

CYNTHIA PUTNAM

she/her



What got you into birding?

I've been hiking the beautiful PNW mountain trails for well over 30 years, mostly enjoying long, solitary hikes. While hiking, birds are my companions in sight and sound. Learning about the birds I was hearing and seeing on hikes got me interested in birding.

What can people expect from a bird outing with you?

I'm not a master birder or a birding expert. I consider myself an intermediate birder. On the outings I lead, people can expect to be part of a learning community where participants help each other see, hear and learn about birds. I see my role as one of facilitating learning by sharing my own knowledge and encouraging others to share. On many of my outings, I team up with a co-lead who can bring a different set of knowledge and perspective. Having a co-lead also helps ensure no one is left behind, particularly when the group is large.

How did you acquire your knowledge? Are you self-taught, trained in a school, had a mentor?

Birds Connect Seattle's neighborhood bird outings were my go-to for getting started. The leaders generously shared their knowledge, and when they didn't know the answer, pointed me to resources for teaching myself.

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What is your personal approach/mindset toward birding?

My approach to birding is summed up by this Q&A.

Q: What's the best bird? A: The one in your binoculars.

[Enjoy what's right in front of you. Even a robin can teach you.]

Where do you personally see the intersectionality of birding and creating safe spaces for folks who have often been left out of the conversation before?

Everyone has talent. Not everyone has opportunity. I believe in providing outing participants with the opportunity to contribute to the collective experience by sharing what they see, hear, know and love about birds and their habitat.

Do you have an area of expertise or focus that you prefer?

Forest birds, and some waterfowl.

What was the best advice you got when starting out as a birder?

Participate in bird outings with people that know more than you!

What is your favorite ecosystem to bird in?

Boreal mountain forests.

Dare I ask, what your favorite bird is?!

Dark-eyed Junco

