

Bird Study

Merit Badge Workbook

Merit badges are earned by doing: reading the pamphlet, practicing the skills, and showing your counselor what you have learned.
This workbook gives you a place to organize your notes and track your progress along the way.
Merit badge counselors may not require the use of this or any similar workbook.
You still must satisfy your counselor that you can demonstrate each skill and have learned the information.
Use the space under each requirement to note what you have done and what you want to talk about, not to write out full answers.
When a requirement says discuss, show, tell, explain, or demonstrate, that is what you must do.
No one may add to or subtract from the official requirements found on scouting.org (Guide to Advancement 7.0.4.8).
Scouting America last updated this badge's requirements page on December 31, 2025.
Requirements change from time to time. Double-check scouting.org before you start.

Scout's name: _____ Unit: _____ Date started: _____

Counselor's name: _____ Phone no.: _____ Email: _____

Links marked "Scouting America resources" are the ones Scouting America shares on its official badge page.
This workbook is unofficial and not endorsed by Scouting America.

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1. Explain the need for bird study and why birds are useful indicators of the quality of the environment. Describe how birds are part of the ecosystem.

Scouting America resources: Why Are Birds Important (video) · Why Birds Matter (video)

Why we study birds, and why they are useful indicators of the quality of the environment

How birds are part of the ecosystem

Requirement 1 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

2. Show that you are familiar with the terms used to describe birds by doing the following:

(a) Sketch or trace a perched bird and then label 15 different parts of the bird.

Scouting America resources: How to Draw and Label a Bird (video)

My perched bird with 15 parts labeled (draw or trace here, or attach)

(b) Sketch or trace an extended wing and label six types of wing feathers.

Scouting America resources: Bird Wing Anatomy - Underside (video) · Bird Wing Anatomy - 2 (video)

My extended wing with six types of wing feathers labeled (draw or trace here, or attach)

Requirement 2 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

3. Demonstrate that you know how to properly use and care for binoculars, a spotting scope, or a monocular.

(a) Explain what the specification numbers mean on binoculars, a spotting scope, or a monocular.

Scouting America resources: Selecting Your First Binoculars for Birdwatching - the 5 Things You Need to Know (video)

Device I used _____ Its specification numbers _____

What the specification numbers mean

(b) Show how to adjust the eyepiece and how to focus for proper viewing.

Scouting America resources: How To Get Crystal Clear Focus With Your Binoculars (video)
How To Use Binoculars For Bird Watching - A Beginners Guide! (video)

Date I showed my counselor _____ Device _____

My steps for adjusting the eyepiece and focusing

(c) Show how to properly care for and clean the lenses.

Scouting America resources: How to Clean Your Binoculars (video)

Date I showed my counselor _____

How I care for and clean the lenses

(d) Describe when and where each type of viewing device would be most effective.

Scouting America resources: What's the Difference-Spotting Scope vs Binoculars for Birdwatching (website)

When and where each device works best

Viewing device	When it is most effective	Where it is most effective
Binoculars		
Spotting scope		
Monocular		

Requirement 3 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

4. Demonstrate that you know how to use a bird field guide. Show your counselor that you are able to understand a range map by locating in the book and pointing out the wintering range, the breeding range, and/or the year-round range of one species of each of the following types of birds:

Scouting America resources: How to Use a Field Guide (video) · Merlin Bird ID (app)

Field guide I used _____ Date _____

(a) Seabird

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

(b) Plover

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

(c) Falcon or hawk

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

(d) Warbler or vireo

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

(e) Heron or egret

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

(f) Sparrow

Species _____ Ranges I pointed out _____

Requirement 4 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

5. Observe and be able to identify 20 species of wild birds. Prepare a field notebook, making a separate entry for each species, and record the following information from your field observations and other references.

Scouting America resources: Bird Identification Mastery (video) · Keeping a Field Notebook (video)
How To Use the Merlin Bird ID App (app)

(a) Note the date and time.

(b) Note the location and habitat.

(c) Describe the bird's main feeding habitat and list two types of food that the bird is likely to eat.

(d) Note whether the bird is a migrant or a summer, winter, or year-round resident of your area.

