

TIPS FOR NEW BIRDBERS

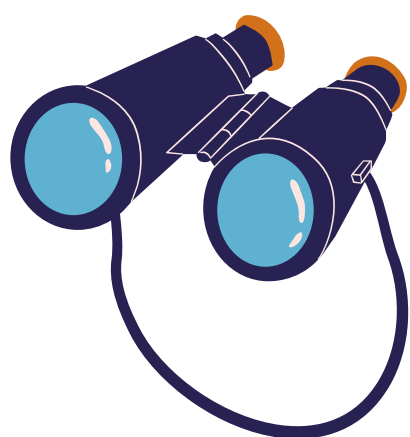
Birdwatching is an easy and inexpensive hobby that anyone can participate in. You can birdwatch without equipment, just your eyes and ears. But here are a few recommendations that will take your birdwatching to the next level.

Binoculars

If you aren't sure if this will be a long-term hobby, start with a cheaper pair. An introductory pair can cost less than \$150. The two numbers on binoculars specify the magnification and objective lens size. Magnification, the first number, comes from the eye piece. Objective lens size, the second number, determines how much light enters the wider end of the binoculars. Images become shakier as magnification increases and become brighter as objective lens size increases. Beginners should start with 8x32 or 8x42 specifications. Tasco Essentials 8x42 and Nikon Prostaff 3S 8x42 are good examples.

Where to Bird

Get to know the birds in your neighborhood by spending 5 minutes a day watching from your window or porch. Or visit a public birding hotspot listed on eBird, an online database of bird observations. Birdwatching can be done stationary or on-the-go. Explore hotspots around the world on eBird.org/hotspots. You can also join a local birding group or make your own.

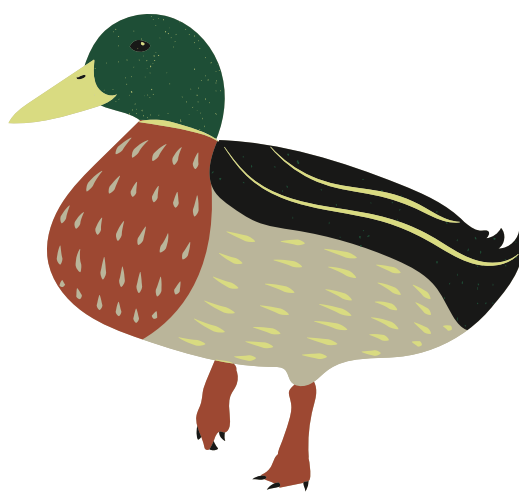


Resources

Here are a few online resources to sharpen your identification skills:

- #BirdsOnMyBlock
- AllAboutBirds.org
- Bird Academy
- Audubon Guide to Identifying Birds
- eBird Essentials

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Field Guides

Choose a guide that can easily be carried. This can be a physical book or a digital resource. A guide should focus on your local region, include information on where and what times of the year you're likely to see a bird, and have detailed illustrations. Visit a library or nature center for guides to borrow. Several free phone apps include sound clips and photos that can assist with bird ID. Merlin Bird ID can identify birds by sound recordings and photos taken by the user.

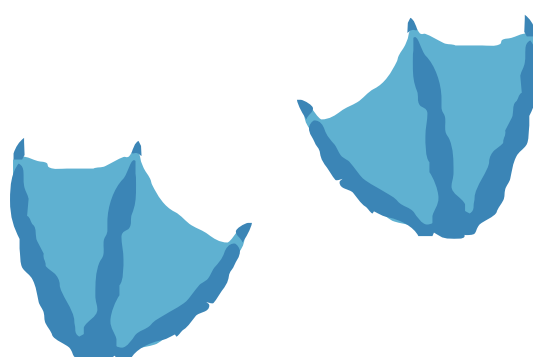
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Mindset

Being present in nature promotes a sense of renewal and cultivates respect for the environment. Birdwatching can be a form of meditation to improve your mindset. Approach birdwatching with a positive outlook and express gratitude to the plants and animals around you. Move at a casual pace and once you find a bird to observe, enjoy the bird with non-judgmental awareness

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TIPS FOR AVID BIRDERS

Are you an avid birder looking to upgrade your gear and get up-to-date on birding essentials? Here are a few recommendations that will take your birdwatching to the next level.

Binoculars & Spotting Scopes

If birdwatching is a hobby that you're interested in continuing, investing in a better pair of binoculars may be worth consideration. Moving from 8x to 10x magnification is helpful in observing finer details on birds. Water resistance and anti-fog lenses are also good features to look for.

Spotting scopes are small, single-eye telescopes with magnifications much greater than that of binoculars.

Scopes can magnify images between 15x - 60x and are very useful in viewing birds from afar. Budget-friendly scopes range from \$300 - \$1000.



Cameras & Digiscoping

Taking photos and videos of birds is another fun way to birdwatch.

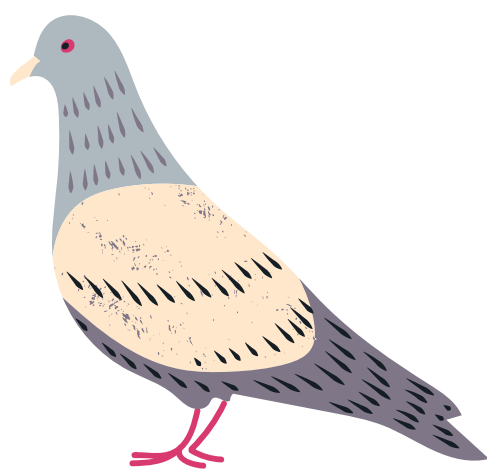
Whether you use a mirrorless, DSLR, or a phone camera, adapters that attach to your gear can improve the images you capture. Digital camera adapters allow photographers to mix and match otherwise incompatible camera bodies and lenses. Telephoto lens adapters that attach to smartphones are inexpensive and convenient alternatives to digital camera kits.

Digiscoping combines digital cameras and spotting scopes to observe birds. Special phone adapters can mount your phone camera to the scope eyepiece.

Mindset

Everyone has identified a bird incorrectly! Give yourself grace when you incorrectly identify a bird. Now that you've gained experience, resist the urge to correct newer birders unless asked. Forgetting an ID or getting it wrong is part of the learning experience.

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Field Guides

Sometimes, typical field guides don't provide enough details or examples for identifying challenging and tricky species. Among the many kinds of guide books are such that focus on specific bird groups like sparrows, flycatchers, and warblers. They provide thorough discussion of how to learn the fine details of identification. Free birding apps can also limit your ability to confidently identify confusing birds. Some paid apps combine the best features of physical guide books and birding apps. Apps like iBird Pro and Sibley Birds 2nd Edition can include detailed illustrations with field marks of each species, several photos, sound clips, and range maps. Additional perks include the ability to compare two species side-by-side and maps that generate lists of observed species near you.

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Festivals & Challenges

Birding festivals are must-do events for any season. They're excellent places for birders to find new species and to meet up with old friends and new friends. Festivals provide opportunities to get exposed to more birds by offering guided tours and workshops led by local birding experts.

Ambitious birders will dedicate a calendar year to find as many bird species as possible in the geographic area of their choosing. A popular year-long campaign, called a Big Year, requires enormous effort and pushes birders to observe all the species in their country. Smaller scale year-long competitions include Big County and Big State with the goal of observing all the bird species in your county or state within a year.

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