

# JULIA HANSBROUGH



## What got you into birding?

I picked up Stokes Beginner's Guide to Birds in a nature shop (much like Birds Connect Seattle's!) at age six, and it's all been downhill from there.

## What can people expect from a bird outing with you?

I always open my trips with:

- \* There's no such thing as a dumb question.
- \* Seriously, PLEASE ask me any question whatsoever about these birds; I am full of knowledge and EXTREMELY EXCITED to blather anything and everything you'd like to hear about them!

Then we try to find as many birds as I can! but I'm answering questions the whole while; I'm a pro at pointing out birds while chatting :)

## What values do you lead with?

When someone comes on an outing or a field trip with me, that means they've taken time away from whatever else they could be doing on a weekend morning to birdwatch with me.

That's a lot of trust in me, and I try to earn that trust. No matter whether you're brand new to this or a seasoned pro, I'll do my best to answer any questions you have—even ones you might not have thought to ask!—and get you to see as many birds as possible.

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**How did you acquire your knowledge? Are you self-taught, trained in a school, had a mentor?**

\* Age 6 through 21, I was self-taught.

\* At age 21, I actually met some other birders for the first time, and realized I'd been ID'ing a lot of birds VERY incorrectly, and thus hastened to correct my knowledge!

\* At age 24, I learned a TON when a stoic guy in a local park mentored me during spring migration season

\* And at age 25, I moved to the west coast and had to start ALL OVER again to learn west coast birds. (Doing Birds Connect Seattle's master birder [now Bird University] class 2016-2017 helped a ton!)

(That adds up to... wow, over 20 years of experience? But not all years are made equal, haha, I was pretty unskilled before I moved to Seattle!)

**What is your personal approach/mindset toward birding?**

My favorite thing about birding is you can do it anywhere. People often don't believe me when I tell them this—they'll say "oh there aren't many birds where I live"—but there definitely ARE, even in the densest core of the city. You just have to learn how to look for them.

Luckily, "how to look for birds" is an easy skill to learn, and it pays huge dividends! I often lead walks where someone will say "wow, I've lived in this neighborhood for years and I had no idea there were so many birds here"—and then, when they come back next month, they'll chatter excitedly about all the species they notice near their home now.

So yeah, my approach is: always be looking around you! always be birding! it's so fun & brings me joy every day.

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**Where do you personally see the intersectionality of birding and creating safe spaces for folks who have often been left out of the conversation before?**

When I was brand-new to Seattle and didn't know anyone in 2015, I signed up for a BCS field trip led by Kathy and Arn Slettebak, and even though I knew much less than some of the other folks on the trip, they did such a wonderful job of making me feel welcome in my new city, and I was just \*glowing\* with enthusiasm for BCS and Seattle afterwards.

I want everyone on every BCS trip, from every background and walk of life, to feel as good as I did after my very first trip.

**Do you have an area of expertise or focus that you prefer?**

I LOVE WARBLERS. We don't get as many of them here as I did when I lived on the east coast, so I make up for the difference by being EXTRA EXCITED about every single one we do have!

**What was the best advice you got when starting out as a birder?**

If you're self-taught like I was for a long time, it's easy to end up fixating too much on the bird's coloration or field marks. Those ARE useful things to note—but make sure you're paying attention to the bird's habitat, behavior, the way they move, and what they're doing! That'll make it much easier to identify what you're looking at.

**What is your favorite ecosystem to bird in?**

I love birding in thick, fully-leaved-out forests, because I am a glutton for punishment. (It always feels like such an accomplishment getting even the briefest glimpse of a bird when they have so many places to hide!)

**Dare I ask, what your favorite bird is?!**

Marsh wrens are the TINIEST and ANGRIEST birds and they sound like an ESPECIALLY FURIOUS TYPEWRITER and I love them.

