



## EPISODE 5

# Global Big Day of Birding

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**INTRO:** Hey there, I'm Christa, your host for the Birding Tools podcast.

Each week, I'll delve into the wonderful world of birds for birding beginners and those wanting to get the low-down on what goes into birdwatching and identifying birds.

Let's get started.

**CHRISTA ROLLS:** First, I wanted to let you know I've just created a new Birding Tools Facebook Community Group, so if you'd like to engage with other birders, post your bird photos or questions, and more I'd love to see you over there! I'll be adding the link to our podcast show notes, or you can search on Facebook for the Birding Tools Community.

Also, for the week of 12 October only, I'm running a field guide giveaway! I'm so grateful for the opportunity to connect with all of you on here and on social media, so I'm giving you to the opportunity to enter to win a new bird field guide of your choice. All you have to do is send me your name, email, and a photo of you birding into a Google Forms link that I'll post in the show notes at [birdingtools.com](http://birdingtools.com). The opportunity closes on 16 October so be sure to go in and enter! Even if you don't win a new guide in this round, don't worry, I'll be doing more giveaways and will have other fun opportunities in the future.

This upcoming weekend is the Global Big Day of Birding on Saturday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of October, and the whole weekend is dedicated to the Global Birding Weekend. Of course, the word “global” in both events lets you know that they are, in fact, global, and people will be participating from around the world!

The Global Big Day is run through eBird, a bird database that originally launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. If you know what eBird is and you’ve used it before, then that’s awesome, and I’d love to hear about your observations. If you’re new to birding or haven’t yet gotten started with eBird, I’ll be diving into what it is and how to get started here in just a little bit.

eBird is a way for people around the world to store their bird observations, photos, and sound recordings and make them available to scientists, educators, and birders. Ultimately, it helps with conservation and helps to understand bird movements and needs on a global level. As a new eBirder, beware: it can be quite addicting to keep building on your bird list! Oh, and did I mention that it’s free?

The first Global Big Day was May 9, 2015, which originally was created as an effort to expand and inform about the global reach that eBird has. At the time, the goal was to reach 4,000 recorded bird species over that one 24-hour period, and keep in mind that’s a little less than half of all the bird species in the world. Initially, this was a push to add species to the online bird database, but it ended up being so wildly successful that now it’s an annual event. The number of species recorded ended up surpassing the goal at nearly 6,000 species with over 44,000 checklists submitted from 14,000 people. That’s a lot of birds and a lot of people!

So this, one-day birding challenge really connects people with other birders around the world and helps to study global bird diversity. But ultimately, the goal is to inspire people to watch and count birds on other days during the year to add to our knowledge about birds, to add to the database, and to better understand how birds are moving across landscapes.

What's really incredible, on the Global Big Day, this past May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, birdwatchers set a new world record for the most number of birds recorded in one day, at 2.1 million bird observations with nearly 6,500 species. The most likely reason all the previous years' numbers were blown out of the water was likely because we're facing a global pandemic, and people are looking for new opportunities to connect with nature and birds wherever they're able to, and birds have become a wonderful getaway for so many people.

So what's different about the event coming up this weekend for the Global Bird Weekend? Well, in association with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and eBird, the Global Bird Weekend was originally created by Tim Appleton, co-founder of Bird Fair, as a way to have fun together as a birding community to record observations during migration as well as raise funds for conservation efforts.

The aim of the event is to have as many people as possible come together to join on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of October to record observations on eBird. So on the 17<sup>th</sup> is the Global Big Day, where anytime during that whole 24-hour period, birders will go out and bird and then submit their observations and checklists to eBird. Then, on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, the Global Birding community is encouraging birders to take their camera, or phone, or sketchpad to capture moments birdwatching or of birds themselves to then share with the Global Birding community and the other birders who are participating in the Big Day and overall weekend.

Basically, set the weekend aside for birding, and connect with your fellow birders on the eBird page, where you can see checklists roll in in real time, or on social media with the hashtags [#globalbirdweekend](#) and [#globalbirding](#).

This event really comes at a great time because October is bird migration season, so you don't have to wait until the Christmas Bird Count, or the Backyard Bird Count in February, or even the next Big Day next May to do a little bird blitz and connect with birders around the world.

Keep in mind that no one should be encouraged to travel for this event, particularly this year, but rather learn to get better acquainted with and excited about the birds in your backyard or local area.

So, to participate in the Global Big Day and Global Birding Weekend, here's what you'll need to do.