My field notebook: species 1 to 10

#	Species	Date and time	Location and habitat	Main feeding habitat and two foods it eats	Migrant or summer, winter, or year-round resident
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

My field notebook: species 11 to 20

#	Species	Date and time	Location and habitat	Main feeding habitat and two foods it eats	Migrant or summer, winter, or year-round resident
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					

My field notebook: species 11 to 20 (continued)

#	Species	Date and time	Location and habitat	Main feeding habitat and two foods it eats	Migrant or summer, winter, or year-round resident
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

Requirement 5 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

6. Describe to your counselor how certain orders of birds are uniquely adapted to a specific habitat. In your description, include characteristics such as the size and shape of the following:

(a) Beak

Scouting America resources: A Beginner's Guide to Bird Beaks (video)
Bird Feeding Adaptations: How Beaks Are Adapted to What Birds Eat (video)

(b) Body

Scouting America resources: Adaptations in Birds - What Makes a Bird Suitable to Fly (video)
Bird Adaptations for Flight Explained (video)

(c) Leg and foot

Scouting America resources: AMAZING Bird Feet! (video)

(d) Feathers/plumage.

Scouting America resources: Discover the Hidden Genious of Bird Feathers (video)
Why Peacocks Have the MOST STUNNING Feathers in Nature? (video)
How Penguin Feathers Are Perfect Adaptations for Icy Water (video)

How orders of birds are adapted to their habitats

Characteristic	Order of birds and its habitat	Size and shape, and how it suits the habitat
Beak		
Body		
Leg and foot		
Feathers/plumage		

Requirement 6 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

7. Explain the function of a bird's song. Be able to identify five of the 20 species in your field notebook by song or call alone. Explain the difference between songs and calls. For each of these five species, enter a description of the song or call, and note the behavior of the bird making the sound. Note why you think the bird was making the call or song that you heard.

Scouting America resources: 25 Iconic Bird Sounds (video)
Two Types of Communication Between Birds: Understanding Bird Language Songs and Calls (video)

The function of a bird's song

The difference between songs and calls

Five species I can identify by song or call alone

Species	Description of the song or call	Behavior of the bird making the sound	Why I think it was singing or calling

Requirement 7 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

8. Do ONE of the following:

☐ **(a)** Go on a field trip with a local club or with others who are knowledgeable about birds in your area.

Date _____ Where _____ Club or group _____

(1) Keep a list or fill out a checklist of all the birds your group observed during the field trip.

Birds our group observed (or attach your checklist)

Species	Number seen	Species	Number seen

Birds our group observed (or attach your checklist) (continued)

Species	Number seen	Species	Number seen

(2) Tell your counselor which birds your group saw and why some species were common and some were present in small numbers.

Birds we saw, and why some were common and some were few

(3) Tell your counselor what makes the area you visited good for finding birds.

What makes the area good for finding birds

☐ **(b)** By using a public library, the internet, or contacting the National Audubon Society, find the name and location of the Christmas Bird Count nearest your home and obtain the results of a recent count.

Scouting America resources: Christmas Bird Count (video)
What Is the Christmas Bird Count? Everything You Need to Know (video)

Nearest Christmas Bird Count _____ Location _____

Year of the count _____ Where I got the results _____

(1) Explain what kinds of information are collected during the annual event.

Kinds of information collected

(2) Tell your counselor which species are most common, and explain why these birds are abundant.

Most common species, and why they are abundant

(3) Tell your counselor which species are uncommon, and explain why these were present in small numbers. If the number of birds of these species is decreasing, explain why, and what, if anything, could be done to reverse their decline.

Uncommon species, why they were few, and how any decline could be reversed

☐ **(c)** Participate in a bird banding program with an approved federal or state agency, university researcher, bird observatory, or certified private individual.

Scouting America resources: Introduction to Bird Banding (video)

Date _____ Banding program and who runs it _____

(1) Explain who is able to band birds and why.

Who can band birds, and why

(2) Explain why birds get banded.

Why birds get banded

(3) Explain what kinds of birds get banded.

Kinds of birds that get banded

(4) Tell how the birds were captured, the number of bird species recorded during your visit, and your role in the program.

How birds were captured _____ Number of bird species recorded _____

My role in the program

Requirement 8 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

9. Do ONE of the following. For the item you choose, describe what birds you hope to attract, and why. Describe the necessary maintenance required with the item that you choose.

For the item I choose: birds I hope to attract, and why

Maintenance the item needs

☐ **(a)** Build a bird feeder and put it in an appropriate place in your yard or another location.

Scouting America resources: DIY How to Make Bird Feeder for $2 EASY 3 Hanging Styles Birds LOVE (video)
Easy D.I.Y Bird Feeder - How to Attract Birds to Your Garden (video)

Date built _____ Where I put it _____

☐ **(b)** Build a birdbath and put it in an appropriate place.

Scouting America resources: How to Pick (or Build) the Right Bird Bath for Your Garden (video)
Easy DIY Bird Baths for Your Garden (video)

Date built _____ Where I put it _____

☐ **(c)** Build a backyard sanctuary for birds by planting trees and shrubs for food and cover.

