

Quorum Tours: Birding-Centric Visual Style Guide

Birding Visual Culture Audit

- **Color Palette:** Birding brands and media favor **nature-inspired palettes**. Common primaries include **sky and forest tones** (blues and greens) with warm **earth/yellow accents** ¹ ². For example, Audubon's site uses a dominant blue with earthy neutrals, adding "vibrant yellows reminiscent of bird plumage" for highlights ¹. BirdLife Australia's guidelines specify a "Corporate" palette (e.g. Splendid Fairywren Blue #005EB8, Pigeon Grey #B6ADA5, black, white) alongside an **"Active" accent palette** drawn from bright Aussie bird colors (Honeyeater Yellow #F2A900, Alisterus Red #E4002B, robin orange #FF671F, etc.) ³ ². BirdLife International similarly uses a **primary blue (#2E6BA6)** and **green (#6BAB45)** with white/grey neutrals ⁴ ⁵. In summary, lean on **crisp blues/greens and warm earthy yellows/oranges**, not neon or pastel: e.g., **#005EB8 (bird blue)**, **#6BAB45 (leaf green)**, **#B6ADA5 (warm grey)**, **#F2A900 (golden yellow)**, **#E4002B (red accent)**, plus **#FFFFFF/#000000** for text contrast. These align with natural habitats and bird plumage, ensuring AAA contrast (a rich yellow on dark blue, etc. is both authentic and readable).
- **Typography:** Birding media traditionally use **clean, highly legible typefaces**. Professional conservation orgs and guides favor sans-serifs for clarity on digital/print. BirdLife Australia, for instance, uses *Tablet Gothic* for headings and *Montserrat Bold* for emphasis ⁶ ⁷. We recommend a **humanist or geometric sans** (e.g. Montserrat, Open Sans, Roboto or Inter) for headings and body to scale well on mobile. (Older print field guides sometimes used serif text, but for a responsive web app, a neutral sans maintains readability.) For a touch of tradition, a serif might be used sparingly for quotes or highlights. Avoid overly decorative or novelty fonts. Font sizing should be responsive: large, clean titles (H1/H2 ~24–36px) and comfortably readable body text (16–18px on desktop, scaled down on mobile). Consistency is key: use only 2–3 fonts (e.g. Montserrat Bold for headings, Montserrat Regular for subheads and Roboto/Inter for body).
- **Imagery (Illustration vs Photography):** Authentic birding visuals prioritize **detailed, realistic depictions of birds in context**. Field guides often use **illustrations** (Sibley's gouache paintings ⁸) or **composite photos** (Crossley's dioramas) to highlight key ID features ⁹. Modern apps and sites lean on **high-quality wildlife photography**. For Quorum Tours, use **crisp photos of birds and habitats**, as found in Audubon or BirdLife campaigns (avoiding stock generic nature shots). Illustrations may be used for logos or educational graphics, but photos are generally preferred online. If using illustrations, mimic the naturalistic style of field-art (subtle watercolor textures, accurate colors) rather than cartoonish art. Do **not** use cartoon animals or cutesy wildlife clipart; that feels amateur.
- **Iconography & Graphics:** Birders recognize certain symbols (binoculars, bird silhouettes, feathers, nests, maps). Icons should be **simple line or glyph-style drawings** (single-color outlines or filled shapes) that match the color palette. Common motifs include a perched bird, a flying bird, or a bird-on-branch silhouette. Avoid generic "nature" logos (e.g. abstract leaves or mountains with no bird element) which feel corporate. When creating icons (for amenities or features), use consistent

strokes and avoid skeuomorphic detail. BirdLife and Audubon use minimalist bird logos – emulate that clarity. Any graphic textures (e.g. subtle leaf pattern, plumage feather motif) should be **tonal and understated**, adding depth without overwhelming content.

- **“Authentic Birding” Style vs “Corporate Nature”:** Authentic birding design feels **curatorial and passionate**: it highlights real birds and birders, uses field-guide or conservation visual cues, and even shares lore (e.g. bird calls, range maps). Corporate-nature clichés to avoid include: overly generic wildlife scenes, trendy “eco” motifs (like random animal silhouettes or earth logos unrelated to birds), or fashion-brand-esque imagery of abstract nature. For example, a corporate eco site might use flat trees and a green logo; a birding brand would instead show an actual bird in a habitat or an endemic Australian scene. In practice, this means preferring **authentic bird photos/illustrations** and conservation storytelling, over anything that feels like a stock-adventure tour. Keep it grounded in birds: e.g. backgrounds of gum trees or wetlands, not just generic mountains.

