

Chip Notes



Keep A Yard List

Did you know that many birdwatchers are bird-listers as well?



A list may be as simple as a small notepad kept on a windowsill, or check marks in a field guide. It may be in the form of a spreadsheet on a home computer. A list? How about many lists: feeder list, yard list, county list, state list, year list, month list, life list, birds seen while driving list, birds heard on movie soundtrack list. My personal yard list, which includes feeder visitors as well as all species seen or heard on my property stands at eighty-four species. My high count for chickadees seen at one time is 11 on January 2010. I had Pine Siskins at the feeders in the winters of 2008 and 2009, but Common Redpolls only appeared in December 2010. The last time I had Evening Grosbeaks visit a feeder was early April 1992. Fox Sparrows have appeared in the spring and fall of each of the last three years. Terrific memory? No. Memory is fading from my brain as quickly as color is fading from my hair! I keep lists... the easy way, by using a free online tool, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, called eBird.

After signing up, the first step is to identify locations where you count birds. Data entry is just a matter of selecting the location, identifying date, time, length of observation, and you are entering counts by species. The beauty of the software is that it does all the tabulating for you. It knows what county and state your locations are found in and each list is updated automatically. It is only then that the fun begins. You can create bar graphs, see high counts by species, compare your records to those of other users in your area, sign up for e-mail alerts of rare sightings, and much more. But wait, we have arrived at the important point! All of the data collected by hobbyists is then made available to scientists doing research, population studies, and assisting in developing public policy to preserve and protect wild birds! See the listing opportunity offered at eBird.com. **Check it out and spread the word!**