



## Code of Birding Ethics

Bird Observation & Conservation Australia (BOCA) states one of its objectives as being:  
*“To foster ethical bird observing as a social and individual activity directed to benefit Australian birds.”*

To help achieve this objective, BOCA has adopted the following code:

### Birds ...

- ❖ **The welfare of the birds must always have the highest priority**  
Do not cause stress to birds or expose them to danger during observation, photography or recording. Do not approach too closely or interfere with their natural behaviour. Try not to put resting birds to flight.
- ❖ **Adjust your behaviour to the location**  
Walk slowly, speak quietly, drive cautiously.
- ❖ **Approach nests carefully and do not stay nearby for long periods.**  
Your visit may assist predators to find eggs or young & your continued presence may drive the parents away.
- ❖ **Do not harass birds by repeated disturbance**  
Accept good distant views of a bird rather than risk causing stress through approaching too closely or putting them to flight. Excessive spotlighting, or repeated playback or imitation of calls can cause stress. Shining spotlights or laser lights directly into bird's eyes is unacceptable. Beating bushes or dragging ropes to flush birds is inappropriate.

### Habitat...

- ❖ **Keep habitat disturbance to a minimum**  
Where possible, walk or drive on formed roads, tracks and paths to minimise disturbance to bird habitat and to the birds. Avoid disturbance around nests, display areas and roost sites.
- ❖ **Consider the consequences of attracting birds**  
Providing food, water or artificial nest hollows can be beneficial, but may, in some situations, expose birds to predation.

### People...

- ❖ **Respect the rights of landholders**  
Always obtain permission to enter their land. Always leave gates as you found them and do not damage property.
- ❖ **Follow all rules, laws & regulations governing public areas**
- ❖ **In groups, respect the rights of others**
  - Raising your voice or pointing excitedly may cause the bird to fly away or spoil the sighting for others.
  - Consider whether you are blocking other observers and if so, when you have seen the bird, move away to make room for them.
  - Be helpful to beginners and always try to encourage others to appreciate birds.
  - On group outings, the group leader must accept responsibility for enforcing the BOCA Code of Birding Ethics.
  - The leader must take into account the cumulative effect of a number of people approaching a bird.

**Remember that all bird observers will be judged by your actions.**

# Application of the Code of Birding Ethics to Photography

## Photography can disturb birds

Bird photographers must recognise that their activities are in many instances different from those of bird observers. Typically, a photographer will usually spend more time in close proximity to a bird.

In order to capture the best images photographers may inadvertently:

- move too close to birds;
- spend too much time near birds; and
- intrude on other birds while concentrating on those they wish to photograph.

- ❖ **Nesting sites should not be altered or interfered with in any way**  
Usually, photography at a nest should be avoided. It is important to remember the removal of foliage around the nest site is not acceptable. Birds choose nesting sites because of the protection offered: altering the site may result in the elimination of shade or open the nest to predators.
- ❖ **Great care should be taken if birds are to be fed**  
The feeding of birds to encourage them into a more 'photogenic' position, should only be practised with the greatest of care. Where feeding a bird may expose it to danger, feeding should be avoided.
- ❖ **The use of temporary hides requires careful consideration**  
Birds should not be stressed by the use of a hide. Birds can become accustomed to a hide over a period of days, by gradually moving it into position for photography. Care must be taken to ensure the hide is not so close as to cause disturbance to the bird.
- ❖ **Care needs to be exercised if a flashlight is to be used**  
Use of a flashlight may cause birds to be temporarily blinded, putting them at risk. Using a flashlight near a nest may cause birds to abandon the nest or cause the young to fall.
- ❖ **On group outings, the group leader must accept responsibility for enforcing the BOCA Code of Birding Ethics**  
The leader must take into account the cumulative effect of a number of people approaching a bird. It may be acceptable for one person to spend 10 minutes photographing a particular bird, but 10 photographers each spending 10 minutes, could cause the bird distress.

**Photographers must be aware of the stress caused to birds by their presence and move back at the first indication that a bird is becoming unduly stressed or agitated.**

*The above points should be read in conjunction with the **Code of Birding Ethics**.*