Scouting America resources: How to Create a Bird Friendly Backyard (video)
What Happens When You Create a Bird Sanctuary in Your Backyard? (video)
Attract Backyard Birds With an Ecosystem Approach! (video)

Date _____ Where _____

Trees and shrubs I planted, and the food or cover each gives

☐ **(d)** Build a nest box for a species of your choice using plans approved by your counselor.

Scouting America resources: DIY Birdhouse (video) · Build a Bird House for Under $5 in Under 5 Minutes (video)

Species _____ Counselor approved my plans on _____

Date built _____ Where I put it _____

☐ **(e)** Describe the elements of a backyard bird habitat for a given area and draw a plan for one, including lists of birds you hope to attract, appropriate plantings for food, cover, and nesting.

Scouting America resources: How to Create a Backyard Bird Habitat | Tractor Supply Co. (video)

Elements of a backyard bird habitat

My habitat lists

Birds I hope to attract	Plantings for food	Plantings for cover	Plantings for nesting

My habitat plan (draw here or attach)

Requirement 9 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

10. Do the following:

(a) Explain the differences between extinct, endangered, and threatened.

Scouting America resources: How the Endangered Species Act Saved America's Most Iconic Bird (video)

What each term means

Term	What it means
Extinct	
Endangered	
Threatened	

(b) Identify a bird species that is on the endangered or threatened list. Explain what caused their decline. Discuss with your counselor what can be done to reverse this trend and what can be done to help remove the species from the endangered or threatened list.

Scouting America resources: Most Endangered Species & Threatened Species (video)

Bird species _____ Endangered or threatened _____

What caused its decline

What can be done to reverse the trend and help remove it from the list

(c) Explain how we can address birds that are in decline before they get to an endangered or threatened list. List how we can protect habitat. Identify threats that migratory birds face and how to protect food supply for birds.

Scouting America resources: Why Are Migratory Birds In Trouble? (And How Can I Help?) (video)

How we can address birds in decline before they are listed

Ways we can protect habitat

Threats migratory birds face

How to protect food supply for birds

Requirement 10 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

11. Identify a non-native bird (introduced to North America from a foreign country since 1800). Describe how non-native birds may become damaging to the ecosystem.

Scouting America resources: Top 3 Most Invasive Bird Species in North America (video)
Wings of Kentucky: Invasive Bird Species (video)

Non-native bird _____ Introduced from _____

How non-native birds may become damaging to the ecosystem

Requirement 11 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

12. Discuss the importance of the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code as they relate to bird study. Explain how you have followed the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code while in natural areas during field observation, specimen collection, and identification.

Scouting America resources: Leave No Trace Basics (video) · Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics (video)

Why Leave No Trace and the Outdoor Code matter in bird study

How I have followed them in natural areas

Activity	How I followed the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and the Outdoor Code
Field observation	
Specimen collection	
Identification	

Requirement 12 completed on _____ counselor initials _____

13. Do ONE of the following:

☐ **(a)** Identify three career opportunities that would use skills and knowledge in Bird Study. Pick one and research the training, education, certification requirements, experience, and expenses associated with entering the field. Research the prospects for employment, starting salary, advancement opportunities and career goals associated with this career. Discuss what you learned with your counselor and whether you might be interested in this career.

Scouting America resources: Careers With Birds: Interview With Kim Bostwick (video)
Ornithologist (Bird Scientist) | Career Exploration (video)

Three careers that use Bird Study

Career	Skills and knowledge from Bird Study it uses

The one I picked: training, education, certification, experience, and expenses

Job prospects, starting salary, advancement, and career goals

Might I be interested in this career? Why or why not

☐ **(b)** Identify how you might use the skills and knowledge in Bird Study to pursue a personal hobby. Research the additional training required, expenses, and affiliation with organizations that would help you maximize the enjoyment and benefit you might gain from it. Discuss what you learned with your counselor and share what short-term and long-term goals you might have if you pursued this.

Scouting America resources: 5 Reasons Why Birding is an Awesome Hobby! (video) · Birding: a Hobby for Everyone (video)

My hobby

How I would use Bird Study skills and knowledge in it

Training, expenses, and organizations that would help

My short-term and long-term goals

Requirement 13 completed on counselor initials

Counselor sign-off

Your counselor signs your blue card or approves the badge in Scoutbook, and your unit records it. This line is for your own records.

Counselor's signature Date completed

Official Scouting America resources

Scouting America resources: Bird Study merit badge page (requirements and resources) · Bird Study merit badge pamphlet (free PDF)
All merit badges

Made by Cole at ScoutSmarts.com, an Eagle Scout who loves helping Scouts.
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