

Parent tip: Benefits of Birding



Our world today seems to be about constant multi-tasking, but it's important for developing brains to stop and recharge (and for old brains too). The stillness of bird watching provides an opportunity to pause and take it all in. You may be surprised at the things you will discover besides birds!

Birding is a brilliant parenting opportunity.

- Birding is one of the best nature activities for teaching children to appreciate wildlife, big and small, and the interconnectedness of all living things.
- Many studies show that time in nature is beneficial to both our physical and mental health.
- Birding helps develop the ability to concentrate and, in short, gives an academic edge
- Good listening and observational skills fostered by birding are valuable life skills.
- Learning to identify different birds, recognize songs and behaviors develops a good memory.
- Recording and sharing bird sightings and stories improves communication skills
- Noticing and naming the world allows children to connect on a deeper level and encourages a love for learning.
- Birding with children is a time to deepen your relationship with each other and the natural world (not about checking off a life list of birds seen).
- Understanding why not to interfere with birds and their nests encourages empathy and compassion.
- We need green-thinking like never before. A love of birds will spontaneously spill over into a desire to protect the wild spaces that birds live in.

Where do you start?

Some of the best bird watching is in your own back yard or neighbourhood. Many colorful birds are there to see every day. It's easy to learn the birds that live around you.

What do you need?

Birding requires little more than your eyes and ears, but the following items can enhance bird watching.

- **Binoculars** let you see the birds up close. They let you see details without disturbing the birds.
- **A book or a bird identification app, like Merlin**, will help you learn the birds' names and more.
- **A camera, note book and pencil crayons** help you record your adventures for sharing later.
- It is also a good idea to pack a bag with snacks, water, sunscreen, and first-aid items whenever you are heading out into nature.

Three great resources for bird watching with children:

1. *The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*, Written by a Bill Thompson III, editor of Bird Watcher's Digest
2. *Backyard Bird Walk* by Jane Kirkland... A great resource for parents, teaches youth how to find and observe birds' nests without harming them. It shows how to tell what a bird eats by looking at its bill and tells how to help an injured bird.
3. *Merlin Bird ID* <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/> Great free app for your phone or laptop. Download this app before heading out. So you are ready to go.

Download our *Be a Birdwatcher* project book for ideas, exercises and activities.

Here is an informative resource for parents;

<https://www.everythingbirds.com/articles/how-birding-can-help-connect-kids-with-the-outdoors/>

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HAPPY BIRDING!