

Are you ready to bird?

So now you've equipped yourself with your binoculars, field guide and the proper clothing. Where do you start birding? You can start in your neighbourhood

or a nearby park. Familiarize yourself with birds you may see everyday. Eurasian tree sparrows, pied fantails, zebra doves, olive-backed sunbirds abound in both cities and the countryside. They are a good start to observing details like size, shape, color and behaviour.

If you want to bird with other birders, you can always contact the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines (www.birdwatch.ph) and ask about a trip you can join. Birding with a group will help you improve your birding skills even further. When you have mastered some basic birding skills you will be ready to discover new sites and new birds.

Birding is a quest. All you need is to know what's out there to see.

*We're wild about birds
- are you?*



Contact the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines

www.birdwatch.ph
www.facebook.com/BirdwatchPhilippines



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What is that bird?

A large part of the satisfaction and joy derived from birding is being able to identify what birds you see. Don't be overwhelmed by the huge numbers of species in your field guide. You may think that some birds look alike but in time you will be able to identify the birds you see.

When you start out birding, almost every bird you see will be new to you. With lots of practice you will eventually be able to recognize and name them.

When trying to identify a bird you can start by describing what you see. Here are some questions that you can answer in order to help you:



A maya and an egret.

How big is the bird? Is it as big as a maya? Or as big as a crow? Or even bigger?

What are its colors? Do the wings have the same color as the head? Is there a specific patch of color that stands out on its throat or wing or tail? Are there any patterns like streaks or spots or eye rings?

What is the over-all shape? Does it have a long neck and legs like an egret? Is it plump and round like a dove? Does it have a long tail?

What does the beak look like? Is it curved or straight? Is it pointed or rounded or flat?

How does the bird behave? Does it walk on the ground or maybe creep up tree trunks? Is it perched upright? Does it keep returning to the same perch after short flights into the air? Does it skim the water's surface or does it dive?

Take note also of other details such as the birds' habitat, the time of the year it was spotted, sounds it makes, flocking behaviour, etc.

Don't get discouraged if you can't identify a bird right away. Everyone sees birds they can't identify, especially when they start birding. The key is to keep birding and practicing. The more birds you see and the more times you come across them, the easier it will be for you to recognize them again. Eventually you will get to be so familiar with some birds that you will be able to identify them just from brief glimpses or by their song.

cover: white-collared kingfisher

peek-a-boo: black-naped oriole

inside panel: cattle egrets

back cover: brahminy kite (top) zebra dove (bottom)



We have woodpeckers here in the Philippines!

Birding for Beginners

All you need is to know what's out there to see.

Birding???

Birds have always been a source of fascination to man. Their beauty, song and power of flight have inspired artists and scientists, common and great men. People have long delighted in watching birds and learning about their behaviour.

Birding is observing wild birds in their natural habitat. It is learning to identify birds and understand their actions. Birders endeavour to watch birds without disrupting their normal activities and with minimal impact on the environment.

If a bird in your neighbourhood, at your workplace, or vacation getaway has caught your attention, and you have taken the time to listen to its song, notice its appearance, view its movement or wondered at its flight, then you have already experienced birding! Perhaps you recognize this bird when you see it again, or wait for it to reappear or maybe you have even shared this experience with a friend. You may already be a birder without knowing it.



What do you need to get started birding?

All you need to get started birding is a pair of binoculars and a field guide.

Any pair of binoculars is better than none if you're just starting out. Binoculars will help you observe details of birds without having to get so close to them. Always keep your binoculars clean and properly maintained. They are your most important piece of birding equipment!

A field guide is a book packed with information that will help you in identifying birds. It describes the birds in a given area and tells you what details to look for and has an illustration or photo of each bird.

A notebook you can carry around in your pocket will also be handy for taking down notes, drawings and observations, just in case you can't identify the bird at once and will need to do a little research later.

Remember that birding may also involve hiking or sitting at one spot for a long time. Make sure that you are comfortably dressed. Light clothing and a hat to shade your eyes (and maybe sunscreen!) will be wise choice for sitting out in the sun or near water. Be prepared also for rain or bad weather. Mosquito repellent is also handy to have. Make sure you also pack water and a snack, just in case you decide to bird longer than the time between meals!



Good Birding Behaviour

Be quiet. Make as little noise as possible and talk in a low voice. Birds have excellent hearing and are easily startled by loud noise.

Dress properly. Keep the weather in mind and always wear dull-coloured clothing. Bright red, yellow and even white will alarm the birds and make them harder to see. Natural colours such as khaki, green and brown are the preferred dress code.



Move slowly and make no sudden movements. Birds' eyes are keen to abrupt gestures. If you move steadily you will be less likely to disturb the birds and more likely to get good views. If you hide in the vegetation the birds may come closer to you. If you are a group of birders, sticking together in a tight assembly will give everyone an equal chance to see the birds.

Be alert! Look around, scan the sky and treetops for bird shapes, look at the ground, look at different levels in the vegetation. Use your peripheral vision. Watch out for movement, moving birds are always easier to spot than those sitting still.

Use your ears as well as your eyes. Listening for bird calls or birds rustling in the bushes or ground will help you locate birds you would otherwise miss.

Do not disturb the wildlife and minimize your impact on the environment. Don't stay near nesting birds or resting animals. Don't litter, damage or take anything. Report hunting or illegal trade. Remember, these places are the animals' homes and you're just a visitor.

Take down notes of what species you see, how many and where you saw them. Observations on the environment are also helpful for later reference.

