



Brookline Bird Club

Information and Guidelines for Field Trip Leaders

Dear Field Trip Leaders,

The Brookline Bird Club (BBC) is deeply appreciative of our field trip leaders. All BBC leaders generously volunteer their time and expertise, enabling the BBC to offer an unparalleled variety and number of field trips across Eastern Massachusetts. We would not be “America’s most active bird club” without our dedicated volunteer field trip leaders.

These guidelines summarize our expectations for field trip leaders, who are responsible for fostering a welcoming atmosphere, looking out for the safety of participants, following the BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct, and representing the BBC in the community. We are very grateful for your service and commitment.

Sincerely,

Cliff Cook

Chair, BBC Field Trip Committee Chair

Guidelines for Leading BBC Field Trips

When planning your trip

- Write succinct but detailed trip descriptions to provide participants with a sense of what to expect and help them select trips that are a good fit. For example:
 - Approximately how many miles should they be prepared to walk?
 - What type of terrain might they encounter?
 - Are restrooms available?
 - Will participants be responsible for entrance fees?
 - Are special parking instructions necessary?
 - Is the meeting point accessible by public transportation?
 - Is the trip better suited for advanced birders or is it a beginner walk?
 - Could your trip be designated as one suitable for people with limited mobility?
- Ensure the Blue Book and website description of your trip, meeting point, and your contact information is accurate and up to date.
- Be creative – we are always open to new ideas for trips, like birding by bicycle, new locations, conservation-focused trips, trips that combine birding and community service, or other ideas.
- We encourage leaders to seek co-sponsorship for trips with community or conservation organizations to increase interest in birding and reach wider, more diverse audiences.
- Check with the Field Trip Coordinator to see if you need to register your walk in advance with Mount Auburn Cemetery. If so, complete the [online group registration form](#) or call 617-607-1986 (group registration). Registration for Mount Auburn trips in the months of April and May are handled by the Field Trip Coordinator.

Prior to the trip

- Familiarize yourself with the [BBC's mission statement](#).
- Familiarize yourself with and uphold the [BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct](#).
- Leaders should check to ensure that the site is open and if there are pre-registration or other requirements for visiting the property, such as entrance fees.
- Consider scouting the location in advance to check bird activity, trail conditions, parking availability, and other variables – or check with others who have visited recently. Think about timing, stops, and how to pace and adjust the trip to respond to participants.
- Leaders may designate a co-leader to be able to accommodate more participants or manage trips with a large number of participants.
- If you are unable to lead a trip, please find a substitute. You can reach other BBC leaders by emailing fieldtripleaders@brooklinebirdclub.org. If the substitute has not previously led a BBC trip, have them contact the Field Trip Coordinator at fieldtrips@brooklinebirdclub.org to review the trip guidelines.
- If you are unable to find a substitute and must cancel a trip please try to do so more than 24 hours in advance. Post a message to Massbird@theworld.org announcing the cancellation and email fieldtrips@brooklinebirdclub.org to arrange to have the cancellation posted on the club website. If pre-registration or other prior notice to the leader was required, please contact participants directly.

At the meeting place

- Be warm and welcoming. Create a hospitable and friendly atmosphere for all participants, regardless of experience level or background.
- Introduce yourself and lead introductions. Ask participants what they are hoping to see.
- Introduce the BBC, what we do, and how to join.
- Brief participants on the trip itinerary and route and birds that you expect or hope to see. Tell them when you expect the trip to end and that they are free to leave at any time. Share information about restrooms, if available.
- Encourage participants to help each other out, to and alert the leader and each other when they locate birds.
- Ask if there are any beginners present and familiarize them with techniques for describing the location of a bird.

During the trip

- Try to put everyone at ease and create camaraderie by being an enthusiastic and considerate leader.
- Encourage carpooling when possible to save energy and build camaraderie among trip participants. Coordinate safely maintaining contact with the group while carpooling.
- Assume responsibility for the conduct of the group. Ensure that the group's conduct adheres to the BBC [Code of Ethics & Conduct](#) and [Guidelines for Birding in Cemeteries](#) at all times.
- Be flexible. Every trip is unique. As a leader you should feel comfortable changing your route or target birds depending on your group's level and interests. Do not hesitate to change plans or even cancel the trip if your safety or the participants' safety seems at risk (i.e., dangerous weather or trail conditions).
- Try to ensure that all participants see the birds and help them understand the identification.
- Share relevant aspects of the [BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct](#) with participants, as appropriate. For example, provide contextual information about any rarities or sensitive species encountered. Be aware that beginning birders might not be aware of some aspects of ethical and responsible birding, like when to avoid using playback and how to responsibly report rarities.
- As appropriate, invite discussions of natural history, local history, and conservation.
- Be respectful of participants' time by ending the trip at the scheduled time, or clearly communicating that the trip may run over time.
- BBC is seeking photos of our trips and members for the website. If you take photos of participants, please ask their permission, and share the photos with info@brooklinebirdclub.org.
- Record your sightings on eBird.

After the trip

- Thank the participants. Encourage non-members to join the BBC and attend upcoming field trips.
 - **Respect the privacy of participants' contact information. Contact information should be used only for official BBC trip communications, or with consent of the participant.**
 - Trip reports are an important part of promoting and documenting BBC trips and contribute to community science. Be sure to record the number of participants on the trip. Include photos in your trip report when possible, particularly to document rarities.
 - Trip leaders should report their trip's sightings to eBird and share with the club and eBird account (username: BrooklineBirdClub) and with participants, if requested. Detailed instructions for how to create and share an eBird checklist can be found [here](#). If you have questions, or if you are unable to submit your report using eBird, please contact the club statistician.
 - Share the eBird list or email a copy of the list to participants who request it.
 - Note: before advertising the presence of a rare bird or owl, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area.

We are always looking for new trip leaders and new locations - if you know anyone who is interested or have a suggestion for a new location, please contact the Field Trip Coordinator!

Some Additional Resources on Making Birding More Accessible and Inclusive

[Birdability](#)

Birdability works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everybody. They focus on people with mobility challenges, blindness or low vision, chronic illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental illness, and those who are neurodivergent, deaf or hard of hearing or who have other health concerns.

[How to be a Welcoming and Inclusive Birder](#)

Some ideas from the folks at Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds.

[Birding While Black](#)

An essay on race, belonging, and safety in nature.

[The Murmuration Project](#)

Help [contribute information](#) about your favorite hotspot to reduce barriers to access and share knowledge.

Please let us know if you recommend additional resources to add to this list.