

Responsible Use of Electronic Bird Calls



OSU EXTENSION
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Objectives

- Participants will learn to use electronic bird calls responsibly
- Participants will understand the terms threatened, endangered and species of special concern

Background

Today more and more people are getting outside and enjoying bird watching. As this hobby continues to grow in popularity so do the tools used to aid in successful bird identification. However, it is important that these devices be used properly and ethically.

If you or someone you know uses an electronic bird call (i.e. birdJam iPods) in the field, the following recommendations should be adhered to for effectively and responsibly using electronic calls outdoors. While experts are continuously polled regarding the issue of attracting birds with recordings (digital, CDs, tapes or records), pishing, whistling and whistles, etc., we are not aware of a definitive scientific study on the impact to birds when using electronic calls.

That being said,

- 1) Primarily use the device to verify a call, do not use it to call birds to you.
- 2) Never use the device to attract species that are **Threatened, Endangered**, or of **Special Concern**. In the U.S., using recordings (or any other sounds) for attracting a species listed as threatened or endangered is a violation of the Endangered Species Act. A list of species meeting the above requirements can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/wildlife.html>
- 3) Check local regulations regarding the use of electronic calls. Some areas do not allow the use of these devices.
- 4) Avoid using device near nests or nesting areas, roosts, display areas and important feeding sites.
- 5) Avoid using electronic devices in heavily birded areas.
- 6) Be considerate of other birders.
- 7) Remember—because something is allowable does not make it ethical.

Materials:

- Handout
- Electronic Bird Call (optional)

Life Skills:

- Responsible Citizenship
- Self-responsibility
- Self-discipline
- Learning to Learn
- Decision Making
- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Concern for Others

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Imagine if someone kept ringing your doorbell, and you went to answer but there was no one there, after a while you might start to ignore the bell. However, that would be regrettable if it was a famous athlete with tickets to the big game, or disastrous if it was the fire department telling you the house was on fire.

When you are with a group of birders and want to use your electronic call with a speaker to identify a bird, always ask first if anyone would mind. Whether you are a trip leader or participant, before playing the song you should alert interested people so they can help by scanning for the bird. When you're in the field, play songs responsibly as indicated in the following paragraph.

Some birders using **playback** continue to play songs until the bird lands right in front of them. If you do not get a response after 2-3 attempts, do not continue playing it over and over. Move on and let the birds get on with their lives. As your skills develop, you'll have a better understanding of which birds are simply migrating through, and not likely to respond to a territorial call, and those that may be more responsive.

Stop, listen and watch even if you don't get a vocal or visible response. Have your fellow birders look in other directions rather than everyone looking in the direction from which you originally heard the bird. Many birds circle around an intruder to try to **triangulate** its location. While triangulating birds may not make any sound and have little movement, so they may slip past you undetected. At this point, it is up to you to find the bird.

We hope these recommendations have been helpful to you. Best wishes for some great birding!

Terms and Definitions

Endangered Species: An "endangered" species is one that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Playback: The reproduction of sounds from a recorded disc, tape, recorder or player.

Special Concern: These are species that may be rare or declining in population.

Threatened Species: A "threatened" species is one that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future.

Triangulate: A way of determining something's location using the locations of other things.

References Cited

The information included in this lesson was adapted with permission from *MightyJams, LLC*. Additional information regarding *birdJam* and related products and services can be accessed through <http://www.birdjam.com/>

Additional Resources

American Birding Association <http://www.aba.org/>

American Birding Conservancy <http://www.abcbirds.org/>

National Audubon Society <http://www.audubon.org/>

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service <http://www.fws.gov/>

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service—Endangered Species Program <http://www.fws.gov/Endangered/wildlife.html>

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