



# Parent tip: Benefits of Birding



Today, our world 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 in the quiet calm nature offers. You may be surprised at what you 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. It is a time to deepen your relationship with each other and the natural world. It is about children experiencing nature and not so much about the birds. Checking off a life list of birds seen is not the goal. There is so much more birding offers.

- Noticing and naming the world allows children to connect on a deeper level and encourages a love for learning.
- 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 birds, recognize songs and behaviors develops a good memory.
- Recording and sharing bird sightings and stories improves communication skills
- Understanding why not to interfere with birds and their nests encourages empathy and compassion.
- A love of birds will spontaneously spill over into a desire to protect the wild spaces that birds live in. We need green-thinking like never before.



## Where do you start?

There are many colourful birds living nearby to see. Some of the best bird watching is in your own back yard or neighbourhood. 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 up close without disturbing the birds.
- **Bird Book or identification app, like Merlin** - helps you learn about birds
- **Camera, notebook, pencil crayons** - to record your adventures for sharing later.
- **Adventure Pack** - it is a good idea to pack a bag with snacks, water, sunscreen, and first-aid items whenever you are heading out into nature.

## Great resources for bird watching with children:

1. **The Young Birder's Guide to Birds of Eastern North America**, by Bill Thompson III, of Bird Watcher's Digest
2. **Backyard Bird Walk** by Jane Kirkland, a great parent resource (includes how to help an injured bird)
3. **Merlin Bird ID** is a free app for your phone or laptop. Download at [merlin.allaboutbirds.org](http://merlin.allaboutbirds.org) before heading out!
4. Allaboutbirds.org - Search All About Birds Cornell Lab of Ornithology - ultimate source of bird information
5. Morebirds.com - Learning Centre - lots of parent resources

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



**HAPPY BIRDING!**

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Produced by Cheryl Chapman  
naturehood@peptbo.ca  
www.peptbo.ca  
Reprint with accreditation.