

# BIRD FACTS & FANCIES

## Popular Hobby Is For The Birds

(NAPS)—Birding is the fastest-growing outdoor activity in North America, according to the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment. More than 71 million people—one in four—watch birds.

If you'd like to join them—or already have—here are hints for identifying birds. Study an unfamiliar bird and gather the following clues:

- The shape of the bird's body and tail
- Its color and pattern
- Its behavior: does it walk, swim, fly
- Its songs and calls
- Its habitat: forest, marsh, etc.

You can use the clues you've gathered to zero in on the name of the bird with the help of the online field guides available for free at [www.eNature.com](http://www.eNature.com). The site provides a wealth of information about nature for beginners and expert birdwatchers.

Would you like to know what birds live in your neighborhood? When you type your zip code, eNature will show you which creatures inhabit your community. You can read about each bird, see photographs and listen to its call for free on the site.

Here are some birdwatching tips:

- When to look for birds: A beautiful spring day is not necessarily the best time for birdwatching. For example, the onshore winds that accompany large coastal storms provide great opportunities for observing seabirds. Songbirds are easiest to spot just after dawn or before sunset. Midday is the best time to see vultures, hawks and eagles.

- Look, listen, and move carefully. Keep conversation to a minimum. Avoid abrupt movements. Experienced birders usually travel less than a mile per hour on foot. Watch for signs of alarm in birds:



**When participating in the popular pastime of birding, experts at a fascinating Web site advise; wear layers of clothing so you can comfortably spend a long time outdoors in all sorts of weather.**

a freeze in posture, a cocked head, a half-raising of the wings. Stop moving until the bird calms down. Back away if necessary.

- Wear dull colors, preferably muted greens, browns, and grays. Avoid fabrics that squeak, rustle, or snag easily. Choose thorn-proof soles for the desert and comfortable shoes that dry quickly or waterproof boots for other environments.

- Consider creating your own wildlife habitat in your backyard. Plant trees and shrubs to attract birds and butterflies. The Backyard Wildlife Habitat Planner on the site will show you what to plant, depending upon where you live.

To learn more and to correspond with an expert naturalist, log on to [www.eNature.com](http://www.eNature.com). The site is a resource provided by the National Wildlife Federation, the nation's largest conservation group.