

WELLBEING BIRD WATCHING



Bird watching - immerse yourself in nature

To be in nature, watching birds, fills you with emotions and experiences. It teaches you the patience of waiting, feeling the excitement of discovering a new species for the first time, and feeling grateful for having the possibility to get a glance of the world of birds – from the shy camouflage-coloured birds hiding in the high grass to proud and colourful species dancing and singing for you.

Bird watching can strengthen your physical and mental health. The still waiting give your time for contemplation and introspection. Your body and mind must at the same time be prepared and ready to seize the moment when the bird you have been waiting for suddenly appears. This gives you training in quick reactions and mental alertness. When searching a spot to watch from or slowly strolling around to search for specific species, you may find yourself hiking long distances and enjoying a wonderful physical activity.

Bird watching is more than an enjoyable hobby – it gives you an immersion in nature, new experiences and learnings, and a possibility to find new friends. Bird watching is also easy. Once you have acquired the basic equipment such as binoculars and a bird book, it is high time to get started. The only way to get good at birds is to practice, on your own or preferably together with others.



Thomas M. Johansson



Thomas M. Johansson

BIRD WATCHING FOR WELLBEING

Take your time and embrace nature and the surroundings. Stop and stand still – use all your senses to experience the wild birdlife. Listen to the loud sounds of birds singing in the trees or the woodpecker hammer. Also, try to notice the more subtle sounds. Listen for the sounds of wingbeats, for birds landing in the bushes, or for birds looking for food among leaves and branches. Peek, scout, and look down low and up high, let the eye get adjusted to find the details in colour, shapes, and movements.

Breathe and let the spirit of birds and the beautiful landscapes, the stillness of forests, or the peaceful mountain treks and the splendour of the ocean fill you with energy.

Place: outdoor, or indoor watching out from a window.

Time: 1-3 hours.

Meet nature with care

Show great consideration to nature, people, birds, and other animals when you are out bird watching. Special rules apply in protected areas and in designated nature and wildlife conservation areas. Bird and seal sanctuaries aim to protect the wild animals when they are at their most vulnerable, i.e. during the birthing or hatching season. You are not permitted to visit these areas during certain times of the year. Inform yourself about the rules that might apply to your intended bird-watching place, even if you aren't visiting a sanctuary.

Good to know when you are visiting in nature

- Let the birds incubate in peace. Watch your steps many nests are completely unprotected.
- Do not destroy eggs or nests, do not split up a brood of youngsters out in the water.
- Keep your dog on the leash from March to August.

BIRD WATCHING FOR BEGINNERS – GUIDELINES



How to start: The best time to start watching birds is at the beginning of a new year. Then the number of bird species is often limited, and it is easier for you to recognize the ones you see.

Where to watch: Start watching in your vicinity, birds you often see are the easiest to learn. You can watch birds almost everywhere. At home through your window, you can watch a busy backyard feeder or birds flying between shrubs, thickets, and trees. Perhaps you can install a camera in a bird box and follow the family life of its inhabitants.

Explorer wider areas: As spring arrives, you can start exploring slightly larger areas. What birds do you see near you? What species can you see along a trail? The better you learn to recognize the most common species, the more you will react when something else comes up.

Be patient, train, and think: Bird watching takes time, both while watching during the day and to improve your skills and get better. Learn about which birds live in your area during a different season. Study how they sound, where they find food, and build their nests. Figure out which birds that fly low or high up in the sky. When you discover a specific bird, take time to learn more about it. What makes it specific in character or behaviour, what differentiates it from other related species.

What to wear: Outdoor activities require proper clothing. Since the weather may shift during the day, all year round, we recommend the layer-upon-layer principle when dressing up for the day. Use natural and organic material. For the first and second layers use functional t-shirts or underwear to help you stay dry from sweat. The third layer is for insulating and shall make you stay warm, use sweaters and cardigans. The outer bearing shall make you stay dry. Bring a windproof jacket, raincoats, hats, and gloves. Remember your feet! Different seasons have different challenges. To protect yourself from the sun or insects consider suitable protection.

Equipment: Binoculars are the most important tool for a beginning bird-watcher. Start by borrowing a pair from a friend or buying them second-hand. Bring a notebook, and if you have a camera it will help you create memories of your tour and discoveries. You can also borrow or buy a beginner's book or download an app to learn more.

Find new friends: Friendships matter for your health. Social connections can have a huge impact on our mental well-being. It can help you grow and develop as a human, and to strengthen your ability to cope with different challenges in life. If you take up bird-watching, you might have the possibility to make several new friendships. An interest in birds brings together people from all walks of life and of all ages and backgrounds. To find bird watchers in your area, see if you can join groups and different social media who arrange meetings and activities.