First, go ahead and download the eBird app and/or create an account online for you to enter your checklist data on your computer instead of your phone. I use both, it just depends on what I have available to me when I'm out birding, and whether I feel like having my phone out or on when I'm birding. In that case I record observation in a notebook and can enter in my information later. But entering your observations through eBird is necessary for participating in the Global Big Day slash Global Birding Weekend event.

Then, register at [globalbirding.org](http://globalbirding.org) as an individual birder or as a team of birding friends. If you join in and register for the Global Birding Weekend, you'll be eligible to win different prizes, including awesome things like a pair of Swarovski binoculars, different trips, and even a year of access to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's World of Birds website. But to get access to this, you do need to register at [globalbirding.org](http://globalbirding.org). If you are registering as an individual, that's totally fine. This year, I'm registering as an individual but next year I'll definitely be making a Birding Tools team. I'd still love for you to share your observations with so message me and I'd love to chat about that with you.

There are some other birding podcasts that are doing checklists as a team, including the Casual Birder Podcast, so go check that out as well. To register on your own, just visit [globalbirding.org](http://globalbirding.org) and click Individual Registration at the top of the page.

The next and last way to participate in the weekend is to donate to the BirdLife International conservation project to stop the illegal trade in birds – all funds collected for the event will go toward this great cause. So, even donating a small amount can help with anti-poaching efforts, including anti-poaching

patrols and alternative sustainable incomes for people who have moved away from poaching as an income source.

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation partnership connecting and coordinating national conservation organizations in over 100 countries. I love BirdLife International because they do a great job at being a resource for travelers to other countries, since they're recognized in over 100 countries they're some of the best people to reach out to about information regarding research on birds and best places to spot birds. Some BirdLife organizations even offer bird walks at different times of year.

If you feel so inclined to learn more about BirdLife International and donating to help stop the illegal trade in birds, you can then visit [birdlife.org](http://birdlife.org) to make a donation to them as well.

If you're wondering about the goal that the Global Bird Weekend hopes to achieve as far as birds sighted, it's 6,000 species, but I don't think this will be too difficult to reach given the May Big Day exceeded that number – really, we just have to make sure we're all out there at some point in the day to contribute our list.

Personally, I'm not going to be able to spend the entire weekend birding as I'd like, I committed to helping out with some prescribed fires for the next handful of weekends; however, I'm still going to take a little time at the beginning and end of day to do my bird observations and collect a checklist around the area where I'll be working this weekend. It's super easy for me to do this since I have the eBird app on my phone, and honestly, even if I don't have service, I can log my observations and go back and make sure they're entered in later.

So this brings me to the important point that you don't have to spend the entire day birding. Don't put that pressure on yourself if you have other things you want or need to do. Even recording observation for just ten minutes in your backyard or neighborhood helps with the effort of collecting bird data. Technically, you don't even have to leave your house if you want to count the birds in your yard for a set amount of time. Just set aside some time to record

all the birds you see in your yard, including the kinds of birds and the number of each kind of bird. Write down the time and date that you made that recording, and just make sure that you're positively identifying those birds before you mark them down as seen in your yard.

One of the biggest issues I hear about from even seasoned birder is second-guessing themselves on a bird they're seeing. Don't be afraid to ask questions of someone who might know the bird or even take a photo of your potentially unknown bird to sit down with your field guide and identify later.

What I'm going to do is link to my free *How to ID Birds* guide in the podcast show notes to detail how to identify a bird by sight using the keys to bird ID. So those keys include identifying a bird by size and shape, color and pattern, behavior, and habitat and distribution, as well as song, but don't worry too much about the song portion of identification at this point if it's new to you.

Of course, there's also the free Merlin Bird ID app, where you can not only identify the birds you're seeing through the easy step-by-step process, but you can also log directly the birds you're identifying in your yard in the app, which transfers the data over to your eBird account.

Don't worry if you've never used eBird before or you are new to birding. This is a great way to connect with other birders and it can be done on the most basic level, and even if you're recording the few species that you're positively identifying in your backyard, that also positively contributes to this larger effort.

eBird's website at [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) also has a comprehensive free, 3 hour training about how to use eBird and that will help guide you through the utility and usefulness of eBird and how to create and manage your checklists. Really, I recommend doing this before you actually have to enter your data, just so that you're up to speed on how the system the works and all you have to do is focus on recording birds. Ultimately, you'll want to make sure that you're positively identifying birds that you're seeing, as I mentioned before, and that it's a bird you're not only watching ethically but that you've seen with your own eyes, not a bird that another birder told you they saw nearby or a bird you saw

in your backyard yesterday or last week or a different place. Just record your observations for the time and date when you're birding.

