

Attention Scouts

Bird Study Merit Badge Opportunity

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will have an Avian Expert on hand at several of the Bald Eagle Appreciation Events to help you with the bird study merit badge. Pat Schlarbaum, research technician with the Wildlife Diversity Division will conduct several sessions aimed at fulfilling most of the requirements of this badge. For an event near you see the accompanying flyer.

Pre-registration for this event is requested. To register, please contact Pat Schlarbaum via email Pat.Schlarbaum@dnr.iowa.gov or by phone at (515) 432-2823 ext 104. Please come prepared. You will need to bring a Blue card for the Bird Study Merit Badge signed by your Troop Scout Master as well as a notebook and pencil (an old school spiral with left over pages is fine). You can also bring a field guide and binoculars if you have them (optional). Remember to dress for the weather as this is an outdoor event.

Attached at the end of this document are the requirements for the Bird Study Merit Badge. Some will require work on your own and some will be covered at the event.

They are as follows:

- Requirement #2 should be completed beforehand using the example attached at the end of this document
- Requirement #8 will be the responsibility of the scout and needs to be signed off by one of their Troop leaders
- Requirements #5&6 will be started at the event and may or may not be completed depending on the availability of birds that day. They can be completed at a later date and signed off by one of their Troop leaders
- The remainder of the Requirements will be covered on the day of the event and can be signed off by Pat Schlarbaum.

This is an excellent opportunity to earn a merit badge that is seldom offered at a merit badge college or at summer camp.

Merit badge requirements

- 1. Explain the need for bird study and why birds are useful indicators of the quality of the environment.**
- 2. Show that you are familiar with the terms used to describe birds by sketching or tracing a perched bird and then labeling 15 different parts of the bird. Sketch or trace an extended wing and label types of wing feathers.**
- 3. Demonstrate that you know how to properly use and care for binoculars.**
 - a. Explain what the specification numbers on the binoculars mean.**
 - b. Show how to adjust the eyepiece and how to focus for proper viewing.**
 - c. Show how to properly care for and clean the lenses.**
- 4. Demonstrate that you know how to use a bird field guide. Show your counselor that you are able to understand a range map by locating in the book and pointing out the wintering range, the breeding range, and/or the year-round range of one species of each of the following types of birds:**
 - a. Seabird**
 - b. Plover**
 - c. Falcon or hawk**
 - d. Warbler or vireo**
 - e. Heron or egret**
 - f. Sparrow**
 - g. Nonnative bird (introduced to North America from a foreign country since 1800)**
- 5. Observe and be able to identify at least 20 species of wild birds. Prepare a field notebook, making a separate entry for each species, and record the following information from your field observations and other references.**
 - a. Note the date and time.**
 - b. Note the location and habitat.**
 - c. Describe the bird's main feeding habitat and list two types of food that the bird is likely to eat.**
 - d. Note whether the bird is a migrant or a summer, winter, or year-round resident of your area.**
- 6. Explain the function of a bird's song. Be able to identify five of the 20 species in your field notebook by song or call alone. For each of these five species enter a description of the song or call, and note the behavior of the bird making the sound. Note why you think the bird was making the call or song that you heard.**

7. Do ONE of the following:

a. Go on a field trip with a local club or with others who are knowledgeable about birds in your area.

1. Keep a list or fill out a checklist of all the birds your group observed during the field trip.

2. Tell your counselor which birds your group saw and why some species were common and some were present in small numbers.

3. Tell your counselor what makes the area you visited good for finding birds.

b. By using a public library or contacting the National Audubon Society, find the name and location of the Christmas Bird Count nearest your home and obtain the results of a recent count.

1. Explain what kinds of information are collected during the annual event.

2. Tell your counselor which species are most common, and explain why these birds are abundant.

3. Tell your counselor which species are uncommon, and explain why these were present in small numbers. If the number of birds of these species is decreasing, explain why, and what, if anything, could be done to reverse their decline.

8. Do ONE of the following. For the option you choose, describe what birds you hope to attract, and why.

a. Build a bird feeder and put it in an appropriate place in your yard or another location.

b. Build a birdbath and put it in an appropriate place.

c. Build a backyard sanctuary for birds by planting trees and shrubs for food and cover.