



Six Simple Ways to Spice Up Your Backyard Birdwatching Life

Follow these tips to improve your birdwatching game and get more enjoyment from this satisfying hobby year-round:

1. Keep a List

Many birders keep a Life List of all the birds they've ever identified, but it's also super fun to keep a Yard List! You can also journal all the birds you see each month, by season, or however you prefer to categorize them. Listing the birds in your yard is a great way to keep track of migratory birds, so you know when to expect their return each year! There are several paper birding journals you can buy, or a nice, blank notebook works well.

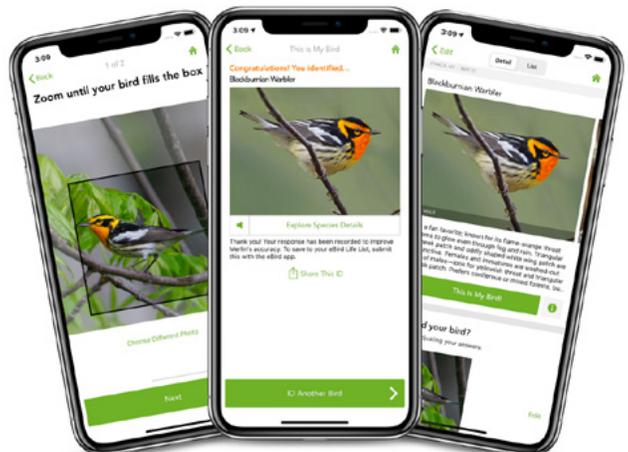
If you'd like to get everyone in the household involved, you can even keep the list tacked to the refrigerator or use a chalkboard/whiteboard mounted in the kitchen. For example, in our family, we start a yard list with a clean whiteboard at the beginning of every month and write down all the birds as we see them. The kids love seeing a bird and then checking the list to see if it's listed yet, and they love being first to write one down. We then take a pic of the whiteboard at the end of the month before erasing it and starting anew.

2. Utilize Technology

There's an app for everything, and birdwatching is no exception! Our favorite all-purpose app is Merlin from The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. With Merlin, you can identify a bird by putting in your location, the date, and then answering some descriptive questions. Next, you'll be shown a list of possible birds to choose from with more information about each. You can also either take or upload a picture to get an ID as well.

The Sound ID feature on the Merlin app is an excellent tool if you're interested in learning birdsong. You can also use it to help you look

The Cornell Lab 
Merlin[®]

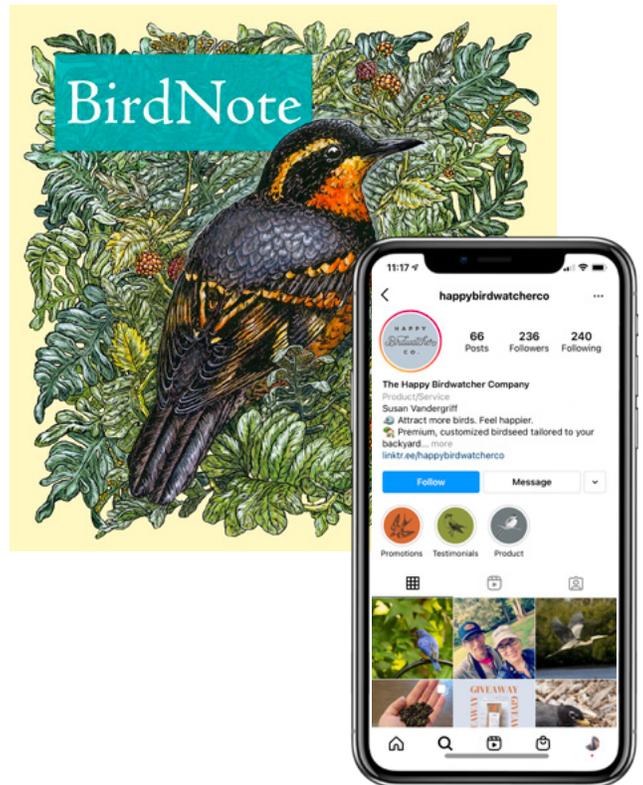


for birds you may not otherwise know are hanging about in your vicinity.