Anti-Patterns to Avoid

- **Clichéd Imagery:** Don’t use cheesy stock photos (e.g. happy models with binoculars in an obviously staged pose). Avoid oversaturated sunsets, generic forests, or cartoon birds. Stock bird images that lack identification detail (blurry wings, out-of-focus) will turn off serious birders. Instead, ensure every image features birds or habitats relevant to tours (e.g. iconic Australian species).
- **Overly Corporate Look:** Flashy UI patterns from generic travel OTAs (like large banner carousels, big travel deals, or passive “book now” modals) can feel soulless. Eschew bland, cold corporate blues/greys. For example, don’t follow generic OTA iconography (like airplane, beach, safari animals unrelated to birds). Likewise, sterile flat design with pastel colors may signal “not a specialized bird brand”. Maintain warmth and specificity.
- **Fonts & Styling:** Very thin or highly stylized fonts (often used by luxury brands) can hurt readability, especially on mobile – avoid them. Similarly, overly whimsical fonts or comic styles (“adventure parks”) alienate serious birders.
- **Misleading Cues:** Avoid insinuating an experience Quorum doesn’t offer. For instance, don’t lead with glamorous wildlife shots (elephants, lions), as Quorum is bird-focused. Avoid imagery of large, unrelated mammals or activities (like rafting or lounging by a pool). Also steer clear of user-generated-photo collage layouts; birders prefer curated, professional imagery.
- **Alienating Serious Listers:** Don’t minimize bird detail. Tiny photos, small or light text, or hiding data (like checklists) behind endless clicks frustrate listers. Respect their expertise: present checklists, maps, trip details clearly, use real scientific or birding terms thoughtfully. Avoid any tone of “birding is just a cute hobby”; use an authentic, knowledgeable voice.
- **Alienating Younger Birders:** Conversely, avoid making the site feel dusty or only for retirees. Brighten with social-proof (UGC photos from younger birders, colorful challenge badges) and a slightly playful tone in modest places. Don’t rely on nostalgia-heavy design (old lanterns, Victorian font) exclusively, as that may put off new birders. Balance heritage elements with fresh, modern flair (e.g., clean icons, smooth animations on mobile).

Bridging Generations

- **Traditional (50+):** This group appreciates **familiarity and clarity**. Use ample white space and **readable typography** reminiscent of print guides ⁽¹⁰⁾ . Calm, orderly layouts (like Aman’s “minimalist serenity” ⁽¹⁰⁾) and realistic imagery resonate. Avoid tiny text or overly dynamic animations. Color

palettes can be somewhat more muted (think earth tones and classic bird illustrations). They trust longstanding brands and may look for conservation cues (e.g. logos of known orgs).

- **Instagram-Era (25–45):** These birders respond to **vibrant, engaging visuals**. Warm, rich colors and storytelling imagery (e.g. sunsets with flocks, travel adventure shots) draw them in ¹¹. Consider dynamic content sections (a “Visual Journey” as Remote Lands does ¹¹) – for instance, story blocks describing what you’ll see or feel. Social media integration (sharing buttons, hashtag feeds) and modern, lightweight fonts appeal to them. They enjoy subtle motion (e.g. a flying-bird SVG animation on scroll) if not distracting.
- **Overlap (Common Ground):** Both segments value **high-quality bird photography**, easy navigation, and a sense of authenticity. A “bold yet trustworthy” aesthetic works across ages ¹². For example, use a consistent color theme that isn’t too neon but still lively (a deep blue with splashes of golden yellow fits both camps). Both like photography-focused design (Mr & Mrs Smith style editorial shots ¹³), so use clean, full-width bird images.
- **Conflicts:** Traditional users might find a super-hip layout (heavy parallax, tiny sans fonts) confusing, while younger users might find a very static, text-heavy brochure design boring. The key is **responsiveness**: keep interactions smooth on mobile (a must for younger users) while making sure nothing hides behind obscure menus (older users tend to dislike hidden menus or excessive scrolling).
- **Brand Examples:** Premium optics bridge generations by combining timeless elegance with modern tech cues. For instance, Swarovski Optik’s site uses sleek product photos and mountain/bird imagery (appealing to all ages), minimal text, and the brand’s signature **blue accents** ¹⁴. Leica balances its classic red dot and high-contrast black-white with contemporary layouts. Quorum can emulate this by using a refined palette (blues/whites) and clean design, yet showcasing vibrant field photos and testimonials to feel accessible, not elitist.

