SELF-GUIDED

BIRDING WALK







As one of the best birding locations in Maryland, Sandy Point State Park has up to 300 bird species that live in or migrate to our park. Pick a trail or just wander the park to get a peek into the lives of the birds that live on the bay!



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<u>Step 1</u>: Pick one of the three locations that seems most interesting to you or has a bird you want to look for.

Step 2: Go to that locations page and familiarize yourself with the route and any points of interest in that area.

<u>Step 3</u>: Collect all your gear and head to the trail.

Step 4: Log your observations in the "Field Notes" section.

(check out the Glossary on page 14 for words to use when describing your sightings!)

BIRDING 101

Key things to remember:

- Timing is Key: Early mornings and late afternoons are often the best times to see birds when they are most active.
- Dress Appropriately: Wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes. Neutral colors help you blend into the environment.
- Use Binoculars: Invest in a good pair of binoculars (8x42 or 10x42 are popular choices) for a closer view. Practice using them before going out.
- Bring Field Guides: A field guide or a bird identification app can help you pin point what you may be seeing/hearing for a more accurate ID.
- Listen Carefully: Many birds can be identified by their calls. Listen to recordings of target birds before heading out into the field to aid in locating them when you havent seen them yet.
- Be Patient and Quiet: Move slowly and minimize noise to avoid startling the birds. Finding a quiet spot and waiting can lead to great sightings.
- Keep a Journal: Document your sightings, noting the date, location, and any interesting behaviors. This helps you track patterns over time. We have included a small log to get you started at the back of the guide!
- Respect Nature: Stay on trails, don't disturb nesting birds, and follow local guidelines to protect wildlife.
- Join a community: Consider joining a local birding group or online community. It's a great way to learn and share experiences.

THINGS TO BRING: Remember to pack out anything you bring in!

- Boots or other comfortable shoes Bird ID Field Guides
- Weather appropriate clothes
- Binoculars (8x42 or 10x42)
- Sighting Log
- Pen

- Bug Spray (Optional)
- Cell Phone
- Camera (Optional)
- Water Bottle

IDENTIFY YOUR BIRD

What does it look like?

Describe the color of the birds feathers and eyes, it's body size, beak shape, and any other visually striking features.

What does it sound like?

Describe the sounds the bird is making. Are they short chirps, longer mating songs, hoots, caws, screeches or squawks?

Where do you see it?

Is it in a tree? In the grass or on a beach? Maybe swimming in a lake or in the ocean?

What is the bird doing?

Is it foraging for food? Building a nest?

Displaying to attract a mate?

HOW TO
USE
BINOCULARS

To set up and use binoculars, first adjust the central focus wheel while looking at a distant object to achieve a sharp image. Next, adjust the right eyepiece for your vision if necessary, using the diopter setting. Finally, hold the binoculars steady at eye level and use the focus wheel to refine your view as needed.



BLUE CRAB

TRAIL

Description:

Gravel trail connecting the Smallcraft parking area and East Beach. The full loop will take you down the trail through a wooded area alongside a wetland marsh. Following the path over a small foot bridge and around the small pond, you can then walk back along the beach and between the rock jetty and the pond making your way towards the parking lots and either continuing along the beach or cutting through the forested picnic area and back to the entrance.

Distance: 0.7 miles **Time to complete**: 25 mins

Birds to look for here



The **Eastern Bluebird** is a vibrant songbird with striking blue feathers and a warm orange-brown breast, found in open fields and gardens across North America. Its sweet, melodic song makes it a cherished symbol of spring and renewal.



The Mourning Dove is a medium-sized bird with a light brown-gray body, subtle black spots, and a distinctive cooing call. Common across North America, it is easily recognized by its graceful flight and is often seen perched on power lines.



The <u>Song Sparrow</u> is a small, adaptable bird with streaked brown and white plumage, a rounded body, and a bold dark spot on its chest. Known for its rich, melodic song, this social bird is commonly found in various habitats across North America, foraging for seeds and insects.



The <u>Carolina Wren</u> is a small, lively bird with warm brown plumage and a distinctive white eyebrow stripe, often found in dense underbrush and gardens. Known for its cheerful, bubbling song and bold personality, it forages for insects and seeds, making it a delightful presence in the southeastern United States.



