



Brookline Bird Club

Information and Guidelines for Field Trip Leaders

Dear Field Trip Leaders,

The Brookline Bird Club (BBC) is deeply appreciative of you, our field trip leaders. All BBC leaders generously volunteer their time and expertise, enabling the BBC to offer an unparalleled variety and number of field trips across Massachusetts - over 300 each year. We would not be “America’s most active bird club” without you, our dedicated volunteer field trip leaders.

These guidelines summarize our expectations for field trip leaders, who are the face of the BBC. The guidelines can help you create and support a welcoming atmosphere, look out for the safety of participants, follow the BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct, and represent the BBC and responsible birders in the community. We are very grateful for your service and commitment.

Sincerely

John Edmondson
Field Trip Coordinator

Guidelines for Leading BBC Field Trips

When planning your trip

Write succinct trip descriptions to provide participants with a sense of what to expect and help them select trips that are a good fit. Aim for no more than 50 words (300 characters) in the full description. For trips that entail using public transportation, for beginner walks, or for trips suitable for limited mobility, rather than put this in your description, indicate with note after trip title, such as “[insert T (limited mobility, birding 101) icon]”.

For example:

- Mount Holyoke to Quabbin: Skinner State Park, Hadley
- 7:30 am–3:00 pm
- [insert xyz icon]
- Join us for a series of short hikes as we search for Cerulean Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, and Alder Flycatcher. Time will also be taken to enjoy flora and fauna along way. Meeting location: Entrance to Skinner State Park off Route 47 in Hadley.
- [The Field Trip Coordinator will add contact info and an ebird link, if there is one.]

Questions to consider include:

- Are there entrance fees?
- Approximately how many miles should they be prepared to walk?
- What type of terrain might they encounter – flat, rolling, hilly?
- Are restrooms available?
- Will participants be responsible for entrance fees? [mention only if there is one]
- Are special parking instructions necessary?
- Is the meeting point accessible by public transportation? If so provide transit directions.
- Limit meeting location details to address and to information not available from a map. Attendees can use GPS or an atlas for the most part.
- No need to say “Severe weather cancels trip.” General note will appear about this in the bulletin.
- Tags: We use the following tags on the website and in the Blue Book:
 - Birding 101: Trips appropriate for beginning birders.
 - Conservation Series: Trips seeking state listed threatened or endangered species or species of special concern.
 - Family Friendly: Trips appropriate for children and parents.
 - Limited Mobility: Trips suitable for people with limited mobility, with limited or no walking, most birding done by car.
 - Loaner Binoculars: Trips where the leader arranges for loaner binoculars.
 - Transit Friendly: Trips accessible by public transit.

We encourage leaders to seek co-sponsorship for trips with community and conservation organizations to increase interest in birding and to help the BBC reach wider, more diverse audiences.

Once the trip is announced please ensure the Blue Book and website description of your trip, meeting point, and your contact information is accurate and up to date. If not, contact the Field Trip Coordinator.

Be creative – we are always open to new ideas for trips, like birding by bicycle or plants and birds, new locations, conservation-focused trips, trips that combine birding and community service, or other ideas.

- Trips to **Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Parker River National Wildlife Refuge** and **Minuteman National Historic Park** require prior approval or permitting. This is handled by the Field Trip Coordinator. If your trip to another location requires advance approval please let the Field Trip Coordinator at the time you offer to lead the trip.

