



THE BIRD-WATCHER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Welfare of Birds must come first

Whether your particular interest is photography, ringing, sound-recording, scientific study or just birdwatching, remember that the welfare of birds must always come first.

2. Habitat protection

A bird's habitat is vital to its survival and therefore we must ensure that our activities do not cause damage.

3. Keep disturbance to a minimum

Birds' tolerance of disturbance varies between species and seasons. Therefore, it is safer to keep all disturbance to a minimum. No birds should be disturbed from the nest in case the opportunities for predators to take eggs or young are increased. In very cold weather, disturbance to birds may cause them to use vital energy at a time when food is difficult to find. Wildfowling impose bans during cold weather: birdwatchers should exercise similar discretion.

4. Rare breeding birds

If you discover a rare breeding bird and feel that protection is necessary, inform the appropriate RSPB Regional Officer, or the Species Protection Department at the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL. Otherwise, it is best in almost all circumstances to keep the record strictly secret to avoid disturbance by other birdwatchers and attacks by egg collectors. Never visit known sites of rare breeding birds unless they are adequately protected. Even your presence may give away the site to others and cause so many other visitors that the birds may fail to breed successfully. Disturbance at or near the nest of species listed on SCHEDULE 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 is a criminal offence.

5. Rare migrants

Rare migrants or vagrants must not be harassed. If you discover one, consider the circumstances carefully before telling anyone. Will an influx of birdwatchers disturb the bird or others in the area? Will the habitat be damaged? Will problems be caused with the landowner?

6. The Law

The bird protection laws, as now embodied in the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, are the result of hard campaigning by previous generations of birdwatchers. As birdwatchers we must abide by them at all times and not allow them to fall into disrepute.

7. Respect the rights of landowners

The wishes of landowners and occupiers of land must be respected. Do not enter land without permission. Comply with permit schemes. If you are leading a group, give advance notice of the visit, even if a formal permit scheme is not in operation. Always obey the Country Code.

8. Keeping records

Much of today's knowledge about birds is the result of meticulous record-keeping by our predecessors. Make sure you add to tomorrow's knowledge by sending records to your county Bird Recorder.

9. Birdwatching abroad

Behave abroad as you would at home. This code should be firmly adhered to when abroad (whatever the local laws). Well-behaved birdwatchers can be important ambassadors for bird protection.

As published by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Please note that, it is a condition of membership of the DOS that you comply with this Code.