The <u>Red-Winged Blackbird</u> is an elegant songbird with glossy black feathers and bright red and yellow markings on its shoulders. Found in wetlands across North America, its sharp, melodic call is a familiar sound in marshes and meadows.



SYMBI TRAIL

Description:

Gravel trail near the park entrance across from the East Beach sign. The trees shade the majority of the path except for a small section of boardwalk taking you out of the trees for a moment to walk amongst the phragmites. Walking out to the Pond Overlook gives a nice view across Mezick pond.

Distance: 1.2 Miles **Time to complete**: 45-50 Minutes

Birds to look for here:



The Red-bellied Woodpecker is a medium-sized bird with a black-and-white striped back, a red cap, and a subtle reddish wash on its belly, commonly found in woodlands and suburban areas. Known for its loud calls and drumming, it forages for insects and seeds by drilling into trees, making it a lively presence in North America.



The <u>Tufted Titmouse</u> is a small, lively songbird with a gray body, large black eyes, and a charming crest, commonly found in deciduous forests and suburban areas. Known for its sweet calls and curious nature, it forages for seeds, berries, and insects, making it a delightful presence at bird feeders and in gardens.



The **Gray Catbird** is a medium-sized songbird with slate-gray plumage and a distinctive mewing call, often found in dense shrubs and thickets. Known for its mimicry and curious demeanor, it is commonly seen in gardens and woodlands across North America during the breeding season.



The **Northern Cardinal** is a songbird known for the male's vibrant red plumage and distinctive black mask, while females display warm brown hues with reddish tinges. Common in gardens and woodlands, they are easily recognized by their melodious whistles and prominent perches in trees or shrubs.



The American Crow is a large, intelligent bird with glossy black feathers and a distinctive caw, commonly found foraging in diverse habitats for insects, seeds, and carrion. Highly social and adaptable, they exhibit problem-solving skills and complex behaviors, often forming large communal roosts.



South

Beach

Distance: 0.7 Miles **Time to complete**: 35-40 Minutes

Description:

Our main beach area with views of the Bay Bridge and the Sandy Point Shoal Lighthouse with access to rock jetty by the entrance to Mezick Pond. Starting at The Point head west towards the Jetty. The path then cuts through a small, wooded area before intersecting with the gravel path in the picnic area. The last stop is the Marina lot where, depending on the time of year, you may spot Osprey making their nest, flocks of different Gulls, or even our resident Canadian Geese.

Birds to look for here:



The Ring-billed Gull is a medium-sized gull known for the black ring around its yellow bill. Often found in diverse habitats from coastal areas to inland parks, they are adaptable and agile, frequently seen scavenging for food in large flocks.



The <u>Least Sandpiper</u> is a small, migratory shorebird with delicate brownish plumage that forages in flocks along mudflats and sandy beaches for tiny invertebrates. It is known for its slender bill, short legs, and energetic scurrying behavior.



The **Great Blue Heron** is a tall, majestic wading bird known for its long neck, large wingspan, and striking blue-gray plumage. Often found stalking wetlands and shorelines, it hunts for fish and frogs with its sharp bill, embodying tranquility with its graceful flight and poised demeanor.



The <u>Double-crested Cormorant</u> is a large black waterbird known for its long neck, distinctive double crests during breeding, and bright blue eyes. Agile swimmers, they dive for fish and often perch with their wings spread wide to dry their feathers.

FIELD NOTES

What did you see?	Where did you see it?	When did you see it?	What was it doing?

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GLOSSARY

A-F

- <u>Barred</u>: Marked with horizontal or vertical stripes or bands, often darker than the base color. Common in species like Barred Owls and some hawks.
- Bill: The hard, external part of a bird's mouth, used for feeding, grooming, and manipulating objects. Also known as a beak.
- <u>Cap:</u> A distinct patch of color on the top of a bird's head, often used to help identify species.
- <u>Caw:</u> A loud, harsh vocalization typically made by crows and ravens. It is often used as a form of communication or warning.
- <u>Chick:</u> A young bird, especially one newly hatched and still dependent on its parents.
- Chirp: A short, sharp sound made by small birds, usually for communication or to express contentment.
- <u>Crest:</u> A tuft or group of feathers on top of a bird's head that can often be raised or lowered. It's used for display and communication.
- <u>Crested:</u> Describes a bird with a noticeable crest of feathers on its head, such as a Crested Tit or a Cockatoo.
- Fledgling: A young bird that has recently grown feathers and is learning to fly but may still rely on its parents for food.

