

ERIC CROCKETT



What got you into birding?

I started birding with the Gaggle, an LGBT birding group in Atlanta.

What can people expect from a bird outing with you?

My outings tend to cover a lot of ground in a single location, rather than involving driving from spot to spot. While I do my best to help people see as many birds as possible, I'm always listening, and we may not see everything that gets called out. It's a great opportunity to practice birding by ear!

What values do you lead with?

There are no dumb questions. I'm an open book; feel free to ask me about what we're seeing or hearing.

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

I initially started to train my ear with Peterson's "Birding by Ear" CDs, but my skills really took off in the Seattle Audubon Master Birder program (now Birds Connect Seattle Bird University).

What is your personal approach/mindset toward birding?

Birding is a fantastic excuse to get off the couch, get outside, and explore our amazing world. I love how birding gets you focused on tiny details all around you (even things that aren't birds!). One of my personal favorites is finding hair ice on a winter morning bird outing.

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)?

The incredible diversity that we find in nature while birding is a reminder of and reflection on the diversity of humans. Every time we see a rock pigeon with an injured foot going about its day, or a leucistic bird that looks a little different than most, or even two male or two female birds acting contrary to our expectations, we see the adaptability and variation that exists within all living things.

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

I enjoy birding by ear, because you begin to realize that there are birds all around you, even if you can't see them.

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

One lesson that stood out from the Master Birder program was about how to help someone else locate a bird. This is a skill that requires practice, but you can get better at it!

What is your favorite ecosystem to bird in?

Anywhere it's quiet enough to hear birds.

Dare I ask, what your favorite bird is?!

I couldn't possibly pick just one, but I'm partial to gallinaceous birds ("chickens"); in part because they can be very hard to find!

