, round 1 of the BC TSD Rally Championship, and round 1 of the Pacific Coast Challenge. The rally is sanctioned by Rally Pacific Motorsports (the BC region of CARS), and follows the current BC Rally Regulations, which are posted here:

[https://www.rallybc.ca/archives/2023/BC\\_TSD\\_Rally\\_Regulations\\_2023.pdf](https://www.rallybc.ca/archives/2023/BC_TSD_Rally_Regulations_2023.pdf)

The rally runs on straight-forward instructions. In addition to the route instructions, maps will be provided. The rally will be about 850km long, entirely within the province of BC, and will start with an odometer check section of about 15km. Roads will be about 40% clear pavement, 60% snow-covered pavement and

gravel. Instructions are provided in both km and miles, but the official measurements and calculations are based on the km figures.

**Required equipment:** 4 snow tires, plus suitable spare, 1 self-supporting, reflective warning triangle (30cm per side), first aid kit (minimum contents defined by the BC rally regulations), 5BC fire extinguisher, open cars require a roll bar. Additional lights on the front should meet legal requirements as to type and mounting height; and must be wired to the high beam lights such that the additional lights turn off when switching to low beam. Fog lights may be wired independently.

**Recommended equipment:** Full sized spare tire, studded snow tires, map light, driving lights, warm clothing, shovel, tow rope, ice scraper. Some helpful hints: Make sure not to mount anything (e.g. rally odometers) in front of an air-bag cover. Handbrakes can freeze if left on overnight. Roads are often ploughed off their summer routes, so beware of over-plow, or snow-filled ditches. Maximum distance between gas stops is 250km (150mi) but remember that many cars get worse mileage in winter conditions. BC Highway regulations sometimes require vehicles without 4 wheel drive to carry chains. The sweep truck will have 4 wheel drive and some extraction capability, but may not always be able to extract wayward cars from the BC scenery. Drivers are asked always to drive with their headlights on and to be particularly courteous to traffic not connected with the rally.

The rally will be divided into a number of legs, each leg ending with a meal stop or overnight stop. Each leg is divided into Transit stages and Regularity stages. Transit stages give a stage time that is adequate for completing the stage well within speed limits. Your time will not be recorded in these stages. Regularity stages list specific average speeds, which are below the posted speed limits, which you must maintain in each part of the stage. Timing controls will be in regularity stages only, at various unannounced locations, and will not be placed near stop signs or busy intersections. Your timing at these controls determines your score.

**Timing & Scoring:** Timing will be to 0.1 second, but scoring is one point per whole second early or late. This means that there is effectively a 0.9 second grace period either side of perfect time, to allow for inaccuracies in checkpoint position and timing accuracy.

Primary timing will be using the phone-based Richta app. In addition, we will also have staffed checkpoint locations. This requires one dedicated smart-phone (iPhone or Android) in each vehicle, and uses the phone's GPS to log the time at which you pass each checkpoint location. Your times will be uploaded when you connect to Wi-Fi at the end of each day, or if you enable data, when you reach coverage. Time decs will be entered through the Richta app, but will be applied to the live checkpoints as well. A second device can be used for backup timing.

**Time Declarations:** Time declarations must be entered through the Richta app. If circumstances mean that you are unable to run on time, you have the choice to run at a specified delay of any whole minute plus 15, 30 or 45 seconds, from 0:15 up to 19 minutes and 45 seconds. This is primarily intended to allow you to deal with circumstances that are beyond your control, such as being held up by a grader or local traffic, or stopping to help at an accident, and then resume rallying at your specified delay. They may also be used for problems of your own devising (e.g. making a wrong turn, or visiting a snowbank).

The maximum penalty at a single control is 300 points (5 minutes) and the maximum penalty for a regularity stage is 600 points (10 minutes). Officials at staffed controls will remain in place at least until all remaining cars are beyond 10 minutes later than absolute rally time, which may be earlier than the latest car at the maximum allowable time declaration. Ties will be broken by the most zero scores, then the most 1 second penalties, etc.