Try this: Step outside your home, open the app, and click on Sound ID to start recording. Watch the screen and see what birds are detected singing. You may be surprised at what pops up. Symbols will let you know if you hear an uncommon or rare bird for your area – which is always thrilling! Grab a pair of binoculars and try to seek out the ones you’ve heard.

Merlin also keeps track of your Life List. Birds are automatically added to your list when you positively identify a bird by clicking “That’s my bird!” in the app. Merlin also pulls your list information from eBird.org and the eBird app.

We highly encourage all birdwatchers to use eBird. This fantastic site from Cornell can be accessed via a web browser or app, and can help you find birds and birding hotspots. It also provides a way to submit your bird sightings, including photos, video, and sound recordings. Your contribution furthers science and conservation efforts to help our birds!



3. Learn More About Your Regular Bird Visitors

There are many interesting and little-known facts about many of the common birds we see every day. Here are a few resources and tips to help you learn more:

- If you’re a book lover, check out *The Armchair Birder: Discovering the Secret Lives of Familiar Birds* by John Yow. It’s a personal favorite of ours! We love how the author presents very cool things about common birds in a fun, entertaining way.
- For a more traditional book, try a guide dedicated to feeder birds. For example, we like *Feeder Birds of Eastern North America* by Roger Tory Peterson or the Audubon Society’s *North American Birdfeeder Handbook* by Robert Bunton.
- Follow @happybirdwatcherco on Instagram or Facebook. We regularly spotlight feeder birds and share fun facts about them.
- Like podcasts? Even if you don’t, you should check out this one! BirdNote airs daily episodes that are very interesting and informative. The best part is that they are only a couple of minutes long! So you can listen to an episode while you’re pouring your coffee each morning. It will brighten and enlighten your day.
- Google “fun facts about (name a bird)” and see what pops up. Then, share what you learn at the dinner table or on social media. It will get people talking!

4. Get Social

Social media offers lots of ways to connect with others who share a passion for birdwatching. Search Facebook for birdwatching groups; many are region or state-specific. It's fun to talk to others about what they see in their backyards. You may even hear about a rare bird in your area, other bird migration news, or learn about a local birding hotspot you can visit. Perhaps you can connect and even meet up with fellow birdwatchers in real life!

Following hashtags on Instagram is also another way to enjoy the bird sightings of others and where you can post your pics as well. The Instagram birding community is active and encouraging, so go ahead and comment on someone's post and strike up a conversation! Here are just a few of our favorite hashtags to follow:

#backyardbirdwatching	#feedthebirds
#backyardbirdsofinstagram	#birdfeeders
#backyardbirding	#happybirdwatcher

5. Add a Plant

Growing native, bird-friendly plants will attract additional birds to your yard and make your outdoor space more beautiful. Just adding one new tree or shrub can increase your bird visitors and provide other birdwatching opportunities. Audubon has an incredible native plants database that can guide you on what to plant for your zip code, and includes info on what birds each plant will attract. Check it out! audubon.org/native-plants

Conversely, letting your yard go can also bring new birds to your outdoor space. Many birds prefer shrubby habitats and love scratching around in leaf litter. So by keeping your lawn not-so-perfectly-manicured, you'll naturally attract a greater diversity of birds to your yard, and that can be very exciting!



6. Try a New Feeder Type

Simply adding a new type of birdfeeder can bring different kinds of birds to your yard. For example, sparrows, doves, and thrashers will frequent ground feeders but not visit an elevated feeder. Larger birds like Blue Jays prefer platform feeders. They are unlikely to visit a small tube feeder preferred by goldfinches. Want to attract woodpeckers? Then a suet feeder is going to be your best bet. And nectar feeders are a must for hummingbirds.

To see a variety of birds, utilize a variety of bird feeders in your outdoor space! Here's a quick checklist of common feeder types:

- Hopper
- Suet
- Platform/Tray
- Tube
- Nectar
- Window
- Ground

Be a responsible bird feeder by regularly cleaning and sanitizing your feeders and birdbaths. And keep those feeders filled with quality food. At Happy Birdwatcher, we deliver thoughtfully blended seed tailored to your backyard. Learn more about premium customized seed blends at happybirdwatcher.com