



Birding in Surrey

A GUIDE TO BIRDING THROUGH THE SEASONS

FREE BIRDING WALKS

Join a local naturalist on a series of monthly birding walks to discover how Surrey's birds are adapted to their urban park habitats. Improve your identification skills and find answers to all of your birding questions. Walks take place once a month from September to May. Every walk is at a different location so it is a great way to explore Surrey's parks.

For a walk schedule, visit us online or call 604-502-6065.



www.surrey.ca/parks



WHY BIRDS? Bird watching is easy, fun, and you'll never be bored again once you become a "birder". You'll start to notice birds everywhere, all year long. Watch migrant birds passing by in spring and fall, local birds building nests for spring breeding, and overwintering birds getting fat for winter. It's a great way to get familiar with your natural world!

STEP BY STEP GUIDE to becoming a birder:

1 Get binoculars and practice using them in a familiar place like your house or yard. Make sure your straps are comfortable, and adjust your binoculars for your vision.

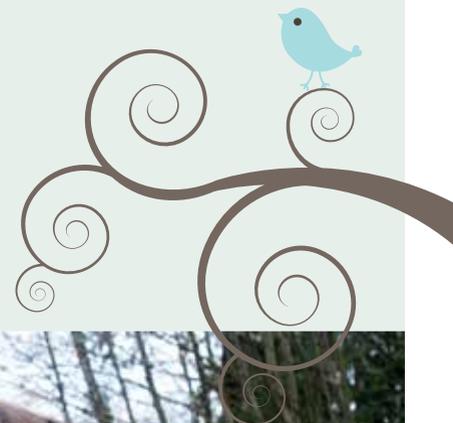
2 Get a field guide to get familiar with some of our local birds. Don't get stuck on the intricate markings of birds at first. Start by paying attention to the groups of birds (for example hawks, shorebirds, sparrows) and the habitats you can find them in. These can be the most important clues to help you identify what you are seeing.

3 Get outside to your favourite park and see what you can find. Lakes and shorelines are great places to see lots of different kinds of birds. Try to identify some of the birds around you. Many birders find that it helps them to remember birds and learn faster if they keep a "life list" of everything they are sure they've identified correctly.

4 Listen Up Birding uses your ears as much as your eyes. Often you will only get a quick look at a bird before it's gone, but if you listen closely to songs and calls you can often identify your bird even easier. You can even determine the group a bird belongs to based on the type of sounds it makes without seeing it at all! For example, woodpeckers pecking on trees and hummingbirds buzzing by.

5 Meet some kindred spirits by joining a local birding walk. This is a great way to learn tips for better identification. See the back of this brochure for information about local walks offered in Surrey.

Congratulations! You are now officially a birder.



BIRDING TIPS

- ▶ Birds are most active in the morning so get out early.
- ▶ Pay attention to identifying clues like behaviour. For example, Brown Creepers usually go up tree trunks, while Red-breasted Nuthatches go down.
- ▶ Visit different habitats as the seasons change. Birds know where they like to go - follow them!



BIRDING THROUGH THE SEASONS Bird watching is an ever-changing adventure. Many birds are year-round residents of Surrey, while others are here only in the summer or winter. Still others stop briefly to fuel up while migrating through Surrey in the spring or fall. Explore Surrey's diverse habitats and track the changing seasons by birding throughout the year.



Spring

Spring is one of the most exciting seasons for birders! Rare migrants stop to rest and refuel before continuing on their journeys north, while local birds take up their familiar breeding spots. It is a great time to watch some of the most interesting bird behaviours, like funny courtship dances or nest building.

Rich shoreline habitats like **Mud Bay Park**, **Blackie Spit Park**, and the **Serpentine Wildlife Management Area** are great spots to see spring migrants. Watch the shoreline plants for passing songbirds, and the tidal marshes for huge flocks of shorebirds.

Summer

Summer is probably the most challenging season to be a birder. Birds hide more as they tend to their babies. Birding in the summer is made even more difficult by birds such as waterfowl that use the time between breeding and migration to shed old feathers and grow new ones. If you are up to the challenge, see if you can find any scraggly ducks and try to identify them without their usual feather patterns.

