

# Leading Successful Birding Field Trips

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October 13, 2007

# I. Know Your Site

- Know trails, so you don't get lost.
- Have a sense of time frames for intended stops and return.
- Plan a rest-room stop for trips over three hours.
- If possible, scout out your site in advance.

## II. Know Your Audience

- Learn people's names, if possible.
- Ask the group about the extent of their previous birding experience.
- Most groups are very happy just to be there.
  - especially alumni
  - main exception (sometimes): kids
- The general goal is to maximize everyone's enjoyment and appreciation of birds.
  - Some groups have a specific additional goal (such as advancement of ID skills for SFO).

# III. Know the Lab

- Key facts about Sapsucker Woods
- Key facts about the Lab
- Lab programs
  - Citizen science
  - Macaulay Library
  - Bioacoustics
  - Conservation
  - Research: genetics, evolution, behavior, etc.
  - Education

# IV. Know the Birds

- Learn to identify common birds
- Practice talking through field marks and sounds
- Understand basic bird behavior in its seasonal context
  - singing, foraging, building nests, raising young, flocking, migrating
- Learn cool facts about birds you're likely to see
  - [www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/)

# V. Know Yourself

- Freely acknowledge when you don't know the answer to a question.
  - If you're willing, getting an answer and sending it to someone after the walk is a very meaningful gesture
- Set yourself up for success.
  - Choose sites and routes that you know well.
  - Focus on the species that you know best.

# VI. Pointing Out Birds

- Try to help everyone to see every bird.
  - Actively ask who needs help finding the bird.
  - Use your judgment about when to move on.
  - Optimization principle: Are those who have been missing a bird likely to see more by moving on?
- Practice talking through locations of birds.
  - Tree's crown as a clock face
  - Angles of tree limbs, presence of bare branches, colored leaves, and fruit
- Ensure correct use of optics.
  - For beginners, practice at the feeders first.

# VII. The Three E's

- **Enthusiasm**

- Share your joy and excitement.
- Don't voice disappointment about slow birding.
- Celebrate even very common birds.

- **Encouragement**

- Respect and commend people's questions.
- Make people feel good about their growing knowledge and skills.

- **Engagement**

- Further recreational birding
- Lab membership and involvement in Lab programs