Prior to the trip

- Familiarize yourself with the BBC's mission statement:
The Brookline Bird Club conducts birding trips in New England, offers and supports educational programs about birds and nature, and works to conserve birds and their habitats. Birding belongs to everyone: we welcome all who enjoy and care about birds, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, birding experience or skill level.
- Familiarize yourself with the BBC's code of conduct:
Promote a positive image of bird watching and the club. Act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds and that do not harm the environment and wildlife. Be respectful and considerate of others.
- Leaders should check to ensure that the site is open to the public and is not subject to high water levels that would prevent a visit. Last minute changes have been known to happen!
- Consider scouting the location in advance to check bird activity, trail conditions, parking availability, and other variables – or check with others who have visited recently. Think about timing, stops, and how to pace and adjust the trip to respond to participants.
- Leaders may designate a co-leader to be able to accommodate more participants or manage trips with a large number of participants.
- If you are unable to lead a trip, please find a substitute. You can reach other BBC leaders by emailing fieldtripleaders@brooklinebirdclub.org. If the substitute has not previously led a BBC trip, have them contact the Field Trip Coordinator at fieldtrips@brooklinebirdclub.org to review the trip guidelines.
- If you are unable to find a substitute and must cancel a trip please try to do so more than 24 hours in advance.
 - Post a message to Massbird@theworld.org announcing the cancellation.
 - Email fieldtrips@brooklinebirdclub.org to arrange to have the cancellation posted on the club website.

- If the trip is in the metro west area please also post a message on the Arlington Birds listserv at arlingtonbirds@googlegroups.com.
- If pre-registration or other prior notice by the leader was required, please contact participants directly.

At the meeting place

- Be welcoming. Create a hospitable and friendly atmosphere for all participants, regardless of experience level or background.
- Introduce yourself and lead introductions - first names are sufficient. Ask participants what they are hoping to see.
- Identify the walk as sponsored by the BBC, what we do, and how to join.
- Brief participants on the trip itinerary and route and birds that you expect or hope to see. Tell them when you expect the trip to end; remind them that they are free to leave at any time. Share information about restrooms, if available.
- Encourage participants to help each other out, to and alert the leader and each other when they locate birds. Birding is a group effort!
- Ask if there are any beginners present and familiarize them with techniques for describing the location of a bird.

During the trip

- Try to put everyone at ease and create camaraderie by being an enthusiastic and considerate leader.
- Be flexible. Every trip is unique. As a leader, feel comfortable changing your route or target birds depending on your group's level and interests. Do not hesitate to change plans or even cancel the trip, if your safety or the participants' safety seems at risk (i.e., dangerous weather or trail conditions).
- Try to ensure that all participants see the birds and help them understand the identification.
- Suggest carpooling as a way to save energy and build camaraderie among trip participants.
- Assume responsibility for the conduct of the group. Ensure that the group's conduct adheres to the BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct at all times.
- Share relevant aspects of the BBC Code of Ethics & Conduct with participants, as appropriate. For example, provide contextual information about any rarities or sensitive species encountered. Be aware that some birders might not be aware of some aspects of ethical and responsible birding, like when to avoid using playback, and how to responsibly report rarities.
- As appropriate, invite discussions of natural history, local history, and conservation.

- Be respectful of participants' time: end the trip at the scheduled time, or clearly communicate that the trip may run over time.
- BBC is seeking photos of our trips and members for the website. **Ask permission to take anyone's photo**, and share the photos with info@brooklinebirdclub.org.
- Did you know that the BBC maintains observation records dating back to the earliest days of the club? Recording the species and numbers you see is an important part of leading a trip. Please record your sightings on eBird, and share your eBird list with "BrooklineBirdClub". Offer to share the eBird list with participants. If you are not an eBird user please contact fieldtrips@brooklinebirdclub.org. More information about using eBird to report BBC trips observations is [available on the website](#).

After the trip

- Thank the participants. Encourage non-members to join the BBC. Remind everyone that we have many upcoming field trips.
- **Respect the privacy of participants' contact information. Contact information should be used only for official BBC trip communications, or with consent of the participant.**
- Review and submit your trip report. Trip reports are an important part of promoting and documenting BBC trips and contribute to community science. Be sure to record the number of participants on the trip. Include photos in your trip report when possible, particularly to document rarities.
 - Share the eBird list or email a copy of the list to participants who request it.
 - Withhold reports of owls from eBird lists or mark the list as private.
 - Always evaluate the potential for disturbance to a sensitive species, its surroundings, and other people in the area. There have been a number of situations where eBird postings have led to undue harassment of birds and led to areas being closed to birders.

We are always looking for new trip leaders and new locations - if you know anyone who is interested or has a suggestion for a new location, please contact the Field Trip Coordinator.