



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Tips & Tricks for an Ethical Birding Experience

Always remember that you are in their territory and that your mere presence is already an intrusion on their lives. Avoid pursuing a bird that is agitated by your presence. Refrain from approaching nesting birds. Even if the bird does not fly away, your close approach will raise the bird's stress levels. Respect its space and its life.

Reduce your level of disturbance to the environment. Along with not littering, be mindful of your noise levels, including talking and noises you make while walking through the habitat. Noise considerations become more important the farther away from human habitation you go.

Never alter the habitat for a better view or for a photograph. Under no circumstances should you remove a branch or piece of vegetation that is obscuring the view of a nesting or roosting bird as this hampers its ability to remain camouflaged. Avoid flash photography of nocturnal birds at night.

Be mindful when using laser pointers. Never point the beam directly at a bird or too close to it. Instead point it at a prominent branch or piece of vegetation nearby and verbally guide other observers from that point to the bird.

Be mindful when using recorded bird calls. Guidelines are as follows:

When/where to absolutely **not** use playback:

- In any heavily birded area
- During the nesting season
- Near any sensitive or endangered species

How to use playback:

- Do not exceed the volume of the bird's call.
- Allow more silence than playback during the duration of the playback.
- Play recordings for no more than 20 - 30 seconds, pause for a minute or two, then repeat if there is no visible response.
- If the bird responds, decrease the frequency of playback or cease it entirely.
- Avoid playing a recording for longer than 5 minutes (including breaks). If the bird does not show up, wait quietly or return to the area after a half hour and try again. Some birds will respond vocally and others will approach silently.

Under no circumstances should you continuously play a recording of a bird's vocalization, especially using external speakers at loud volume.

These guidelines also apply to pishing and whistling pygmy-owl calls.