



California Wildlife Center

Patient of the Week

March 1, 2024

Beginning to Bird

Have you ever wanted to try Birding but didn't know where to start? Birding can be a casual or more formal affair, but whatever level you try, it's always engrossing. In fact, many of you are already amateur birders—watching, appreciating, and noticing birds are entry points for many! Bird watching may mean travelling to the Amazon rainforest to see rare birds or may be watching them in your backyard—the best part is that there is something for everyone!

What do you need to start bird watching? We recommend using an app such as Merlin, eBird, or Audubon. We prefer the Merlin App as it is free from Cornell University, and it allows you to identify birds by sound and also offers a way to keep track of all the birds you see. If you're traveling to an area without coverage, it's a good idea to carry reference book such as Sibley Field Guide to Birds. You might also want to consider acquiring binoculars—they come at many different price points and preowned pairs can be purchased for a (ahem) song. And remember, the same species of bird may look different depending on the sex, time of year, and age.



Young Birdwatcher.

When watching birds, be mindful of the bird's safety—that means not drawing attention to nests—predators may be watching you and your sudden interest in a particular area can put a nest location at risk. Be quiet when watching birds. Not only will you see more when you say less, you'll also be able to find more birds by listening for their calls. If you keep poultry at home, wear different shoes to bird watch than to care for your pets—domestic fowl may carry diseases to which wild birds are sensitive such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.

Be mindful of your safety too—if you're going out alone, be sure to practice good trail safety and alert someone to where you're going. Stay on trail and watch where you're walking. If you're bird watching with a group, be mindful of where the rest of your companions are. Bring a snack (and take your trash home with you), water, sunscreen, and a sweater.

We are fortunate to have some great locations in Southern California to bird watch—some of our favorites are:

1. Malibu Lagoon—great for seeing waterbirds like cormorants, loons, and pelicans
2. Balboa Park (especially the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Preserve)—the site of our annual Wildlife Walk, the preserve features a small lake where all manner of birds and other animals thrive
3. Debs Park—located near Montecito Heights, this Park has an Audubon center and is home to 140 different species of birds
4. Griffith Park—this huge park is also home to a huge variety of birds and provides [this handy checklist](#) where you can track which birds you spot when in the Park
5. Silverlake Reservoir—Since the 1900s, the reservoir has been a popular site for seeing over 100 different species
6. Ballona Wetlands—this ecological reserve allows us to see some of the amazing waterbirds like egrets, osprey, coots, and terns.
7. Eaton Canyon -home to a 3.5 roundtrip trail, this park is home to many different birds and mammals.

