

The Characteristics of a True Birder

By Harmony Coriddi

What is a person who likes birds, is observant and alert, knows the markings, songs, and calls of many species of birds, and takes care not to ruin birds' habitats? He is a good birder, of course. But, what if this good birder does not watch birds for the pleasure or scientific interest of it. Perhaps he studies a list of rare and vagrant birds at certain locations around the globe, and travels frantically around the planet, checking each rarity off his list as he sees it. Now, is this a true birder? Certainly, it is exciting to see the world's rarities and vagrants, but does it help the birds any? Does it help the scientific world? No, it doesn't. If he were going around the Earth studying these rarities, and providing humanity with some concrete, scientific information about these birds (especially those in remote locations), it would be well worth it. He could then be called a true birder.

A true birder is one who not only has all of the qualities a good birder has, but he is also one who contributes something to science. This is not to say that all true birders are scientists. I am only stating that there is more to birding than amassing the longest life list in the world. Birding is about caring for birds, and learning about their habitats, their lives, their needs. Science is only starting to crack the opaque shell around the distribution, migration, and lives of birds, so scientists welcome any extra information they can get regarding not only the birds of North America, but also the birds of other continents. Therefore, a true birder feels he has an obligation to help birds by both studying their lives and telling the world of science when he finds something new or

interesting. Fortunately, true birders are becoming more and more numerous around the globe as an increasing number of ordinary citizens become fascinated with the lives of birds. Many true birders report their sightings of common birds (and rare ones) to organizations such as eBird, thus helping scientists track the movements of birds. In addition, true birders often have a lot more fun than good birders do. It is the simple pleasure and intrigue of watching and studying birds that gratifies true birders, and the occasional rarities that come their way makes their daily path even more exciting. We have now come to the question of which sounds more enjoyable: the life of a good birder, or that of a true birder? You may take your choice, but I, personally, have chosen the blissful life of a true birder.