

## A B C OF BIRD WATCHING

Bird watching as an activity could be carried out for sheer pleasure of observing birds in their environment. After sometime it may become a serious study of exploring Nature. Whether it is pursued as a hobby or as a scientific interest, bird watching needs to be done in a systematic manner.

1. Before you start : Try to get familiar with the geography of the area. Within 100 km you may come across different types of environment. It may be countryside, woodlands, forests, wetlands, plantations, etc.,. The birds association differ in different environment. They can very well be observed in parks, gardens and campuses.
2. When to start : As a beginner it is better to start when birds could be seen in large numbers. October to April is the best period. A number of migratory birds descend down to feed in marshes and wetlands.

The birds are active during early morning or before dusk. The timings for bird watching :

7 a.m.	to	10 a.m.
	&	
4 p.m.	to	6 p.m.

3. What we need :

- i) Dress : Dull Green or Brown coloured. The dress should blend with surrounding. Black, white or striking coloured dresses should be avoided.

- ii) Rubber soled shoes.
- iii) A cap
- iv) Binocular size 8 \* 30 (8 - magnification, 30 - diameter of object lens in mm.)
- v) A field notebook.
- vi) A handguide on birds. There are a few other things one need when carrying out studies like maps, camera, tape recorder, etc.,. The beginner should not worry about them.

#### 4. How to observe :

- i) Make full use of eyes and ears. They are equally important tools. It is better to get familiar with bird calls.
- ii) Choose a place from which one may be able to scan a large area, e.g. sitting on a mound, under a large shady tree.
- iii) Always walk zigzag, circular or alongside the bird. Do not approach the bird directly.
- iv) Use binocular for details. Do not observe constantly to avoid eye strain.

5. What to observe : Keep careful notes of all that you observe. It is better to get familiar with birds from their pictures or observing them in zoo or museum from time to time.

- i) Note down date, time, weather, locality.
- ii) Size : Sparrow, bulbul, myna, crow or kite  
( bigger - smaller ).
- iii) Shape : Slim, stout.
- iv) Bill - Straight, pointed, curved, slender, thick,  
hooked, conical. Also note colour of beak.
- v) Legs : Size, long, short, toes.
- vi) Tail : Long, short, forked. Tip : round, pointed. Also  
observe movements of tail.
- vii) Crest over the head, colour, shape.
- viii) Colour of body - Bright, sober.  
  
Colour of upper part and lower part, wings. Conspicuous  
marks, look at breast, spotted, streaked or stripped  
Tail. Bands at tip. Any spots, Rump. Any patch.  
  
In waterbirds marking on wings are important. In some  
Male and Female differ in colour and appearance. During  
breeding some birds assume breeding plumage.
- ix) Voice : Musical, metallic, harsh, soft, trilling.
- x) Behavior : How birds feed and manner of eating. Behavior  
during breeding season. Flying habit.
- xi) Where the bird was found, on tree, ground, on post, in  
bush, grass.
- xii) Details about place visited. Marsh, Garden, Grove,  
Kere, Cultivated field, Fallow land, Plantation, For-  
est, Scrub.

5. Code of Behavior :

- i) Permission to enter private lands must be taken.
- ii) While walking in cultivated lands, keep to paths.
- iii) Don't throw away litter.
- iv) Be careful during dry periods. A chance match stick thrown on grass may start a devastating fire.
- v) Don't disturb any natural thing. Don't touch nest, eggs, etc.,.
- vi) Be familiar with the Wildlife Protection Act.

Useful Books for Bird watchers.

- 1. The Book of Indian Birds - by Salim Ali.
- 2. Collins Handguide to the Birds of the Indian Sub continent - by Martin Woodcock.
- 3. About Indian Birds.

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If you are further interested :

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