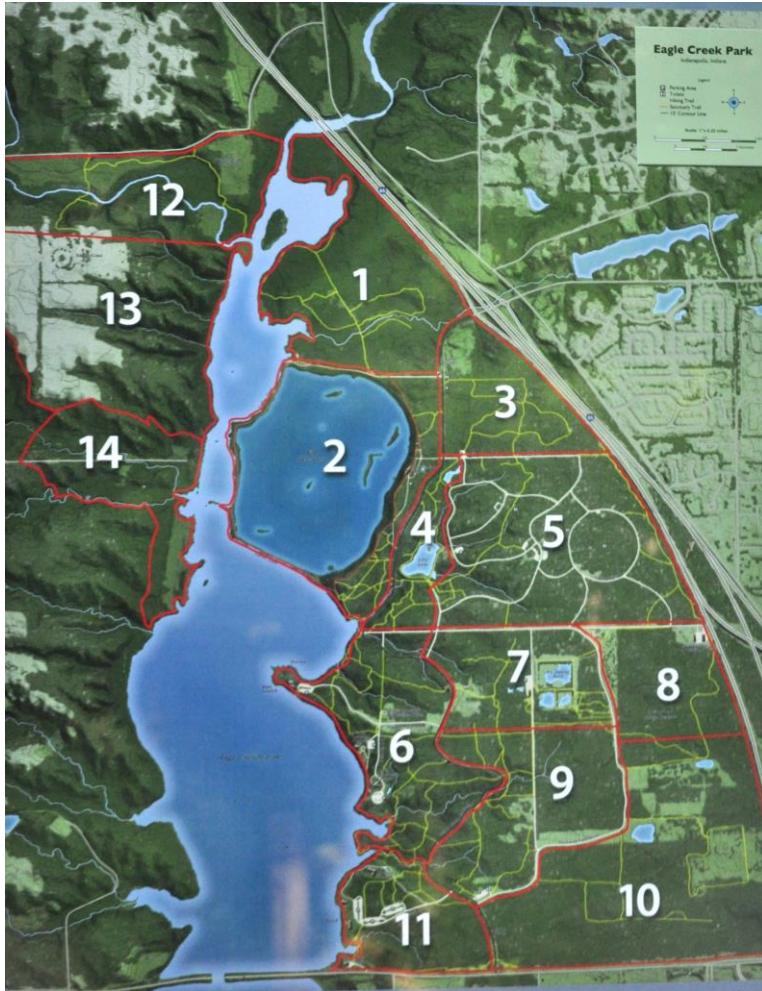


Birding Trails of Eagle Creek Park



Call to schedule a bird hike or program of your own!

317-327-BIRD



Ornithology Center
6515 Delong Rd.
Indianapolis, IN 46219

Birdwatching



At Eagle Creek Park

Getting Started

Becoming a Birder

Bird identification is not nearly as daunting as it sounds. It's like any other skill: practice will make you better! One of the great things about getting started is that everyone has some kind of basic knowledge of birds – birds are everywhere! Even if you are a beginning birder, you can probably recognize at least some of the birds on the next page.

Of the 408 bird species that visit Indiana throughout the year, 265 can be seen in Eagle Creek Park!

Start by Learning Bird Groups

Don't let the total number of bird species in the world (10,448 to be exact) overwhelm you. Start by learning the categories or types of birds you might see (*illustrated on page 3*).

Birds are typically categorized by their shape and physical characteristics. For example, shorebirds have long legs and necks and upright bodies while gulls have short necks and are as long as they are tall. Dividing birds into groups is an important skill, especially if you plan to use field guides for identification. Field guides group birds by their relatedness to each other, so narrowing your search down from "bird" to "duck," for example, is an important step.

Learn the typical shape of bird groups.

Birding Trail Highlights

Section 2 – Coffer Dam Trail

Surrounding the bird sanctuary, this mostly gravel trail offers great views of the reservoir. Enjoy spotting waterfowl, shorebirds, warblers, and maybe even eagles! (2 mi)



Section 7 – “Skating” Pond

A combination of four small ponds located in the eastern part of the park, look for waterfowl, rails, and other marsh-loving species. (1/2 mi)

Section 12 – Scott Starling Sanctuary

Located on the west side of the park, the prairies and wetlands of this sanctuary give habitat to many species that aren't normally found on the east side of the reservoir. (1 mi)

Habitat and Range

Although birds are not bound by maps, many species are only found in certain regions of the country. Many field guides have “range maps” that can help you decide if you “should” be seeing a certain species where you are. If you know that a bird is a “western” species, that can help you narrow down your Indiana bird list.

Similarly, if you learn what habitat certain bird groups or species prefer, that can also help you decide what birds to look for in your backyard, the forest, a wetland, prairie, etc.



Where a bird is can tell you WHAT it is.

Behavior

How a bird acts can also give you clues! Is it pecking on a tree or soaring in the sky? Is it diving in the water or sticking its tail up to “dabble?” Does it flick its tail up and down or sit still when its perching? Does it hop on the ground or walk?





Identifying Species

Once you learn your bird groups and their general size and shapes, you can start narrowing down to species. There are many clues that birders use to identify birds:

Field Marks

Field marks, or a bird's physical features, include feather color, plumage characteristics, the shape of certain body parts, or specific markings such as spots or bands.

Look at the bird! You will have plenty of time to look at your field guide later!

