

# BIRD WATCHING

*Creativity applied to anxiety (Activity 11/12)*

## DESCRIPTION

Nature therapy is a key approach in supporting people with anxiety as it can take their thoughts away from worries about the future or other situations. By focusing on the present, and experiences in nature, people can feel calm and relaxed and alleviate anxiety. Bird watching is particularly helpful as both the sounds of the birds, their actions, and simply watching them can occupy the mind in pleasant ways. This activity provides guidance in how to support the elderly with a structured approach to bird watching as well as some structured follow-up ideas for later.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Reduce or alleviate anxiety being experienced in the moment as well as in the medium to long term.
2. Develop an appreciation for nature and one's natural surroundings.
3. Provided opportunities for quiet thought as well as community-building through discussion of bird watching observations.

## RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

1. None, other than some outdoor space where birds are present.
2. Optional: pen and paper, colouring pencils, internet access device, e.g. a mobile phone or laptop. See optional modifications below.

## IMPLEMENTATION - INSTRUCTION

1. Go to an outdoor space where birds are often present. This could be a garden, a park or even an urban space.

2. Give the instruction that you're going to sit quietly and observe and listen to the birds.  
If you're in an urban space, the bird may be pigeons. If in a green space, like a garden or park, there could be a range of birds to watch and listen to.
3. As you begin to see or hear birds, lower your voice to continue the instruction. Guide the elderly you're with to notice the birds. Watch their movements. Observe what they're doing. Listen to the noises they make. How are they interacting with their surrounding?
4. After some quiet observation time, discuss what's happening, what's they're seeing and how they feel about it if this is possible without frightening the birds away.

## POSSIBLE MODIFICATIONS

1. Bring pens and paper outside with you. Guide the elderly in your care to draw the birds they are watching. Consider colouring them in. Alternatively, print out some outlines of common birds in your area which can then be coloured in.
2. Print out a selection of local birds on one sheet and tick off the ones you can see.
3. When you go back inside, do an online search for videos of the birds you saw or online information about the birds, e.g. Wikipedia.
4. if it's not possible to do this activity outside, you could find some online videos of birds and do the same activity. Alternatively, when listen to bird sounds online Searching for videos of specific birds you saw/heard online, e.g. YouTube.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

As a mindfulness technique, focusing on the present moment, we expect feelings of anxiety to be alleviated and replaced with feelings of calm. Through this activity, people can also develop a greater appreciation for the natural world. Finally, through reflecting on and talking about bird watching with others, this will develop a sense of community and shared experience with others, which can also support wellbeing.