

# BRETT EATON



## **What got you into birding?**

I had a chance encounter with a hummingbird while brainstorming new hobbies that caused me to text my closest friends, “I’m getting into birds in a big way.” The rest is history.

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

I tend to plan out a route to have in mind but let the birds/people set the pace for the route. I try to add in fun facts and identification tips for the birds we find but if there are experienced birders present, I try to step back and allow others to share their knowledge first.

## **What values do you lead with?**

I try to understand that everyone experiences nature in different ways and loves birding for different reasons. Listening and understanding to the queues either direct or indirect from people on the walk is important in building an experience that everyone can enjoy.

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

I'm self-taught through practice, and attending walks with much more serious birders, and researching through apps and books.

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

The biggest thing that I've gotten out of birding is the positive mental health benefits from being in nature. I enjoy an early morning bird walk to wake up and just enjoy watching birds going about their business whether they are rare or common. I do enjoy list keeping and seeking rare birds, but only when it doesn't get in the way of me enjoying the experience.

**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 (BIPOC, neurodivergent, queer folks)?**

There are countless ways to experience birds and each person experiences them differently. As a leader, I see it as my role to help foster positive connections with nature for anyone that's interested. It's even more important for people who have often been left out of the conversation because there are so many positive benefits from birding that can help to lift everyone up.

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

Not really, I enjoy all birds. Though I don't frequently drop everything to rush off to see a rare bird.

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

Practice makes perfect. It can be tough to hear that there isn't a shortcut to getting better, but it's a fun game to watch yourself improve each time you go out.

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

I like them all, but I have the most fun in brackish marshlands with a good mix of birds. Especially shorebirds.

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

Black-capped Chickadee!! Find me on a walk and I will happily talk your ear off about how neat they are.

