



RESOURCES TO PREPARE FOR MASTER BIRDER CLASS

The Master Birder program is intensive, so a certain level of familiarity with the birds of our state is required. Most applicants will be able to recognize 80 – 100 Washington birds by sight (and identify most of the rest to family) and at least 20 by song. Not quite there yet? Or, already accepted into Master Birder but would like to sharpen your skills before class begins? Check out “Tips from Master Birder Graduates.” Bird in the field as much as you can, and take advantage of Seattle Audubon field trips. And be very familiar with reference tools.

Only one text is required for the class (*The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior*) but using multiple resources to complete homework is needed and expected. Excellent resources are listed below. You don’t need to have all of these, but you should be aware of many resources and know where to search for specific information. Dennis Paulson advises serious birders to be familiar with all of these resources and have access to many.

Most resources below are available at Seattle Audubon member prices from the Nature Shop. Some are available from public libraries or can be found as used copies for low cost, or accessed online at no cost.

Of course, a good field guide is essential.

- Recommended: *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Sibley (2000 or 2014) North American edition, also available as an app for mobile devices; smaller Western version is handy in the field if you don’t have app.

Other good options that cover all of Washington include:

- *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America* by Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer, 7th ed. (2017) or an earlier edition.
- *Birds of the Pacific Northwest* by John Shewey and Tim Blount (2017)
- *Birds of the Pacific Northwest: A Photographic Guide* by Tom Aversa, R. Cannings and Hal Opperman (2016)
- *iBird* digital field guide with photos – learn more at iBird.com

For more info and opinions, google “the best birding apps and field guides”

Beyond visual ID, natural-history resources are also essential.

- ***The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* by David Sibley (2001) is the required text for the class.**
- *Birdweb*, Seattle Audubon’s free online guide to the birds and habitat of our state, provides ID and natural-history accounts for every species that regularly occurs in Washington. www.birdweb.org
- *Birds of North America Online* is the most comprehensive source for accounts of nearly every bird species in North America. You can sample some species accounts for free, or subscribe. Seattle residents can access for free (at www.spl.org, select “articles & research” and then the database section) birdsna.org

Other good natural-history references include:

- *Pete Dunne’s Essential Field Guide Companion* (2006)
- *Lives of North American Birds* by Kenn Kaufman (2001)
- *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America* by Jonathan Alderfer (1st ed. 2005, 2nd ed. 2014)
- *The Birder’s Handbook: A Guide to the Natural History of No. American Birds* Paul R. Ehrlich et. al. (1988)

Learn or review bird topography and birding basics before beginning class.

- *Sibley Birding Basics* by David Sibley (2002). Also available as an ebook from Seattle Public Library; very small and highly useful. Aspects of the book, such as the parts of birds, are referenced in class and in tests.

Use at least one resource for learning or reviewing bird songs.

We'll focus on a few species each week in class, from the list of "108 Species for BBE Quizzes and Tests."

- *Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (5 CD set) G. Keller & G. Vyn, Cornell Lab of Ornithology (2009) is a comprehensive library of regionally specific bird songs and calls.
- *Birdsongs of the Pacific Northwest* (small book with 1 CD, 165 songs) by Stephen R. Whitney et. al. (2006)
- *Larkwire* – online tool for learning bird songs (not free, but you can sample for free) www.larkwire.com
Useful app for iOS devices. Enables you to quiz yourself.
- *The Backyard Birdsong Guide (Western): A Guide to Listening* (book & recordings) Donald Kroodsma (2008)
- *Earbirding.com* - free website from Nathan Pieplow, author of Peterson series book about birding by ear.
- *Xeno-canto.org* - free website/sound-library where anyone can share recordings.
- Need help understanding sonograms ("pictures" of sounds)? http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=49

Other compilations of bird sounds:

- *Bird Songs of the Pacific Northwest*, Stewart, Whitney & Hart (2006). Largely recorded in Washington.
- *Western Birding by Ear: Guide to Bird Song Identification* (Peterson Field Guides) Richard K. Walton & Robert W. Lawson. 3 cassettes or CDs. Teaches techniques to remember and differentiate between songs.
- birdJam – Sound files of the Stokes Field Guide to Bird Song (Western ed.) in mp3 format, organized into playlists for easy access and playback in field www.birdjam.com

Other resources to be aware of, if you aren't already –

- *A Birder's Guide to Washington* 2nd ed. 2015, edited by Jane Hadley (first ed. Hal Opperman). Covers where to bird; bar graphs and summaries show when and where each species occurs in Washington; published by the Washington Ornithological Society, online version free at www.wabirdguide.org
- *Birds of the Puget Sound Region: Coast to Cascades* by Dennis Paulson et. al. (2016)
- *Birds of Washington State* by Brian H. Bell (2006)
- *Birds of WA: Status & Distribution* by Wahl, Tweit & Mlodinow (2005). In-depth. Out of print, but findable.
- *eBird* – free citizen-science website to report and access info about bird distribution. Can help you locate a target species, check what species are likely or rare, and track your sightings. www.eBird.org
- *Birder's Dashboard* - free website, uses data from eBird, makes it very easy to find recent reports for a particular species or check what has recently been seen at a particular eBird hotspot. Created by former Seattle Audubon president Randy Robinson. <http://birdingwashington.info/dashboard/>
- *Tweeters* – free email forum to exchange info, observations and opinions about WA bird-related topics. You can opt to receive every email as it is sent, or get a single daily batch in "digest" mode, or read recent posts at <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/WA> Created by Dan Victor, grad of the first MB class (1988).
- *Washington Ornithological Society* offers programs, field trips, annual conference, newsletter, checklist of Washington birds, summaries of rare sightings and other resources. www.wos.org
- *Shorebirds of the Pacific Northwest* and *Shorebirds of North America* by Dennis Paulson. Out-of-print but loaner copies are available to Master Birder participants from Seattle Audubon.
- *Raptor ID* digital guide – including photos, video and text; app created by Hawkwatch International
- *Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding* (2011) or *A Peterson Field Guide to Advanced Birding* (1999) by Kenn Kaufman - covers classic ID challenges

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