



# BIRDING: HOW TO GET STARTED

By Michele Neligan

Ever wonder how people get involved in this wonderful activity we call bird watching? Each person you ask will tell you a different story. The possibilities are endless, and it is a year-round activity. The information below will help you get started.

## Equipment Checklist

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Field Guide
- ✓ Hiking Boots or Sneakers
- ✓ Bug Repellant with Deet
- ✓ Hat, Waterproof Jacket, Gloves, Wind Pants
- ✓ Road Map/DeLorme Atlas/Google Map Directions

## Binoculars

The first thing you want to do here is decide how serious you want to be about birding. Then you need to determine how much money you want to spend. You will need to learn about the following when choosing a pair of binoculars.

- ✓ Size/Weight
- ✓ Magnification
- ✓ Waterproofing/Lens Coatings
- ✓ Warranty
- ✓ A good place to learn about binoculars is: <http://www.binoculars101.com/>
- ✓ Vendors to consider: Bushnell, Nikon, Eagle Optics, Swift, Kowa, Zeiss, and Swarovski

8x42 binoculars are considered the standard size for birding. The first number is magnification, which means the image will be magnified 8 times. The second number represents the size of the lenses and the amount of light that they let in. The higher the number, the more light, e.g., 50 is better than 42. The trade-off, however, is the higher the number, the heavier the binoculars are. This is something to consider if you are planning to be outside all day with them around your neck.

## Field Guides: Books, Online, and Cellphone Apps

- ✓ Sibley's Field Guide
- ✓ Peterson's Field Guide
- ✓ Golden Guide to Birds of North America (published 2001)–unique because it has sonograms of bird songs
- ✓ Cornell Lab of Ornithology All About Birds <http://www.allaboutbirds.org>
- ✓ iPhone and Android Applications can be found on Amazon.com or Google Play Store
- ✓ BirdsEye BirdLog Application, ability to post directly to Ebird

## Hiking Boots: Things to Consider

- ✓ How much money you want to spend?
- ✓ Do you want a waterproof lining? Gortex lining vs. a regular waterproof lining.
- ✓ Where and when will you be wearing them? hiking vs. walking, spring vs. winter
- ✓ If you are doing winter birding, look the lowest temperature rating for the boots.
- ✓ Vendors to consider: Merrell, North Face, LL Bean, and Vasque

When purchasing any equipment, check reviews on Amazon or other retail websites.

## Birding Ethics

**DO NOT TRESSPASS!!** If you really want to bird on someone's property, knock on their door, introduce yourself, and ask for permission. Nine times out of ten, you will be allowed on the property. If the property is posted, it's that way for a reason! For more information on Birding Ethics, visit the American Birding Association's website at [www.aba.org/about/ethics.html](http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html).

## PLACES TO BIRD

Please always use caution and common sense while birding. The areas listed below with a red asterisk (\*) are located in 55-m.p.h. speed zones.

Your back yard. Put up a bird feeder and watch to see who finds it first!  
Inner Harbor Creekwalk by Carousel Mall, Syracuse  
Oakwood Cemetery, Syracuse  
St. Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt  
Butternut Creek, Dewitt  
Jamesville Beach, Jamesville  
Ditchbank Road, Canastota  
Whiskey Hollow IBA, Baldwinsville  
Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area, Baldwinsville/Phoenix  
Below the Dam on the Seneca River and at Mercer Park, Baldwinsville  
Beaver Lake Nature Center, Baldwinsville  
\*Biddlecum Road Wetlands on Route 264, Phoenix  
\*Black Creek, Co. Rt. 54 (off Route 264), Phoenix  
\*Peter Scott Swamp, Phoenix  
Great Bear Conservancy, Phoenix  
Lake Neatahwanta, Fulton  
\*County Route 6 Wetlands, Volney  
Derby Hill Bird Observatory, Mexico  
Noyes Sanctuary, Oswego  
Sunset Beach State Park, Oswego  
Oswego Harbor and Breitbeck Park, Oswego  
Fair Haven Beach State Park, Fair Haven  
Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Seneca Falls

Howland Island (NYSDEC Northern Montezuma Wildlife Mgmt.), entrances in  
Port Byron and Savannah  
Montezuma Audubon Center (aka The MAC), Savannah

## Migration

Spring hawk migration starts the last week of February and runs into June. Peak migration is between the second and fourth week of April. Most other north-bound birds reach our area at the beginning of April, with peak being the middle of May. Fall migration starts in late August and runs through the end of November. However, you can bird all year round. Eagles can be seen in the area in January and duck migration gets started in February.

## BIRDING RESOURCES

Ebird.org – “A real-time, online checklist program, eBird has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales.” (Taken directly from the Ebird.org website.)

### Audubon Society

Onondaga Audubon

[www.onondagaaudubon.com](http://www.onondagaaudubon.com)

New York State:

[www.ny.audubon.org](http://www.ny.audubon.org)

National:

[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Check the above websites for birding trips. It's a great way to meet fellow birders and learn new locations.

Joining a List Server – If you want to receive emails about where the birds are from a list server, please visit [birding.aba.org](http://birding.aba.org). Our area is served by Oneidabirds. See the links that say

How does this work?

List Archives

How do I Subscribe?

Comments/Questions

If you scroll down the page, you will see a list of states by region. If you click on New York, you will see the most recent posts from all across the state. You can get these posts in your email by joining a list server under “Join” or “How Do I Subscribe.”

Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter: Oneidabirds, Derby Hill Bird

Observatory, and Onondaga Audubon all have Facebook pages. Onondaga Audubon has a Twitter feed.

<http://www.nemesisbird.com/> Nemesis Bird was founded in 2006. Its goal is to promote the fun and serious sides of birding, bird science, and conservation from the viewpoint of people in the field.

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*Michele Neligan has been actively birding for past six years. Her parents and grandparents were backyard birders and got her interested at a young age. She sits on the Onondaga Audubon Board of Directors and has been part of the OAS Bird Festival Committee for the three years. Her favorite places to bird are Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Derby Hill Bird Observatory, and the Seneca River in Baldwinsville, N.Y. Raptors are her favorite birds, and seeing a Snowy Owl got her hooked. Michele is also an active member of the Beaver Lake Nature Center Photography Group.*