

## **02) Tips for Beginners**

Spring and autumn are probably the best times of the year to start and get into birding. In spring the weather is getting warmer and with the lengthening days summer migrants start to return to the UK from sub-Saharan Africa in their splendid plumage ready to breed. Then in autumn resident adult birds will be getting active in the garden, feeding up for the winter months after hiding themselves away during their post-breeding moult, while the last summer visitors will be returning south. Thousands of waders and wildfowl return to the UK from their northern breeding grounds in the Arctic to spend winter in milder conditions on splendid marshes and in tidal estuaries. Essex, with all the excellent and varied habitats, is a huge *'magnet'* for so many of these species during these very special times!

**This means there is lots to see. Getting started is very easy, and here are five great tips for everyone wishing to get started and enjoy fantastic experiences.**

### **1) Put out Food and Water**

Natural food is abundant during the autumn, but it is still a good idea to put out food to entice birds into your garden all year round. This also lets birds know to include your garden on their foraging journeys during the leaner winter months. Water is especially important; both for drinking and bathing, and a fresh supply will keep birds coming back to your garden. See the Society's Information Sheets 7 and 8 – Feeding and Water, for more information.

### **2) Consider Investing in a Field Guide and Binoculars**

These are all you need to start 'birding'. There are a number of guides to choose from, but 'The Collins Bird Guide' is considered one of the most popular guides for Great Britain and Europe, and has recently been transformed into an I-Phone app.

Regarding binoculars, again there are plenty to choose from to suit every pocket. See the Society's Information Sheet 4 – Choosing Binoculars, for more information.

### **3) Identify a Local Patch**

Patch watching is another great way to improve your birding skills and to get to know the local wildlife better. Your 'patch' can be a local park, reservoir, woodland, nature trail or nature reserve – anywhere with some form of bird friendly habitat. You can Google Maps ([www.google.co.uk/maps](http://www.google.co.uk/maps)) to locate a suitable area. Look for somewhere with a mix of woodland, grassland and some water to increase the species that can be seen. Once you have found a suitable 'patch' you like, visit it as often as you can and make records and notes of what you see each time you visit to note the many changes during the various seasons.

### **4) Join a Local Birding Club**

This is a great way to meet like-minded people and learn more about your local birds and wildlife. The Essex Birdwatching Society is a volunteer run Registered Charity; you can find out more about the Society's interesting activities and events on our website – [www.ebws.org.uk](http://www.ebws.org.uk)

### **5) Go on Guided Walks and to Local Talks**

These activities are a great way to get to know about birds better, and provide you with the opportunity to ask questions about things you would like to know more about. The Society operates friendly Field Trips and interesting Indoor Meetings on a monthly basis during autumn, winter and spring. Full details of these can be found on the Society's website [www.ebws.org.uk](http://www.ebws.org.uk) or by contacting the Society's Secretary by e-mail – [Info.EBWS@gmail.com](mailto:Info.EBWS@gmail.com)