

Wild about Birds!

It's fun to watch birds. They're bright and cheery, even on the greyest day. But that's not the only reason to keep an eye on our feathered friends. Birds are important members of the natural ecosystem. They are **predators**, eating everything from insects and worms to mice, rabbits and fish. They may also be **prey**, eaten by other birds, foxes and weasels. Birds are helpful to people too, as many of the insects and rodents they eat are considered to be pests.

Birds require specific **habitat**, the combination of food, water, shelter and space that meets their needs. If the habitat changes—due to urban encroachment, pollution, climate change or any other cause—bird populations will be affected. Some may move into an area while others may leave. As you study birds, look for the types and numbers of birds in an area, their behavior, when they migrate and nest.



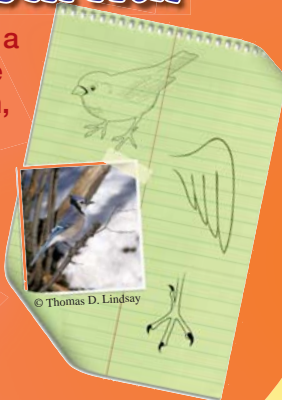
Becoming a

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You can get started watching and enjoying birds without any special equipment at all! Just go outside and keep your eyes and ears open to the world around you. As you get better at spotting birds, you'll want to keep a record of the birds you see and what they're doing. You may find these items helpful.

Field Journal

A **field journal** is a notebook you write your observations in, or a binder you add new pages to each time you go out. You can include drawings, photos, or a list of all the birds you see.



Field Guide

There are many different **field guides** (books with information on identifying natural objects), just on birds. Look through some to see which is easiest for you to use. Some have drawings of birds, while others have photos.

Your public or school library is a good place to start.



Binoculars

Binoculars make things that are far away appear closer. Find a pair that are easy for you to focus and light enough for you to carry when you go outdoors. Many nature centers have binoculars you can borrow during your visit.



Take photos



of the birds, nests and other things you see. Photos can be saved in your journal. (Remember, don't remove natural items from the wild.)

