



**Environment  
for the Americas**  
Conserving Birds by Connecting People

# Leading A Birdwalk

## Overview

Learn to plan and lead a birdwalk.

## Recommended Ages

> Tailor program for your audience.

## Activity Time

Approximately:

- 1.5 hours planning & organizing
- 30 minute walk

## Materials

> To be determined by your plan

## Activity in Action

Send your comments on this activity and pictures of the activity in action to [info@environmentamericas.org](mailto:info@environmentamericas.org).

Leading an engaging birdwalk is an important aspect of increasing the public's interest in birds and creating life long birders who may become citizen scientists helping gather important bird data. Studies have found that birdwatching increases awareness and creates a sense of stewardship. Through years of leading walks staff at EFTA have developed a tried and true recipe for success. The key is planning!

Why plan? Planning is a key way to focus and organize your program. Planning provides a good track record of what you have done for your future reference and for others, such as volunteers or educators that follow you. It is also a good way to tie in key messages about your site and document your work, time, and budget.

The main components of a birdwalk are simple but before you think about those steps you have to ask your self some important questions. Use this activity to lead you through the process.

## Pre-planning Questions

> Who is Your Audience?

If you know your audience, you can tailor your program for their ages and abilities. If you don't know your audience, plan for beginner bird watchers.

**Get Involved!** Discover easy, fun ways to learn and connect with others while spreading bird conservation awareness

Find free educational materials (and much more) at [environmentamericas.org](http://environmentamericas.org)

Have you registered your WMBD event? It's quick, easy, free, and helps measure the success of WMBD each year.

## Pre-planning Tips Continued

- > What is the focus of your program? Take advantage of the resources your site has to offer.  
Can you focus your program on a particular species or group of birds, the variety of nests, the foods birds eat, and the habitat they live in? Examples:
  - “What do birds eat?” with stops at sites that illustrate what birds eat such as drilling by woodpeckers, invertebrates in mud, bugs swarming over the water, etc.
  - “Wetland birds” with stops at sites to see wetland birds that could focus on how they eat, what they eat, and tracks in mud (adaptations for living in a wetland habitat).
- > What are the key messages that you want to incorporate into your program? In other words, when you are finished with the program what do you want people to remember. For example,
  - Rosy Wetlands is a locally important wetland for resident and migratory birds.
  - Rosy Wetlands serves to filter and clean our drinking water and absorb excess water from rain and snow melt.
  - Rosy Wetlands is a vital habitat for the rare rosy coot.
  - Rosy Wetlands needs your help. You can.....

**Tip:** Use the worksheet in this activity to help you plan.

## Main Components of a Birdwalk

1. Welcome
2. Distribution & Explanation of Binoculars and Guides
3. Planned Viewing and Activity Sites
4. Wrap-up

### 1. The Welcome

- > Begin your program with a discussion about what participants know and want to learn.
- > Integrate your key messages.
- > Give a program overview so participants know what to expect.

**Tip:** Don't overwhelm people by trying to identify everything.

## 2. Distribution and Explanation of Binoculars and Field Guides

- > First, determine which field guide you will use and how to introduce it. Options for using field guides include:
  - You keep the field guide and show visitors each bird after it has been seen by everyone.
  - Use a regional/local guide that helps narrow the possible birds.
  - Make copies of the birds that you are most likely to see, laminate, and put on caribiner or ring that can be hung on a belt loop or backpack.
- > Explain your field guide tool to your group before you get started on your walk.
- > Even if there is only 1 beginner in the group, review how to carry and use binoculars. Most birders do not mind a review. Identify an area to practice binoculars.

### **Great Resource:** Check out these tutorials-

- Field Guides 101: <http://birdday.org/education/virtual-field-trips/ideas-for-educators>
- Using Binoculars: <http://birdday.org/education/virtual-field-trips/ideas-for-educators>

## 3. Planned Viewing and Activity Sites

- > Rotate your program between Viewing-Identification-Information-Activities. For most beginning birders, a variety of activities are needed to keep them active and involved in the program.
- > Identify stopping points on your walk that tie into your focus. For a 30 minute walk, plan on 4 stops but be prepared to be flexible if your stops take more or less time.
- > Select a few bird species and focus your teaching on those species. That doesn't mean not to take advantage of a great teachable moment!
- > Weave in your key messages along the walk.
- > Break-up looking at birds with other activities.
- > Plan for about 10 to 15 minutes for each component of your program.
- > Allow for chatter while walking in between stops.

### **Great Resource:** Check out this tutorial

- Leading a Birdwalk: <http://birdday.org/education/virtual-field-trips/ideas-for-educators>

## 3. Wrap-Up and Evaluation

- > Briefly review the program with participants incorporating your key messages.
- > Consider these evaluation ideas for students:
  - Ask each student to share one thing they learned
  - Use an activity where student must use what they learned to participate such as jeopardy, journaling, 20 questions game, art, etc.
- > Consider these evaluation ideas for adult/family participants
  - Ask participants to fill out a short evaluation.

### Sample Evaluation

#### **Birdwalk Evaluation**

1=Needs Improvement 2=Just Right

Was the program clearly presented?            1        2

Was the program well organized?            1        2

How was the length of the program?        too short            just right            too long

Please share with us one thing you learned in the program.

Your comments help us improve. Please write additional comments below.

***THANK YOU!***

## Birdwalk Planning Worksheet

What is your purpose/focus of the birdwalk?

Who is your audience?

What are your key messages?

What do you want people on your walk to learn and/or see?

What materials do you need? Field guide, binoculars, props at your stops?

How will you introduce the field guide and binoculars?

How long is your program?

- Introduction \_\_\_\_\_ minutes: What will you include?
- Birdwalk \_\_\_\_\_ minutes: Where will you stop? What will you see/do? (see next block)
- Wrap-up \_\_\_\_\_ minutes How will you wrap-up?

Birdwalk Stops: Where will you stop? What will you see/do?

How did it go? What will you modify for next time?