



# West Midland Bird Club

Studying Birds in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire  
and the West Midlands, since 1929.

## **Bird Photography**

Photography is an ever more popular aspect of watching and engaging with Birds and Wildlife. Whether being a Bird Watcher who takes photographs or digiscope images of birds or being a Photographer, who along with other subjects, enjoys taking images of Birds, we all have an ethical responsibility of the correct behaviour towards the Birds & Wildlife we are endeavouring to gain images of.

The golden rule is that 'the welfare of the subject, is far more important, than gaining the perfect photograph'.

## **WMBC Guide to Ethical Bird Photography**

DO firstly take time to weigh up the situation, to see if a photo can be taken without undue disturbance to the bird.

DON'T chase, continually advance and 'push' the bird.

DO recognise when the subject's behaviour is affected negatively by your presence...withdraw immediately if the bird shows signs of being agitated.

DO study your subject's habits, surroundings and DO use good 'field craft' in every situation. E.G Use local habitat features, to conceal yourself.

DO wait patiently and inconspicuously from a reasonable distance, for the bird to come within camera range...natural behaviour of the subject, makes for a better image.

DON'T use bird call recordings or make exaggerated physical movements or make loud noises, in order to attempt to maneuver birds into more 'desirable' photo positions or behavioural actions.

DON'T food bait/continually bait rare birds to keep them returning to the same, close position. This results in them losing their natural inhibitions and makes them more vulnerable to predators and worse, human persecution in some cases.

DO consider setting up a feeding station for commoner species and using a mobile hide or conceal yourself in a vehicle to gain nice, detailed images.

DON'T use normal camera flash at all, especially on nocturnal species. There's no evidence to suggest that it doesn't lead to temporary blindness, making the subject more vulnerable, in its surroundings.

DO only use, if you must, INFRARED flash or INFRARED flash filter to illuminate dimly lit areas.. better still, just 'increase the camera ISO'!

DON'T disturb nesting birds to gain close images. It's an offence by law, to disturb breeding bird species on the Schedule 1 List of the Countryside & Wildlife Act.

DO make yourself aware of the rare breeding bird species, Schedule 1 List.

<https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/birdatlas/methods/protected-species-britain>

DO be aware too, where fellow Bird Watchers & Photographers are, in relation to yourself, in group situations and at rare bird twitches etc. An individual doesn't have a right to gain an image, at the expense of somebody else's enjoyment of the same bird(s).

DO set an example and stay further back from a bird, in group situations. Greater numbers of people have the potential to create more disturbance to the bird.

DON'T trample down & damage habitat vegetation, just to get a better camera angle.

DO think of composing the subject, showing its surroundings, as you would if you were watching it through binoculars. This creates a more atmospheric image, taken further away from the subject.

DO, once images have been obtained, withdraw from the bird/scene carefully. For example, when the subject's attention turns elsewhere or feeding behaviour distraction, allows for an exit.

DON'T continuously hog the most prominent position in crowded hides or restricted viewing areas, especially for rare birds...let other Photographers & Bird Watchers take your place, once you have an image.

DO be an ethical, patient photographer of birds and gain the respect of your fellow Bird Watchers & Photographers alike.

DO strive to improve your skills in the 'field' and you'll be rewarded with great experiences & images!

- WMBC would like to give thanks to the local Bird Photographers who regularly contribute images to WMBC Publications, for their input into this guide.

