

Bill's Top Twelve Tips

- 1. Go birding with groups led by an experienced birder**
 - he will know what species to expect
 - he'll know the key field marks and help you hone in on them
 - he'll know the bird songs and help you learn them
 - and he'll have a spotting scope
- 2. Buy the best optics you can comfortably afford**
 - many good brands: Nikon, Swarovski, Swift, Leica, Zeiss
 - avoid compact, zoom and high power binoculars
 - magnification 7 to 10x, objective lens 30 to 50 mm
 - mid range and my choice is 8.5x42
 - try binoculars first, especially if you wear glasses
 - when it comes time to purchase a spotting scope, you'll know
- 3. Purchase at least one good field guide**
 - Sibley, Kaufman, National Geographic, Peterson
 - better yet, with 2 different field guides, you can cross check what they say
 - some come with an Eastern edition which narrows options
- 4. Learn the common resident birds "like the back of your hand"**
 - when new species arrive during migration, you'll know you have somebody new
 - learn the songs of the most common birds
- 5. Use and trust published literature, such as**
 - range maps, birds do get out of their normal ranges, BUT this is rare
 - check-list abundance is quite useful and accurate
 - if the check list says your ID is a rare species, you may wish to recheck your ID
- 6. Bird year round**
 - 85% of DE birds are migrants, which means only 15% do NOT migrate
 - when possible spend extra time birding during migration, which is:
 - spring: April-May, with peak the first 2 weeks in May
 - fall: Sept-October-November, with peak the last 2 weeks of Sept
- 7. Learn habitat preferences of the birds you seek**
 - most warblers don't hang out on the beaches
 - most shorebirds don't hang out in the woods
 - "waders" do like to wade in shallow water impoundments
- 8. If you can, provide food, water, plantings and bird houses for birds in your yard**
 - observing birds in your yard helps hone expertise
 - it can also provide a great deal of pleasure
 - and it can help the birds as well
- 9. Use the Internet as a resource**
 - SussexBirdClub.com
 - go to SBC Links page for lots of additional information on the internet
 - consider DE-Birds to be notified of rare and noteworthy bird sightings
 - Google a bird's name, or Google-Image a bird's picture
 - also use Google maps to get details on a possible birding location

10. Visit the top nearby birding locations as often as you can

- Prime Hook NWR
- Cape Henlopen State Park
- Mispillion, DuPont Nature Center (especially May)
- Trap Pond State Park
- Bombay Hook NWR
- Indian River Inlet (especially winter)
- Cape May/Lewes Ferry

11. Travel and Bird

- new habitat means new birds
- definitely research where you plan to travel
- there are many very nice lodges which cater to birders as well as the general public

12. Enjoy what you see!

- yes, Cardinals are beautiful, as is the Scarlet Tanager
- common birds sometimes do uncommon things
- and toucans are really cool as well
- enjoying the birds is why you go birding

Bill Fintel