Record the common name, date and time, and location where the bird was seen. If you can get a photo of the bird, even better, and then log that information into your eBird checklist.

eBird is all about uploading checklists of birds found in the field with enough precision to give those data into the larger database, and accurate, good quality data are what positively contributes to this citizen science project. Keep track of all birds you see, including robins and rock pigeons, or whatever birds are most common in your area – this is called keeping a complete checklist, or a complete list of all the birds seen during the time you've birded, not just rare or uncommon birds. And, I guarantee this will help give you a renewed appreciation for getting to know and counting the birds you might think are common or boring but really each of those tallies helps contribute to science.

Also just keep in mind that if you want to, you can select different times of day and submit a checklist for different times of day, that works too. So, you can do one in the morning when you get up as well as in the middle of the day or end of day, too. Since it's bird migration season, birds are going to be moving through or arriving to places at different times of the day. Sometimes larger migration events will happen when the winds are especially blowing from north to south in the early hours of the morning. Keep that in mind that when you go out at different times of the day during migration you might see birds at different times of day.

What's also cool is the site tracks all your personal lists and you can summarize everything you've seen in different ways so you can look at the birds that are in your local park in different seasons of the year or look at the birds you saw in your backyard at different times of day.

You can also participate in the eBird challenge which is submitting a checklist to eBird every day for a year. This is one of my New Years resolutions, is doing

this, so if you start getting used to eBird now, then you'll be able to join me come January 1<sup>st</sup>.

Aside from what I've already mentioned, there are some other cool things to get involved with this weekend as well.

For example, on Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Facebook page is going to be streaming birds from 20 different locations to show what it's like to bird in other locations around the world. There's nothing you need to sign up to see the live broadcast, just go to the Facebook page. You can even have this on in the background as you enter in your checklist data. All live broadcasts are saved on the page, so don't worry if you can't show up live if the times overlap with when you were planning on going out birding, as you'll be able to watch the replay whenever you're able to – just go to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Facebook page and look for the Videos tab.

Also, if you haven't already checked out eBird's hotspot map, at [ebird.org/hotspots](http://ebird.org/hotspots). This map shows areas that are popular for birders to go to to log their bird checklists. Often, the locations with more checklists have higher numbers of birds listed as being sighted there. If you check out the bird checklists that have already been entered you'll get a good sense of the kinds of information people collect and submit to eBird.

The map is color-coded to show the areas where the most number of checklists has been submitted, which again often corresponds to having more birds overall observed at that particular location. If I wanted to get a checklist for a local area that might not have a downloadable, printable checklist available easily online, I head over to this map and see the list of the birds that people have recorded there so far. Of course, this might not be a 100% comprehensive list of all birds that could potentially be at this location, since it's based on the birds that people have specifically seen and heard, or positively IDed, and if some birds were just passing through, more quiet, or someone just didn't record them, they might not be on there. Either way, you'll get a better sense of the kinds of birds you'll see there. You might even be able to log a bird that hasn't yet been added to your local birding hotspot, which is really cool.



**PODCAST** **Birding** *tools* **TRANSCRIPT**

eBird is such an incredible tool and I really encourage those who are new to birding to get started with it and see just how useful it is even in continuing to grow your own knowledge about the birds in your area. By the end of last year, eBird had received more than 700 million bird observations from nearly half a million birders since its creation in 2002. Talk about an incredible effort! The entire eBird dataset is freely available to download, and that freely available data helps conservation by shedding light on distributions of poorly known species and species conservation status. It's been useful in determining where migration routes are and has been essential for environmental planning purposes to keep developments out of migration routes. I'm so excited for you to get started on this journey and to participate in this weekend's Global Big Day and Global Bird Weekend, but also all the other birding events to come.

We're one big community, and I'm so glad we're in it together.

And there you have it!

Thanks so much for tuning in to the Birding Tools Podcast and I hope this material was helpful to you.

To access information about the websites and freebie I mentioned in the show, and the show notes, visit our website at [birdingtools.com](http://birdingtools.com).

Next week, I'll be getting into the best ways to connect with fellow birders. Of course, you've just heard me tell you all about eBird and this global event to connect birders together, but there are a bunch of other ways to meet other birders and engage with them. I've asked a big group of birders about their experiences connecting with other people who love birds and I'll be telling you all about that next week.

If you enjoyed this episode and want to get updates on the latest Birding Tools has to offer, subscribe to the podcast wherever you're listening now.

See you next time.