

Children are naturally curious, and one way to ensure that they engage with the outside is to go looking for it. Bird watching can be a rewarding experience which gives children a close up view of some amazing creatures, but can be a long and tiring process if there is not a lot to see. Here are some activities and tips that could help make the activity more fun for all.

Using binoculars

Bird watching is not much fun if you can't see through your binoculars. Here are some tips on how to get the best results.

- Start with the eye pieces at the widest setting and slowly bring them together until you, or the child, only sees one image or circles
- Focus on a relatively large, near, well defined object to get used to focusing. Once in focus look away from the object, focus on something else and then move back
- Do not walk and look through binoculars at the same time, to avoid trips and falls. Always remain stationary when looking through binoculars.
- Do not look directly at the sun through binoculars, especially in the summer.

Take a checklist

- Take a sheet with pictures of some of the birds and have the group tick them off when they spot a species. Additional sheets with insects or plants can also be brought along, just in case there are no birds that day. These can be laminated to be used multiple times.

Have the group draw what they see

- This is especially good if there is not a lot of activity on the reserve. When a bird is found have the group draw. Make sure that the main features are clear, and as close to the real thing as possible. Then compare to an ID sheet or field guide and try to identify what bird was found.

Bird Bingo

- Use a bird bingo sheet where each individual has a sheet with a grid with a list behavior or type of bird. Try to imitate any behaviors you might see and discuss what they are or why they may be useful for the bird. Some examples can be found with the online resources.

Scavenger hunt

- Use a checklist of things that you are likely to find when birdwatching, such as birds, droppings, feathers, a nest, twigs etc., and see if anyone can find everything on the list, as well as some birds
- This is useful if there isn't many birds to be seen when visiting the reserve.