

# **BIRD WATCHING FOR BEGINNERS**

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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself lying in your bed. The morning sun is just peeking through your window. Along with the sun, you hear the melodious song of birds chirping their “good mornings” to each other --- and to you! Have you ever wondered what those birds looked like? Why they are close enough for you to hear? What interesting characteristics they have about them?

Bird watching is a sport that has been around for years. In fact, today, bird watching is the second fastest growing hobby in America, bested only by gardening. A whole new language has emerged along with it. Those in the know also refer to bird watching simply as “birding” and the people who do it as “birders”.

People of all ages enjoy seeking out the birds of their region, watching them in their natural habitat, and enjoying the songs they have to offer. Birds can be fascinating creatures with much to offer those who care to study their lives. Much can be learned from where they roost, how they fly, and what they sing. We can even go so far as to say that watching birds can reveal things about nature and the beauty that exists in nature.

“I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment, while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn.”

~Henry David Thoreau

Birding can be done anywhere. You can find all kinds of species in your local park, any forest, and even in your own backyard!

No one knows the sights and sounds of nature quite like a bird watcher. By taking a half-second look at a small darting assemblage of black, yellow, and white feathers and adding a musical note that sounds something like "chirp", a birder can tell you, not only the general species of that bird, but he or she can narrow it down to the exact bird.

To distinguish among the 900+ species of birds found in the U.S., birders must quickly process a great deal of information on color patterns, call notes, and even the shapes of bills. They have to know what to key in on when they see a strange bird, noting its overall shape, how it moves through a bush or tree, and the shape of its wings. Such sensory work-outs help to develop great visual and hearing acuity among birders. In fact, birders are generally much more observant than the average person.

To the beginning bird watcher, this might seem like an unbelievable task that they might never be able to achieve. Trying to identify even common species can be extremely frustrating, and many people give up before they ever actually begin.

Finding birds and identifying them can happen in an instance. A small black bird flashes up to the top of a bush. You grab your binoculars and start flipping through your field guide. You take another look at the bird, flip back a page or two... suddenly the bird is gone, but there is a different one lower in the bush. All that page riffling and binocular lifting begins anew.

Birding can make you more familiar with the natural beauty of the world and perhaps will lead you to appreciate how quickly that beauty is being lost. Birding can coax you into new country and enables you to take in all the fresh air and impressive scenery that you can hold. Most important, though, is the fact that birding is simply too much fun to be missed.

## Birdwatching for Beginner

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