

Birding Etiquette

The issue of birding etiquette, especially the issue of using bird song playback, is a hot topic in birding circles. The ABC Board met, and based on our discussion and three primary sources noted below, agreed on the following:

When you are birding, photographing or filming birds, the ABC urges you to respect wildlife, nature, your fellow humans and their property. You can do this by following these guidelines:

- Exercise restraint during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming to avoid stressing birds.
- Limit the use of bird song recordings and other methods of attracting birds. Do not use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting species that are threatened, endangered, or rare.
- Keep well back from nests, nesting colonies and known roosting areas.
- Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.
- Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas.
- Practice common courtesy; it will generate goodwill.
- Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, consider the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, other people and their property. Proceed only if access is reasonable, disturbance minimized, and with the permission of private landowners.

On this topic, a noted ornithologist David Sibley writes: "Most of the debate about (bird song) playback has focused on a polarizing question: Is (the use of bird song) playback ethical, or not? With no concrete evidence supporting either side it remains unresolved. In this post I assume that it will be used, and that *it is just one of many birding activities that should be practiced with sensitivity.*"

The ABC encourages you to read the full article, as well as the Virginia Society of Ornithology's "Principles of Birding Ethics" and the American Birding Association's "Code of Birding Ethics". Here are those links:

<http://www.sibleyguides.com/2011/04/the-proper-use-of-playback-in-birding/>

<http://www.virginiabirds.org/publications/birding-ethics/>

<http://listing.aba.org/ethics/>

The ABC Board of Directors