F-R

- Flock: A group of birds that gather and move together, often for migration, feeding, or roosting.
- Hoot: A deep, soft call made by owls, commonly associated with territorial behavior or attracting mates.
- Migration: The seasonal movement of birds from one region to another, often between breeding and wintering grounds.
- Mottled: Having an irregular pattern of spots, streaks, or patches of color, often helping with camouflage.
- Nestling: A baby bird that is still in the nest and entirely dependent on parental care, often without developed feathers.
- Perch: A place where birds rest or sit, such as a branch or a man-made rod. Also used as a verb meaning to land or rest on something.
- <u>Plumage:</u> The layer of feathers covering a bird's body, often used to describe color patterns or seasonal changes in feather appearance.
- Preen: The act of a bird grooming its feathers with its bill to keep them in good condition and waterproof.
- Roost: A place where birds settle or congregate to rest, especially at night. Birds may roost alone or in groups.

R-Z

- <u>Ruffled:</u> Describes feathers that are fluffed up or out of place, often due to preening, agitation, or cold weather.
- <u>Rufous:</u> A reddish-brown color found in the plumage of many birds, such as the Rufous Hummingbird.
- <u>Screech:</u> A high-pitched, piercing call often made by birds like owls or parrots. It can indicate alarm or communication.
- Song: A series of musical notes or calls produced by birds, usually by males to attract mates or defend territory.
- Spotted: Having small dots or patches of color on the feathers, helpful in identifying certain bird species.
- <u>Squawk</u>: A loud, harsh cry made by some birds when alarmed, irritated, or communicating aggressively.
- Talon: A bird's claw, especially in predatory birds like eagles and hawks, used for catching and holding prey.
- Tweet: A short, high-pitched sound made by small birds. The term is also used informally to describe general bird vocalizations.

- The Merlin_app from Cornell Labs is great for IDing birds based off their calls.
- The website **eBird.org** is a great reference tool and good for keeping a log of bird sightings.
- The Seek app from **iNaturalist** is good for IDing birds from photos taken with your cellphone camera or photos uploaded to the app.

EXTRAS/RESOURCES

Looking to dive deeper into the bird watching hobby?

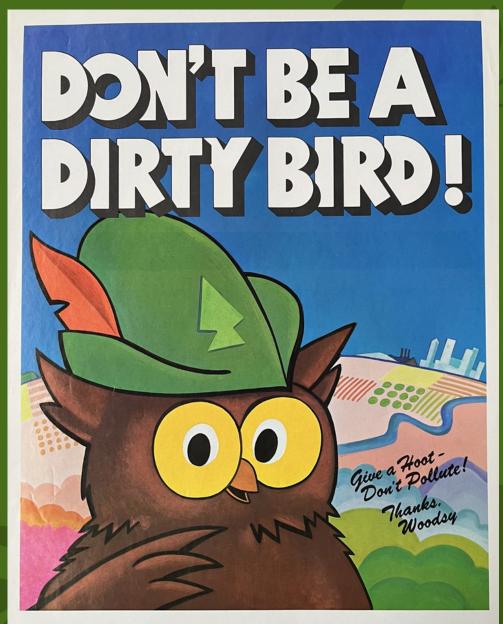
Check out the references listed above for help IDing birds or join one of the local birding clubs listed below to meet like-minded people that share your passion for birds and the spaces they inhabit.

- Anne Arundel Bird Club
- Maryland Ornithological Society (15 chapters across the state-look for one closest to you!)
- Central Maryland Audubon Society
- American Birding Association
- Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership









WOODSY OWL SAYS:

GIVE A HOOT! DON'T POLLUTE.

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