## Awards and Classes

Trophies will be awarded, for overall position and according to the classes laid out for the BC region rally championship:

- Paper:** No calculators, pre-printed rally tables or accessory odometers.
- Calculator:** Any distance-measuring device so long as it does not display average speed or calculate target times. Calculating devices are allowed, but must not be programmable, and must not interface with a distance or position input.
- Unlimited:** Unlimited equipment.
- Novice:** Neither team member having entered more than 3 Regional championship level TSD rallies prior to the start of the current year, with no limit on equipment.
- Historic:** Vehicles manufactured more than 25 years prior to Dec 31 of the year preceding the current competition season. Navigational equipment is unlimited.

In addition, there will be an award for the top 2 wheel drive car, regardless of class.

## Thunderbird Team Prize

In the grand tradition of 1960's rallying, Savoia Aero SA (a division of D.E.R. International) sponsored the establishment of an annual Team Trophy for the Thunderbird Rally. A Team is defined as three to six entries, of differing classes (span at least two classes and no more than two in one class) and should include a novice team. All teams with or without a Novice class entry shall be scored by one of the following means: by averaging a Novice score factor (average of all novice scores for the event) or the actual score of their novice team member (which ever method is more beneficial for the team score). Teams may be declared up to the close of registration. There is no additional fee for registering a team. Teams are strongly encouraged to display their team name and/or logo on the team vehicles, using professional-looking and tasteful decals. Each entry on a team will be given a score factor, which is the ratio of their score to the winning score in their class. The winning team will be the one with the lowest average score factor. The designated team captain will be awarded the perpetual trophy. Team trophy details can be found at <http://www.rallybc.com/archives/SavoniaTeam.htm>

## Officials of the Event

Route Master:	Paul Westwick	(paul@rallybc.com) (604) 617 4132
Registrar:	Tony Latham	(tony@rallybc.com)
Steward:	TBA	()

## Schedule

**Friday January 23:** Close of early entries. Preliminary start order assigned. Those who pay after this date may be assigned at the back of the field.

### Tuesday January 27:

7:00pm Optional novice course via zoom at 7pm. If you wish to attend, please contact paul@rallybc.com

### Friday January 30:

7:00-9:00pm Registration & Technical inspection, at rally HQ in Merritt, Best Western Plus Hotel.

9:00pm Final start order posted, based on current paid entries. Any entries received after this time, or without payment yet confirmed, will start at the end of the field.

### **Saturday January 31:**

7:30-9:30am	Late Registration & Breakfast, rally HQ, Merritt.
7:30-9:30am	Technical inspection, rally HQ, Merritt.
9:30am	Novice drivers' meeting
10:00am	Drivers' meeting
10:31am	First car out
8:00pm	End of day 1, Dinner & Scoring, Vernon

### **Sunday February 1:**

8:00am	No drivers' meeting for day 2, but if there any notes, they will be posted in the hotel lobby by this time, as well as on rallybc.ca
8:30am	First car out
3:15pm	End of day 2, Mr Mike's Restaurant, Merritt, Dinner, Scoring & Awards presentation (start making up your stories)

Directions to the rally HQ: The Best Western Plus Hotel is on Crawford Ave. From the south, take the second Merritt exit (exit 290), and turn right at the T junction onto Voght. From the north, take the first Merritt exit and turn left on Voght. Turn right on Gordon St, about 150m from the exit, then left on Crawford.

### **Fees and Costs**

Entry Fee: \$250 for entries received before midnight January 23, 2026. \$280 for late entries. Members of BC rally clubs are eligible for a \$15 discount each (i.e. \$30 off if both are members).

If you wish to join WCRA or renew your membership, the form and fee can be included with your entry. Membership form is here: [https://www.rallybc.ca/wcra/wcra\\_mem\\_app.pdf](https://www.rallybc.ca/wcra/wcra_mem_app.pdf)

If you wish to pay by PayPal or Interac, send it to [paul@rallybc.com](mailto:paul@rallybc.com). If you want to pay by credit card, we will invoice via Square.

Maximum entries accepted: 50. Any entries received above the maximum will be notified by phone and held on a waiting list. If entering late, please confirm by phone or email.

