How to Start Birdwatching From a Window With a Field Notebo

Hobbies and Crafts · about 18 minutes · 2026-11-12

A practical 32-step guide to beginning birdwatching at home: set up one comfortable watching spot, learn a handful of regular visitors, keep a field notebook that improves, add feed and water responsibly, and turn short observations into a lasting habit.

Set Up One Comfortable Watching Spot

1. **Pick the window with a view you can observe seated**
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2. **Note what is in the view: branches, roof, fence or sky**
   Note what is in the view: branches, roof, fence or sky.
3. **Put the notebook, pencil and binoculars in one place**
   Put the notebook, pencil and binoculars in one place.
4. **Clean the glass and check your reflection**
   Clean the glass and check your reflection.
5. **Sit still for two minutes before writing anything**
   Sit still for two minutes before writing anything.
6. **Choose a regular time, not necessarily an early one**
   Choose a regular time, not necessarily an early one.

Learn a Handful of Regular Visitors

7. **Describe before you try to name anything**
   Describe before you try to name anything.
8. **Notice behaviour as much as appearance**
   Notice behaviour as much as appearance.
9. **Keep an 'unidentified' list without embarrassment**
   Keep an 'unidentified' list without embarrassment.
10. **Get one field guide or one reputable bird site for your region**
    Get one field guide or one reputable bird site for your region.
11. **Compare your description against two or three likely matches**
    Compare your description against two or three likely matches.
12. **Write 'probably' when you are not sure**
    Write 'probably' when you are not sure.

Keep a Field Notebook That Improves

13. **Write date, start time and how long you watched**
    Write date, start time and how long you watched.
14. **Note the weather in plain words**
    Note the weather in plain words.

15. **Record where in the view each visitor appeared**

    Record where in the view each visitor appeared.

16. **Write one line about what each bird was doing**

    Write one line about what each bird was doing.

17. **Make a quick sketch of one detail per session**

    Make a quick sketch of one detail per session.

18. **Add a photograph only when it helps**

    Add a photograph only when it helps.

19. **End with one sentence on what was different**

    End with one sentence on what was different.

Add Feed, Water and Shelter Responsibly

20. **Check local guidance before putting out food**

    Check local guidance before putting out food.

21. **Start with one simple feeder or a plain water dish**

    Start with one simple feeder or a plain water dish.

22. **Place it where you can see it and reach it**

    Place it where you can see it and reach it.

23. **Clean feeders and dishes as the guidance recommends**

    Clean feeders and dishes as the guidance recommends.

24. **Remove uneaten food rather than adding on top**

    Remove uneaten food rather than adding on top.

25. **Watch for problems and stop if something seems wrong**

    Watch for problems and stop if something seems wrong.

26. **Record what you put out and when**

    Record what you put out and when.

Turn Short Sessions Into a Habit

27. **Once a week, read the last seven entries**

    Once a week, read the last seven entries.

28. **Make a short list of regulars you can recognise**

    Make a short list of regulars you can recognise.

29. **Note one question for the next week**

    Note one question for the next week.

30. **Let a quiet session count as a session**

    Let a quiet session count as a session.

31. **Share one observation with a local group or a friend**

    Share one observation with a local group or a friend.

32. **Take the notebook outside when you are ready**

    Take the notebook outside when you are ready.

Sources

1. National Audubon Society — bird guides and conservation
   https://www.audubon.org/
2. eBird — community bird observation records
   https://ebird.org/
3. RSPB — UK bird and wildlife guidance
   https://www.rspb.org.uk/
4. British Trust for Ornithology — bird recording
   https://www.bto.org/
5. Royal Horticultural Society — gardening advice
   https://www.rhs.org.uk/
6. TED — talks and ideas
   https://www.ted.com/
7. NASA — official site
   https://www.nasa.gov/

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