



MASS AUDUBON BIRDING CODE OF ETHICS

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their habitats.

(a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.

(b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming—and ***please avoid using bird song apps or taped playback to attract birds.***

- Do not use recordings and other mechanical methods to attract birds—most notably in heavily-birded areas—or to attract any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern in Massachusetts, or that is rare in your local area;
- Keep well back from known nest locations, nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important bird feeding sites. If there is a need for extended observation, photography, or filming in such sensitive areas, try to use a blind or other existing structure to remain inconspicuous, or else take advantage of natural cover.
- Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

(c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird (especially during [Bird-a-thon](#)), evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area. Proceed and allow other observers to view the bird ***only if*** access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities, including those found during [Bird-a-thon](#).

(d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths either where they already exist, or else on your own property; otherwise, keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.

(a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

(b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas.

(c) Observe all local, state, and Mass Audubon COVID guidelines, including wearing a facemask and physical distancing.

(d) Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people, including wearing a facemask and physical distancing. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

(a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean, and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

(b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

(c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

In addition to the obligations spelled out in Section 1 and Section 2 above (as well as rules for events such as [Bird-a-thon](#)), each individual in the group has responsibilities as a Group Member.

(a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

(b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

5. Group Leader Responsibilities

(c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

(d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment, and does not interfere with others using the same area.

(e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.

(f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g. no tape recorders allowed).

(g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.