Premium Positioning (Luxury Yet Accessible)

- **Elegant Minimalism:** Like top luxury travel brands, use **generous white space, large imagery, and simple navigation** ¹⁰. This communicates confidence and quality. For example, Aman Resorts’ site is almost entirely white with subtle text overlays ¹⁰ – such restraint can make bird photos pop and feel more exclusive.
- **Rich Storytelling:** Employ **warm, inviting visuals and narrative content** to inspire (as Remote Lands does ¹¹). In practice, Quorum could use a warm duotone or gradient overlay on hero photos to unify look, and write immersive tour descriptions (“wake up to the call of kingfishers...”). This conveys a curated experience, not a commodity.
- **Typography & Tone:** Use **sophisticated type (clean sans or refined serif)** at larger sizes for headings, but avoid all-uppercase or overly tight kerning that feels shouty. Keep tone informative yet passionate (show expertise without jargon). The luxury feel comes from confidence and clarity, not snobbery.
- **Palette Refinement:** A premium look often includes **deep neutrals and one accent color**. For instance, a dark teal or charcoal (#041C2C Apostlebird Black) combined with white and a single accent (birdy yellow/orange) looks high-end without seeming exclusive. Avoid juvenile brights or the camper-green of budget eco-tourism.
- **Texture and Finish:** Subtle textures (like a linen or canvas background, or a soft watercolor wash behind content blocks) can add craftsmanship vibe. But use them sparingly to maintain cleanliness. Patterns reminiscent of feathers or tree bark (toned-down, almost watermark-style) can evoke nature and luxury if done with restraint.

- **Icon & Logo Quality:** Premium birding products (optics, lodges) often use *embossed or metallic-looking logos*. For web, ensure the Quorum logo is crisp (e.g. a stylized bird or tree ring graphic) and maybe in dark-blue or gold. Icons should have a consistent, polished style (avoid mismatched free icons).
- **Avoid “Elitist” Tropes:** Don’t use ostentatious symbols (e.g. crowns, tuxedos). Instead, suggest luxury through **experience cues**: show photos of guests birding in elegant settings, use testimonials highlighting expert guides, and mention any exclusivity (small groups, rare species) in respectful language. The premium feel should come from *quality and expertise* cues, not gatekeeping language.

Framework Summary: Quorum’s design should feel like a modern field guide meets a luxury travel brochure. Use a **two-palette system**: a **base palette** of natural blues (#005EB8, #2E6BA6), greens (#64A70B), warm grey (#B6ADA5), plus crisp white/black; and an **accent palette** of bird-inspired hues (golden yellow #F2A900, orange #FF671F, red #E4002B). Pair a **strong sans font** for headings (e.g. Montserrat Bold) with a neutral sans or serif for body (e.g. Roboto/Serif for readability). Feature **vivid bird photography** and subtle nature motifs, while keeping layouts clean and touch-friendly. Icons should be simple and thematic (birds, binoculars, local flora). This balanced approach – authentic, high-quality, and inclusive – will resonate across the birding community.

Sources: Audubon and BirdLife style analyses ¹ ² ⁴ ; field-guide design (Sibley, Crossley) ⁸ ⁹ ; Merlin Bird ID UI review ¹⁵ ; luxury travel site reviews ¹⁶ ¹⁰ ¹¹ .

¹ National Audubon Society Website Design Analysis | DesignRush

<https://www.designrush.com/best-designs/websites/national-audubon-society-website-design>

² ³ ⁶ ⁷ Calaméo - Bird Life Australia Brand Guidelines 2024

<https://www.calameo.com/books/004107895cd4aa174433a>

⁴ ⁵ Styleguide - BirdLife International

<https://www.birdlife.org/styleguide/>

⁸ Art Gallery – Sibley Guides

<https://www.sibleyguides.com/art-gallery/>

⁹ Your next bird book: The Crossley ID Guide (Eastern Birds) | ScienceBlogs

<https://scienceblogs.com/gregladen/2011/03/11/your-next-bird-book-the-crossl>

¹⁰ ¹¹ ¹² ¹³ ¹⁶ Top 13 Luxury Travel Websites That Inspire Great Design

<https://akanshasoni.com/blogs/top-13-luxury-travel-websites-that-inspire-great-design>

¹⁴ Quality and innovation

<https://www.swarovskioptik.com/us/en/hunting/about-us/quality-and-innovation>

¹⁵ Merlin Bird ID: A Comprehensive App Review | Birda

<https://birda.org/merlin-bird-id-a-comprehensive-app-review/>