

# The Beginners Guide To Bird Watching



Andrew Johnson

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# What Is Bird Watching?

If you go walking through the forest and see a bird, are you bird watching? Do you have to be knowledgeable in the study of birds before you are considered a bird watcher? What exactly is bird watching? Let's try to answer some of these questions. Bird watching or birding is basically defined as the observation and study of birds with the naked eye or through a visual enhancement device like binoculars. Though there are those that disagree, bird watching and birding are very similar, if not the same thing. Broken down, both are the observation of birds in the wild.

In the birding community though, there is some disagreement about grouping the two terms into the same category. Many deem bird watching to be different than birding on quite a few levels. Some birders feel that bird watching is nothing more than a pastime and people don't pursue it with the same level of enthusiasm as a dedicated birder. It is felt that bird watchers are more content to observe more locally and don't invest in the same grade of equipment as that of a birder. In short, birders don't tend to rank themselves in the same category as bird watchers.

Birders feel this way because they tend to invest in higher technology equipment and are dedicated to studying birds for more than general observation. Many birders will purchase optical equipment such as spotting scopes. They may even invest in auditory equipment in order to identify the species by ear. They take note of molt, distribution, migration patterns, as well as habitat. Birders are also more prone to travel in order to pursue their passion for birds. Though I feel it is basically the same sport; it's just that one group just takes it a notch higher than others.

So, what do you do when you go birding? Birding is a little more involved than merely looking at birds, though you do observe them. Birding also includes learning to recognize birds and identify them. As with any subject you study, you begin to understand birds and gain knowledge of what they're doing while in nature. Many people outside the birding world don't seem to realize that there are over 800 different types of birds.

Obviously, everyone has to start somewhere when they begin a new hobby or sport. You aren't going to automatically know everything there is about birds without researching them. For many, it takes years before they gain a firm understanding of all the aspects of birding, and we are all still learning as new information emerges.