



Richmond Centre for Disability

Duke of Edinburgh Challenge Expedition Information

Birds are Everywhere

Bird watching is a great way to explore the nature around Vancouver, as there are an abundance of birds throughout Southwestern British Columbia. Step out of your house, hotel, or tent and you will see and hear birds everywhere. In an urban environment pigeons, crows, and gulls are obviously present. If you look a little further you will encounter a wide variety of songbirds, waterfowl, birds of prey, and shore birds. In BC alone, 495 bird species are found, some of which are native, indigenous, introduced, or migratory birds.

Bird watching doesn't require a trained eye but with more practice you will find that you can spot many different species. Start with an area that is well known for bird watching and bring binoculars. Then look, listen, and be patient. Different bird books can be purchased or found at the library, however the best way to learn is by observing the bird and its behavior first. Look at the bird's beak and facial characteristics first. Observe its movements and watch it fly away. Now is the time to refer to the bird book and try to determine what it is you saw.

To start identifying birds you have to look for the details. Study their markings, colours, shape, posture, flight pattern, behavior, voice, habitat and whether they are in a group or not. Look for more than one field mark as birds are individuals and there is variety among species. Be aware that estimating the size of a bird in the distance is difficult for a novice birder and individual variation occurs between individuals as well as between males and females.

In your attempt to find different species don't overlook the common birds, take the Northwestern Crow for instance. Their population in the Lower Mainland is growing even though they are accused of being a pest by some and adored by others. The truth is, they are actually quite smart and have complex social relations. They are known for their sound imitations and their problem solving skills. Take a moment and have a closer look next time you see them roaming around.