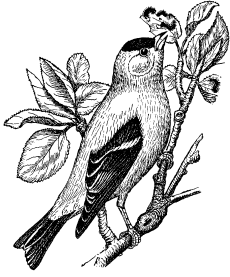


# Core Module #2: Birding

Exposure Module





# Core Module #2:

## Birding

### Exposure Module

*Authors: Bill Lynch, M.S. and John S. Watson, Jr.*

#### Themes

1. Introduction to the pleasure of birding by sight and sound.
2. Identification of common "backyard" bird species seen in your neighborhood followed by movement to nearby diverse habitats to add other birds to your list.
3. Getting people outdoors in new ways to enjoy nature and understand the value of natural systems and habitats.
4. Whet the appetite of the community for the sport/activity and create a lifelong love of birding.

#### Background

"Birding" or bird watching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the world. An estimated 45 million people in America alone consider birding a hobby, according to a 2016 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study. It is such a pleasant way to enjoy nature and gain incredible insights into our ecosystems, wildlife, and habitat values. From your own street or backyard, along your favorite stream or field, or in large tracts of intact forest, an incredible array of species can be observed. It is remarkable to think that if one travels just a few miles outside of their neighborhood or city, they might see an entirely different suite of birds that they wouldn't see at home.

For instance, in a city or city park, you might see plenty of American robins, Northern cardinals, blue jays, red-bellied woodpeckers, and other "backyard species", but traveling to an open meadow just outside of town, you might observe Eastern meadowlarks, bobolinks, Eastern bluebirds, and other species that require wide open grassland habitats. Or you might enter a large, forested area where forest interior species' breed, feed, and dwell. These interior species prefer large stands of undivided intact woods without edges such as roads, mowed lawns, pipeline "rights of way," and other areas that create breaks in the intact forest canopy. There, you might see or hear barred owls, scarlet tanagers, pileated woodpeckers, and many colorful varieties of neotropical songbirds moving through the area as they head north and south on their annual migrations.

The reliance on special habitat types by individual species clearly demonstrates the importance of protecting a mosaic of habitats to maintain our planet's biodiversity.

### Values

Birding brings joy to millions of people around the world every day. Whether viewing them at your backyard feeder or participating in the Audubon Annual Christmas Count, it is a fun, safe way to spend time outdoors year-round. Birding is a great way to demonstrate the value of different types of habitats and why it is important to protect our landscapes around the globe. This is true not only for the wintering and breeding grounds, but also for the "flyways" that provide respite for weary migrating species on their long-distance travels. Birding offers a direct glimpse into the depths of biodiversity of species and the land types they rely on for their very survival. For instance, an interior forest species would not survive long in only grassland habitats.

### Challenges

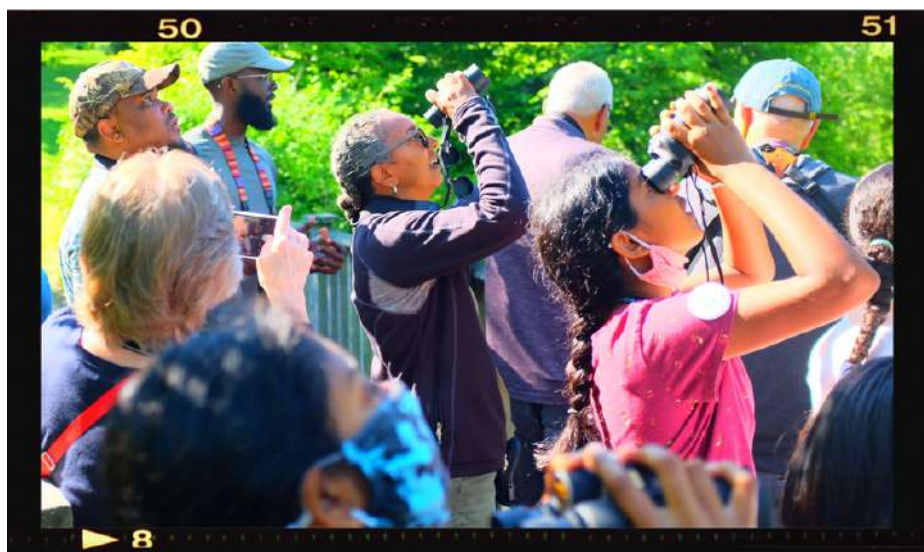
Our challenge for this module is to recruit more young people to the world of birding for both enjoyment and enlightenment on natural systems, diverse habitat values, and outdoor recreation.

### Solutions

We recommend getting people engaged in safe spaces to ignite and nurture their passion for this lifelong activity. We can demonstrate the process of starting a "life list" of birds and expose them to proper use of binoculars, backyard feeders, and identification by sight and by ear.

### Training

- Instruct basic "backyard" bird identification by sight and sound and basics of binocular use.
- Conduct routine bird walks in convenient places to engage the community.
- Create a backyard feeder program and a species list.



## Bird Identification

### Level 1: Common "Backyard Birds"

- American robin
- Northern cardinal
- Blue Jay
- Downy woodpecker
- Carolina wren
- House wren
- Sparrows (multiple species)
- American goldfinch (New Jersey's State bird!)



*American robin*

### Level 2: Interior Forest Species

- Barred owl
- Northern parula
- American redstart
- Eastern wood pewee
- Rose-breasted grosbeak
- Scarlet tanager
- Black-and-white warbler
- Hooded warbler
- Pileated woodpecker
- Ovenbird



*Barred owl*



*Bobolink*

### Level 3: Grassland Species

- Eastern meadowlark
- Bobolink
- American kestrel
- Eastern bluebird

### Level 4: Birds You Might See Near Rivers, Lakes, and Streams

- Great blue heron
- Bald eagle
- Osprey
- Belted kingfisher
- Double-crested cormorant



*Great blue heron*

**Facilitation Questions:**

1. What are some common birds you might see in your neighborhood?
2. Describe proper setup and "sighting objects" with binoculars.
3. Match these six birds with their calls / song / sounds / behaviors.
4. What is the difference between a "resident" species and "migratory" species?
5. What times of year do migrations occur?
6. Where does a certain migratory species come from and where are they going?
7. What is a "flyway"?
8. Why is habitat protection of lands along the flyway important?
9. How might nonnative invasive plant species impact migrating bird species?
10. Which bird can hover and fly backwards?

**Additional Resources:**

- Book: [The Sibley Field Guide to Birds](#), by: David Allen Sibley
- Video: [Black Birders Week 2020](#)
- Video: [Birders Central Effect](#)
- App: [Merlin All About Birds](#)

