



The Mindful Birding List of Ethical Birding Guidelines

In this document we present ethical birding guidelines compiled from an extensive online search of guidelines used by organizations, birding festivals, and nature tour operators. The following guidelines were chosen for their high degree of clarity, specificity, and restraint.

1. Mindful of Wildlife

How aware are you of the "bird" in birding? The ethical guidelines presented here focus on increasing awareness of the needs of birds and on minimizing disturbance to wildlife.

a. Putting the Birds First

"The birds' welfare is the highest priority." (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

b. Awareness of the Lives and Needs of Birds

"Disturbance can keep birds from their nests, leaving chicks hungry or enabling predators to take eggs or young." (British Bird Lovers, accessed 2014)

"Migrants may be tired and hungry and should not be kept from resting or feeding." (Ontario Field Ornithologists, accessed 2014)

c. Noticing Bird Behavior

"If you are approaching birds, and they adopt an upright alarmed posture, it is time to stop and allow them to settle back down." (Sibley's Birding Basics, accessed 2014)

"Do not harass birds by flushing." (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

d. Dress, Posture, and Lessening Your Impact

"In no-hunt areas, blend in with your surroundings. Wear neutral-colored clothing..." (Indiana Dunes Birding, accessed 2014)

"Keep movements slow and steady rather than fast or sporadic." (Florida Birding Trail, accessed 2014)

"No approaching nests, roosts, and display areas." (Mangalajodi Eco Tourism, accessed 2014)

"Share your lunch only with other humans." (Indiana Dunes Birding, accessed 2014)

e. Use of Audio Playback, Laser Pointers, Pishing, etc.

"Refrain from using audio playback." (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

f. Handling Wildlife

“Birds, nests, or eggs must not be handled except for recognized research.” (Malaysian Nature Society Bird Conservation Council, accessed 2014)

g. Photography

“Refrain from using flash when photographing birds.” (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

“When photographing birds, study their reaction and if they become agitated, back off.” (Ontario Field Ornithologists, accessed 2014)

2. Mindful of People & Safety

Of course no one would describe *you* as an "insufferable" birdwatcher. These guidelines focus on keeping you and others safe, and on keeping the outdoors harmonious for all.

a. Private Property, Restricted Areas, and Rules and Regulations

“Respect private property; do not enter without express permission.” (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

“Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.” (American Birding Association, accessed 2014)

b. Driving and Parking Behavior

“Never stop your vehicle in a traffic lane to view birds. Always pull completely onto the shoulder to conduct short-term or long-term viewing. No shoulder? Don't stop.” (Malaysian Nature Society Bird Conservation Council, accessed 2014)

“Park your car only in approved sites. Park tight so that other people have space, too.” (New Jersey Audubon, accessed 2014)

“Drive cautiously.” (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

c. Dress, Preparedness, and Decisions for Safety

“Wear appropriate attire for outdoor activities, including footwear.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Stay hydrated on long birding hikes.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Inform others of your plans in case you fail to return.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Carry a cell phone if possible.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Wear visible, bright clothing if birding during hunting season.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Stay with the group. Don't wander off.” (Mecklenburg Audubon, accessed 2014)

d. Etiquette Toward Birders and Non-birders

“An ethical birder is a polite one.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Practice common courtesy in interactions with other people.” (BirdLife Australia, accessed 2014)

“Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the birding communities in the eyes of the public.” (BirdLife South Africa, accessed 2014)

“Try not to disrupt other birders’ activities or scare the birds they are watching.” (Ontario Field Ornithologists, accessed 2014)

“Many other people enjoy the outdoors; do not interfere with their activities.” (Ontario Field Ornithologists, accessed 2014)

“Express gratitude to individuals, institutions, and businesses that go out of their way to accommodate your interests or needs.” (New Jersey Audubon, accessed 2014)

“Keep conversations minimal and voices soft.” (Mono Basin Bird Chautauqua, accessed 2014)

“Be careful not to point optics toward people or houses.” (New Jersey Audubon, accessed 2014)

“Turn off your mobile phone.” (British Bird Lovers, accessed 2014)

“When carpooling, chip in to cover the cost of the trip.” (Mecklenburg Audubon, accessed 2014)

“Think about the interests of local people before passing on news of a rare bird.” (British Bird Lovers, accessed 2014)

“Share the best views with other birders.” (Birding ethics article on about.com by Melissa Mayntz, accessed 2014)

“Keep groups to a size that does not interfere with others using the same area.” (American Birding Association, accessed 2014)

“If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.” (American Birding Association, accessed 2014)

3. Mindful of Personal Birding Experience

Did you remember to stretch your neck so your body feels good for the party tonight? The guidelines gathered here will help you relax and enjoy your time in the delightful company of birds.

“Bird quietly, walk slowly.” (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

“The keen senses of birds alert them to your presence, often long before you have a chance to see them. Whether alone or in a group, walk as quietly as possible and whisper.” (National Audubon Society, accessed 2014)

“Quiet walks will also help when listening for bird calls.” (National Audubon Society, accessed 2014)

“And most important, enjoy yourself! Don’t be too concerned about finding that rare bird, or spotting more species than last month. Birding is meant to be informative, but also fun. (National Audubon Society, accessed 2014)

“Be patient, take the time to observe.” (Lake Region Audubon Society, accessed 2014)

“Keep the volume down, silence is golden.” (Lake Region Audubon Society, accessed 2014)

“Patience is often rewarded.” (Ontario Field Ornithologists, accessed 2014)

4. Mindful of Nature Protection

Of course you've been doing great things for conservation, but have you aligned your efforts with what birds need most? Guidelines presented here illuminate the pathway to becoming a conservation birder.

a. Support Conservation

“Support protection of important bird habitat.” (American Birding Association, accessed 2014)

“All bird watchers have a responsibility... to contribute to the future well-being of birds and the environment.” (Experience the Wild Nature Tours, accessed 2014)

b. Carpooling

“Carpool whenever possible. This is a great way to get to know new folks, swap birding stories, and learn a lot.” (Mecklenburg Audubon, accessed 2014)

c. Damaging Habitat

“Do not damage habitat (breaking branches, trampling vegetation).” (Mountain Bird Festival, accessed 2014)

“...leave habitats in as good or better condition as we find them.” (Wilson Society of Ornithology, accessed 2014)

d. Staying on Paths and Trails

“Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist.” (American Birding Association, accessed 2014)

e. Littering

“Dispose of waste properly.” (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, accessed 2014)

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