

OFO Code of Ethics

As the number of birders increases, we must **all**, no matter what our interest in birds, make every effort to act in a positive and responsible way. We must also convey a responsible image to non-birders who may be affected by our activities.

As more and more pressure is put on our environment it is essential to do whatever we can to protect birds and habitat. Birders should lead by example. We are ambassadors of birding and environmental stewardship.

The welfare of the birds must come first.

Whatever your interest, from scientific study to sound recording to photography to listing, always consider the impact of your activity on the bird. Respect bird protection laws and abide by them at all times.

Protect habitat.

Habitat is vital for the existence of birds and we must ensure that our activities cause minimum damage to our environment. Use trails, pathways and roadsides, whenever possible, to avoid trampling vegetation.

Keep disturbance to a minimum.

Although some birds can tolerate human activity, this varies from species to species and from season to season. Migrants may be tired and hungry and should not be kept from resting or feeding. Do not deliberately flush birds. Patience is often rewarded.

To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.

Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

Rare breeding birds.

If you discover the nest of a rare breeding bird, do not feel under any obligation to report your find to other birders. The location should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities. You may wish to file a report of the nest with Bird Studies Canada's Project NestWatch <http://www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/pnw/>. Avoid visiting known sites of rare breeding birds unless they can be viewed from a distance without disturbance.

Rare birds.

Rare migrants or vagrants are the species most sought after by birders.

Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. Ask the landowner for a list of dos and don'ts, for example, where people may stand to get a good view and what restrictions there may be on time of day. Also ask which areas are off limit. If you decide to release the news, give precise directions and instructions, if possible including a phone number. Remember, most non-birders will be surprised by the number of visitors who wish to see a rare bird.

Respect the rights of landowners.

Be aware of the rules about access to Conservation Authorities, National and Provincial Parks, and Regional Authorities. Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission. Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad. Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

Have proper consideration for other birders.

Try not to disrupt other birders' activities or scare the birds they may be watching. Be polite to other birders and helpful to beginners. Many other people enjoy the outdoors; do not interfere with their activities. If you see people obviously disturbing birds or significantly damaging habitat, explain to them the effect of their actions but be courteous, they may not be aware of the effect they are having.

Increase our knowledge about birds.

Consider keeping notes of your sightings and sending them to area compilers. Send rare bird reports to the Secretary, Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Bird responsibly in other countries, provinces or regions.

Find out if there is a local code of ethics or any special rules that should be respected.

Please follow this code. Distribute it and teach it to others. It is up to you to help promote respect toward wildlife, wildlife habitat, the environment, and other people.

Thank you.