

Howard County Young Birder Field Trip Instructions

Introduction: In order to provide an enjoyable, safe day of birding for the leaders and participants, the Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) Young Birder field trips will be led by students with the support of three designated adult leaders. These Young Birder field trips have been well-attended, attracting people with varying levels of birding experience.

Two Student Leaders:

1. **Field Trip Leader** - The Field Trip Leader will pick the location, route and date/time. They will work with their parent to coordinate and advertise the walk through the Howard County Bird Club. On the day of the event, they will explain the plans for the walk and lead the way. After the event, they will make sure that an eBird checklist and field trip report are submitted. *See below for specific pre- and post- field trip planning instructions.*
2. **Checklist Keeper** - This person will assist the Walk Leader by keeping and submitting the eBird checklist

Three Adult Leaders: Pacer, Sweeper and HCBC Representative

1. **Pacer** - The Pacer will review the walk route in advance with the student field trip leader. On the day of the event, the Pacer assists the Field Trip Leader in keeping the group together, making sure the observations are shared and explained to the group. They will also make sure the group gets back to the starting point on time.
2. **Sweeper** - The Sweeper brings up the rear, making sure no-one is left behind and helping the participants in the back see and understand the bird sightings. Often beginning birders are in the back and need help with their binoculars or getting on the birds.
3. **HCBC Representative** - Handles the loaner binoculars, hands out club information, makes sure introductions and logistics are done before the walk starts. Assists parent and student leaders. Steps up in situations where the parent may not be an appropriate "enforcer."

Note: Adult Leaders should exchange phone numbers before the walk starts. They should also be familiar with the route in case of emergency, should the group need to split up. The HCBC rep can serve as the Pacer or Sweeper as well, if they choose.

Other: HCBC Young Birder Working Group Coordinator:

Provides the "Young Birder Field Trip Instructions" to the Student Field Trip Leader. Assists when needed in picking date, location and advertising. Makes sure that someone from the bird club can provide loaner binoculars and can assist on the day of the walk. Helps recruit leaders, if needed. Checks in with planning to make sure everything is in place. If available, this person will serve as the HCBC rep for the event.

Planning Young Birder Field Trip (Student Field Trip Leader):

1. Pick Date and Location: Check HCBC Calendar for scheduling conflicts and consider other possible conflicts (ex: hunting dates)
2. Contact HCBC Young Birder POC (tgtberk@gmail.com) who will serve as a resource and will make sure an HCBC member can support and bring loaner binoculars to the field trips
3. Recruit Leaders (see above)
4. Write field trip announcement and send to Newsletter and Webmaster POCs: (odenata@msn.com and howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org)

Field Trip Rules (During the Trip):

1. **Pre-plan the Route:** The route should be along designated trails and to the extent possible along easy terrain.
2. **Sign-in Sheet:** Have everyone sign-in and check to see they have a responsible adult with them.
3. **Stay on the trails:** One goal of birding is to protect and respect the habitat. Going off trail can damage the habitat and unnecessarily spook birds and other wildlife. Plus, it poses potential safety issues for the participants.
4. **Keep the group together:** The participants should be clustered together so that everyone can learn about what birds are being observed and have a chance to see them. Don't leave anyone behind or let them go ahead of the leader! This is to ensure participant safety as well as a good experience for everyone.
5. **Explain what you are seeing and hearing:** Take time to explain what bird is being observed, how you know what bird it is and perhaps throw in a fun fact.
6. **Don't forget Introductions:** Before you start, take time for introductions, outline your plans for the walk, point out who the co-leaders are and any special information about the site (ex: bathrooms, etc.).
 - Introduce the Student and Adult Leaders and their roles.
 - Go around the circle having participants give their name and school, is this their first bird walk with Howard County?
 - Give important information about the location (ex: bathrooms).
 - Explain how photos will be used, i.e. HCBC Facebook page and website. Check the sign-in sheet to confirm that photo permission has been given. If not, make sure photo-takers know that.
 - Outline your plans for the field trip. What route, how far, what you hope to see.
 - Go over some standard ways birders communicate: how to identify where a bird is (clock), how to notify of a bird flying overhead ("bird up!")
 - Check to see that the loaner binoculars have been passed out.
 - Ask that everyone stay together and not go ahead of the leader.
 - Have fun!
7. **End on Time:** Make every effort to end on time. Remind people that the field trip report will be posted on the HCBC website and the eBird list will be shared with them.

After Young Birder Field Trip (Student Field Trip Leader):

1. Get copy of the eBird checklist and share with Participants.
2. Create and submit a Field Trip Report
 - A. As a trip leader, you can use the completed eBird checklist as a basis for your report to the webmaster. To do this, open the completed eBird checklist. Click on Checklist Tools. When that opens, click on Email Yourself. Forward the email you sent yourself to odenata@msn.com, adding the following as needed.
 - Trip leader(s) name(s). Recorder's name.
 - Date of trip.
 - Location of trip.
 - Details (such as weather conditions).
 - Additional comments.
 - a legible photo of the sign-in sheet.
 - B. Ask participants to upload bird photos to the eBird checklist for the field trip.
 - C. Group Photos (with parent/guardian permission) can be submitted to odenata@msn.com and to our Facebook and Newsletter coordinators at howardbirdclub@mdbirds.org.
 - D. Send courtesy note to participants telling them about the Field Trip report explaining that:
"This field trip report will be posted on the HCBC website:
<https://howardbirds.website/birding/field-trip-reports/>."