

Cumberland Bird Observers Club - Ethical Birding Guidelines



CBOC has adopted the following Ethical Birding Guidelines for leaders, members and visitors with respect to the birdwatching and bird photography of wild birds during our outings and other activities or when birdwatching as an individual. These guidelines are designed to minimise any negative impacts on birds while seeking to enhance the experience of the participants and are based on the BirdLife Australia guidelines.

Bird welfare

The welfare of the birds must always have the highest priority.

- Minimise the impact that you are having on birds and their environment.
- Support the protection of birds and their habitat.
- Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger.
- Do not interfere with the natural behaviour of the birds.
- Avoid handling birds.

General guidelines

Be a responsible birder.

- Keep an appropriate distance from all birds that you observe. Approaching too closely may flush the birds and the rest of the group will not be able to sight the bird.
- Accept good distant view of a bird rather than risk causing stress through approaching too closely or putting them to flight.
- Do not harass birds by repeated disturbance.
- If a bird appears to be stressed or agitated by your presence, move away from the bird immediately.
- Try not to put resting birds to flight.
- Do not deliberately flush birds in order to get a good view of them. Repeatedly flushing birds can mean that they use up vital energy for other activities and can place the bird under stress.
- Adjust your behaviour to the location; walk slowly, speak quietly, do not talk on your mobile phone and drive cautiously.
- Use of the bird calls function from one of the bird Apps can be used for identification purposes by using an earphone with the device so that the call is not audible to the birds.
- With regards to the use of bird call playback, as a general rule, CBOC does not support the use of call playback. It can distress target birds and other species and may disrupt feeding or breeding activity. In particular, playback should not be used in areas that get visited frequently by birders, including hotspots to see rare species. If you feel you need to use call playback against this advice, please use playback for less than 5 minutes per site, for less than 30 seconds at a time, followed by a one-minute break and at volumes below the bird's natural call volume.

Birdwatching in groups

Respect the leader and practise common courtesy.

- The group Leader is responsible for enforcing the Club's birdwatching ethics.
- The group Leader must take into account the cumulative effect that a number of people may have when approaching a bird.
- Adhere to the directions of the group Leader.
- Stay behind the group Leader unless the Leader advises you otherwise.
- Be aware that raising your voice or pointing excitedly may cause the bird to fly away or spoil the sighting for others.
- Consider whether you are blocking other observers and ensure that once you have seen the bird that you move aside so that others can also view it.
- Ensure that you keep with the group so as to not unduly delay the progress of the outing.
- Be helpful to beginners.

Nests and Nesting birds

Disturbing a bird's nest or nesting site can cause stress for the bird and may make them more vulnerable to predators. It may also cause the parent bird(s) to stop incubation duties or to abandon the nest.

- Approach nests carefully.
- Observe from a distance.
- Do not stay nearby for long periods.
- Nesting sites, including foliage near the nesting site, should not be altered or interfered with in any way. Birds choose nesting sites because of the protection offered altering the site may result in the elimination of shade or open the nest to predators.

Additional photography guidelines

Be aware of the impact that photography can have on the birds.

- When taking photographs, use artificial light sparingly, especially for close-ups.
- When taking photographs, where possible, run the camera in silent mode to avoid a shutter noise.

Spotlighting

Spotlighting disturbs birds and animals which may be sleeping or resting and may interfere with the night site of nocturnal species.

- Do not shine spotlights or laser lights directly into bird's eyes.
- Do not spotlight near a nest as this may cause birds to abandon their nest or cause the young to fall.
- Use lower intensity spotlights or red filters.
- Direct the light to the side of the subject to reduce the discomfort to the bird.
- Keep the time that a bird is held in the spotlight to a minimum; i.e. for seconds rather than minutes.

Habitat

It is important to keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

- Where possible, walk or drive on formed roads, tracks and paths.
- Do not alter or remove any vegetation near birds.
- Do not "garden" the area near a bird or any nesting, roosting or displaying sites.

Locations

Respect the law and the rights of others.

- Consider and respect the right of landholders.
- Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- Always leave gates as you found them.
- Do not damage property.
- Follow all rules, laws and regulations governing public areas.
- Do not enter restricted areas.
- Do not litter.

Reporting of bird sightings

Report of bird sightings is useful to bird conservation.

- Report rare bird sightings to conservation authorities and consider the wellbeing of the bird before making this knowledge more publicly available.
- It is recommended that all other group bird observations are recorded in the BirdLife Australia's **Birdata** database.