Green Timbers Urban Forest Park, **Surrey Lake Park**, and **Crescent Park** all have a diverse mix of habitats (including forest, meadow, lake and marsh) and are good spots to try your luck finding birds at this time of year. See if you can spot Ospreys circling above the water, or Red-winged blackbirds defending their nests in the marsh.

Fall

Fall is a great time to go birding in Surrey! You can spot overwintering birds like songbirds and woodpeckers, as there is less cover to hide them as the leaves drop. It is also a fun time for more experienced birders, ready for the challenge of identifying juvenile birds with different feather patterns and spotting rare migrants passing through our rich local habitats.

Visit **Elgin Heritage Park** or other open grasslands to see sparrows and other songbirds preparing for migration by feeding on the grass seeds. Meadow edges are also good as they are often full of shrubs and berry bushes that offer nutritious meals.

Make sure to visit some shorelines such as **Blackie Spit Park** and **Crescent Beach**. These are incredible birding areas in the autumn, as hundreds of thousands of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl stop in, resting and refuelling in our rich tidal flats before continuing on their journeys south.

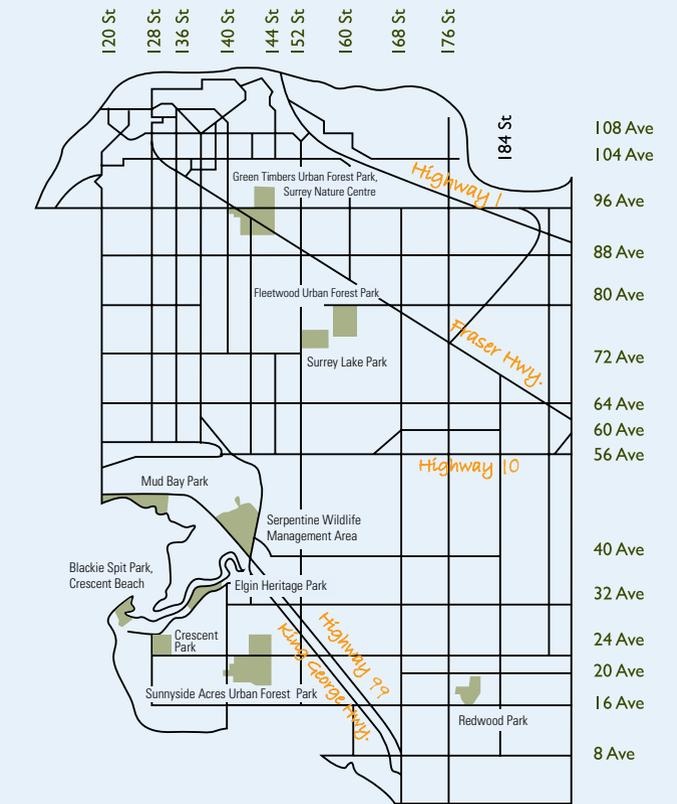
Winter

Winter is the season to view the birds that stick it out here during the chilly, wet months. Many birds like chickadees, bushtits and nuthatches are starting to join together into large flocks that are easy to spot and exciting to watch.

Forested parks like **Sunnyside Acres Urban Forest**, the arboretums at **Redwood Park** and the **Surrey Nature Centre**, and **Fleetwood Urban Forest Park** are great places for beginner birders to get to know the birds that call Surrey home throughout the winter.

Make sure to visit some open bodies of water like **Surrey Lake Park** as these are great places to see flocks of overwintering waterfowl like Mallards and widgeons.

PARK MAP



BIRDING ETIQUETTE

- ▶ Remember that you are a visitor in the birds' and other animals' habitat, or home. Be respectful by staying on trails and not damaging plants. This is especially important during the summer breeding season, as some birds nest on the ground where they can easily be trampled.
- ▶ Dogs are natural predators of most birds and can cause them a lot of stress. Keep dogs on leash and on trails if you are bringing them along.
- ▶ People can also be stressful for the birds, so try to be quiet and have slow movements when you are in a bird's territory. Move on once you have had a good look so that the bird can return to the behaviours necessary for its survival.
- ▶ It's tempting to attract birds to you by feeding them, but please do not do this! It's dangerous and unhealthy for birds to become dependent on people food, and it also attracts unwanted pests like rats to the area.