Entry form link: <https://forms.gle/Bj82Vo8a2xiHs59X6>

## Accommodation

We have arranged hotel group rates as follows:

### **Merritt (Friday Night and/or Sunday Night):**

Best Western Plus – follow the link for our group booking rate (\$184.99 + taxes for 2-queen room):

[https://www.bestwestern.com/en\\_US/book/hotel-rooms.62132.html?groupId=5X2NL3D1](https://www.bestwestern.com/en_US/book/hotel-rooms.62132.html?groupId=5X2NL3D1)

(or call the hotel directly at 250 378 0700 and quote Thunderbird Rally)

### **Vernon (Saturday Night):**

Quality Inn – follow the link for our group booking rate (\$129 + taxes)

[Booking Link for Quality Inn.](#)

Or phone 1-236-599-0996 and quote Winter Car Rally Block FV51M9. Please book before January 15, after which the block will be released. There is also a 2-room suite available for \$30 more.



Richard McKie & Nigel Purvis –1989



Ted Wilkinson & Malcom Wilson – 1995



Snow plow stuck in the ditch during prerun – 2018



## Thunderbird Rally Past Winners

1957	No Records	
1958	No Records	
1959	M Proctor / D Halliday	?
1961	B Collins / B Mansfield	VW
1962	D Titmus / J Neilson	VW
1963	T Burgess / W Fane	MGA
1964	B Dunwoodie / J O'Dwyer	VW
1965	B Dunwoodie / J O'Dwyer	VW
1966	B Dunwoodie / J O'Dwyer	VW
1967	B Wilson / A Robitaille	Citroen
1968	tie: S Somerville / R Cook tie: J Bowie / T Burgess	VW Cortina
1969	R von Hertzberg / W Bergelt	VW
1970	B Owen / M Hunter	VW
1971	T Burgess / J Bowie	Datsun
1972	tie: T Heinonen / S Arvonen tie: C Hall / L Richardson	Ford Anglia Saab
1973	L Paivarinta / S Arvonen	Renault Gordini
1987	G Reid / J Reinertson	VW Rabbit GTi
1989	J Kingsley / S Tracey	Plymouth Arrow
1990	D Steel / B McGuffie	Škoda GLS 120
1991	G Reid / J Nispel / S Richards	VW Rabbit GTi
1992	D Steel / B McGuffie	Subaru GL
1993	P Hill / W Peterson	Mazda 323 GTX
1994	tie: S Carlson / R Kraushaar tie: J Fouse / D Wende	BMW 325ix Subaru Legacy
1995	J Fouse / D Wende	Subaru Legacy
1996	G Webb / S Carlson	BMW 325ix
1997	P Linde / S Carlson	Audi Coupe Quattro
1998	P Hill / S Bishop	Eagle Talon Tsi
1999	P Hill / S Bishop	Eagle Talon Tsi
2000	J Nispel / M Nolte	Toyota Celica AllTrac
2001	G Webb / J Kisela	Subaru Legacy
2002	R Lima / A Dobric	Subaru Legacy
2003	L Sorenson / R Sorenson	Subaru Impreza
2004	G Wallace / G Hightower	Subaru Impreza STi
2005	G Wallace / M Dumaoal	Subaru Impreza STi
2006	P Hill / G Hill	Subaru WRX
2007	S Carlson / R Kraushaar	Saab Sonett
2008	J Webster / B Harer	Subaru STi
2009	S Carlson / R Kraushaar	Saab Sonett
2010	J McMillen / M Crippen	Subaru WRX
2011	tie: L Lefebvre / B Harer tie: G Wallace / R D Kraushaar	BMW 325 ix Subaru Forester XT
2012	S Carlson / R Kraushaar	Saab Sonett
2013	M Damm / R Damm	BMW 325ix
2014	J Webster / B Harer	Subaru WRX STi
2015	J Bowie / T Burgess	Subaru 555 STi
2016	A Kouzmin / Y Smolyansky	Toyota Celica AllTrac
2017	P Eklund / Y Smolyansky	Subaru Forester
2018	M Damm / R Damm	BMW 325ix
2019	G Ankeny / R Kraushaar	Ford Cortina
2020	P Eklund / Y Smolyansky	Subaru Forester
2023	B Walsh / M Crippen	Mazda Protoge
2024	T Liong / J Drewoth	Subaru Impreza
2025	P Eklund / Y Smolyansky	Subaru Forester



Tom Burgess & Bill Fane, winners of TBird 63, pictured in TBird 65



Dave Fairhall, Honda S600, on Mamette Lake Road, TBird 66



Andrew Dobric, post-roll, being chased by Nick Seldon on Robbins Range, TBird 92



Satch Carlson & Russ Kraushaar  
Winners of TBird 2012