

Jumpstart your Bird Life List

A quick guide to starting your life list and building excitement to add to your list



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THE BIRDS

First off, what IS a life list?

A life list is a record of the different birds you've seen and identified.

When you've seen a new bird for the first time, they're called a "*lifer*."

Keeping a life list is so beneficial because you can not only track the birds you've spotted, but it's also a great conversation topic. If you end up really getting into birdwatching, you'll be ahead of the game by already having a log of all the birds you've seen, and those you desire to see.

Where to Record your Life List

Your life list can be recorded in a number of places, including:

- ◆ A physical journal book
- ◆ An app, such as eBird or Merlin Bird ID
- ◆ Software, such as Birder's Diary

Which one you select ultimately depends on your personal preferences. If you want to get off your phone a bit while birding, opt for a physical journal. It doesn't hurt to have a Rite-in-the-Rain notebook with you in the field, anyway, to compile notes of what you see as you're out and about birding.

What to Record in your Life List

Note that you'll want to record the following information:

- ◆ Species Common Name and Scientific Name
- ◆ Where you saw the bird
- ◆ When you saw the bird
- ◆ Information about the five keys to bird ID, such as color and pattern, behavior, and other sounds, if any
- ◆ Any of birds they were with at the time

What to Record in your Life List (continued)

Of course, you can simply log species name and date, and be done with it. However, logging this other information will integrate you more into the bird's world and help you become a better birder.

It's also good to get into the habit of writing both Common and Scientific Name down, particularly if you plan to travel to other countries or regions with different birds.

In Europe, a Common Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) is actually not in the blackbird family at all – rather, it's in the thrush family.

What Actually Counts as a Life Bird

There are some general rules that birding organizations follow when deciding what actually counts as a life bird. Only check off that you've seen that bird species if the following points apply:

- ◆ The bird is identified positively by sight or sound
- ◆ The bird is wild, and is not captive or domesticated
- ◆ The bird is alive
- ◆ The bird is ethically observed, and no laws or regulations were broken to see or hear the bird

Getting Started

First, start in your backyard or locally. This helps to avoid overwhelm and acquaint you with the birds you're likely to see most often (and probably those you already recognize!).

Meet up with other birders - CONNECT with others in the bird world. Engaging with others who have a similar hobby helps immensely in your confidence and brings loads of fun into the mix. And, as always, HAVE FUN!