



Tips for Improving Your Birdwatching Open Results



The Birdwatching Open is a 24-hour event. For the best results, start at dawn when birds are most active, take a break mid-day, and spend some time after dark calling for owls.

The number of different bird species on your property is primarily dependent on the quality, quantity, and variety of habitats present and on your location. Identifying those birds depends on a different set of factors, some of which you can control and some you can't. The weather and the timing of bird migration are out of your hands, but there is much you can do to get the best results possible. Here's how:

1. Get an early start.

Birds are most vocal and active at dawn. Teams that start at 6 a.m. are at a distinct advantage over those starting even an hour later. The morning is by far the best time of day to see and hear birds. That doesn't mean you won't pick up something new in the afternoon or evening-- be persistent.

2. Spend more time.

If you can't be out for hours at a time, bird for several intervals throughout the day and evening. If you can spend some time after dark, you may add an owl or two to your list.

3. Recruit experienced help.

This is probably the single most important thing you can do to improve your results. An experienced birder makes all the difference in the world. Find someone who can identify birds by both sight and sound. Recruit several birders and watch your numbers soar.

4. Check out as many different habitats as you can.

Note where various habitats are on your property. You'll see different birds in each one. On the day of the Birdwatching Open, be sure to make the rounds to each of these habitats. If you're covering a lot of ground, make a map of where habitats are located and plan your route ahead of time.

5. Scout a few days ahead of time.

Advance scouting will help you become familiar with what you might expect to find on the day of the event.

6. Know what you're looking for.

Take your birding checklist and highlight birds that you've seen before on the property and those you expect to find on the day of the Birdwatching Open. Make a note of the location that you most often see various species. Birds are fairly predictable. Go looking for them and you'll likely find them in the places you've seen them before.



Invite someone who can identify birds by sight and sound to help you conduct your Birdwatching Open count. Provide them with a map and an overview of habitats in advance, so that they can plan a good route.

7. Cover the basics.

Most properties have common birds that are present every day. Your basic bird list might include Red-winged Blackbird, Song Sparrow, House Finch, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, and American Crow. Don't let the Birdwatching Open go by without finding them.

8. Be prepared for surprises.

During the height of spring migration, you never know what birds may happen to be in your area. Birds that you don't see often, birds that you've never seen before, or birds that are traveling further north to breed may show up. Keep a field guide with you to help you identify unusual sightings.

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