

1. Birding for All Children Initiative. (Initial Focus for Grant Application: Cape Cod Elementary School Children)

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(she/her)

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3. Relevant Qualifications and Experience:

Keen birder. Love kids. Raised 4 of my own, including 3 more keen birders.

Cape Cod Bird Club member. Association of Field Ornithologists member.

Mass Audubon Field Naturalist certificate. Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist certified.

Former attorney (so understand fiduciary obligations, and am trained to keep separate accounts and to never commingle third-party funds with my own).

Currently employed as a Field Teacher Naturalist for Mass Audubon, based at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. (Seasonal). My primary job activities are to lead hikes for adults and children in the field, and teach about birds, shorebirds, nature, and other wildlife in the elementary schools.

4. Purpose:

My purpose is to make the joys of birding available to more children whose families do not have the resources or inclination to fund birding materials on their own. This purpose can be met by placing more birding backpacks in more elementary school libraries on the Cape, so that students can check out the birding backpacks just like they would check out a book.

Based upon my survey at the end of my capstone project's pilot year, once I give a school a backpack, student interest runs high.

The Ezra Baker librarian showed her third grade students the bird backpack "and there was immediate excitement." She concluded the school year with 25 students on the wait list who "continually asked when it would be their turn."

5. Description and Methods:

Background:

For my capstone project for the Field Naturalist Certificate I earned from Mass Audubon, I designed, self-funded, and distributed child-friendly birding backpacks kits to 6 area locations — Provincetown, Wellfleet, Orleans, and Ezra Baker elementary school libraries, as well as to Long Pasture and Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuaries. The idea is that children can "check out" the birding backpack just like they would check out a book. The 4 birding backpacks I gave to the elementary school libraries got checked out more and generated more excitement and engagement amongst the kids than did the 2 that I donated to the wildlife sanctuaries. For example, one of the students at Orleans Elementary School wrote down a list of the birds he saw when his turn came, and put his list of birds he had seen back in the the birding backpack.

Other students who checked out the birding backpack after him added to that list as their turns to borrow the birding backpack came. I love the sense of a budding birding community inherent in that student-generated and student-shared list.

Students were on long waiting lists to check out the elementary school library birding backpacks. Some of the librarians, in evaluation forms I designed and collected from them, expressed a desire for a second birding backpack at their school.

Materials:

The birding backpacks contain an introduction titled “Birding Basics” that I wrote in order to have a one-on one conversation with each child who checks out the birding backpack from their school library just like you would check out a book. In “Birding Basics” I explain where to look for birds, how to use and practice with binoculars, and I stress that you can bird from anywhere, including from a chair, inside or out. I also suggest “guiding questions” that a student can ask themselves like:

“What is my bird doing?”

“What do I notice about this bird?” , and

“What am I wondering about as I watch and listen to this bird?”

Each birding backpack contains a pair of child-friendly but pretty decent binoculars, two fun take-along field guides for kids, and a cheeky, fun “Everything Bird” book that asks and then answers “What Kids Really Want To Know About Birds.” That book runs the gamut from “How do I attract more birds to my backyard?” to “Why is bird poop so runny?”

6. Timetable: If I were to receive a grant, I would purchase the bird backpacks and the materials while reaching out to librarians at elementary schools to offer them the opportunity to have one. It would be great if I could be delivering the backpacks to the schoolchildren this September, 2024.

7. Budget:

Based on the prices below, a \$1,000.00 grant would give schoolchildren in 12 more schools on the Cape access to and the opportunities for joy, discovery, connection to nature, and the possibility of awakening at least in some a lifelong affection for and desire to protect birds and their natural habitats.

Estimate is \$76.49 per birding backpack, before sales tax. (assuming a 6.25 % MA sales tax, that would add \$4.78 tax per birding backpack.)

\$81.20 per birding backpack is based on the following current prices:

\$ 26.95 per binoculars - Promora 8x21DCF 122m/1000m

\$ 6.99 plus tax per Peterson Field Guides for Young Naturalists Backyard Birds.

\$ 7.95 plus tax Take-Along Guide’s Birds, Nests, and Eggs by Mel Boring.

\$ 8.95 plus tax Kids FAQs’ Everything Bird by Cherie Winner

\$ 1.68 plus tax per “Birding Basics” two-sided 8 x 10 to laminate it with 5 millimeter laminate. (Got a quote of \$26.78 tax included for 15 “Birding Basics” guides.

I can cover the costs of printing the front and back "Birding Basics" sheets at my home.

I can also absorb the costs of driving around the Cape to deliver the birding backpacks to the elementary schools.

\$23.97 plus tax (sale price currently; may be able to get it for less or more, depending on timing) per Lands End shiny backpack (unless CCBC would want to buy some backpacks branded with our Cape Cod Bird Club logo?). Similar to the ones I purchased and deployed earlier, this Lands End Item #540835AH5 3 is a sturdy Kids Classmate Small backpack, with padded shoulder straps. Its color, “Rainbow Ombre Foil,” is similar to the ones I chose that kids of all genders loved. If the backpack has some pizzazz or “coolness” to it, that can heighten the sense of fun kids will associate with birding.

8. Matching Funds or resources:

I don't have any matching resources or funds as of now. I may have one potential donor, and I will follow up with her.

9. Continuity: I would love for this project to continue. I am open to brainstorming about that with all or any of you. Enthusiastic family and friends have mentioned pursuing sponsorship and in-kind donations from companies like Patagonia.



The following two photographs on the next two pages are photos of the front and back of the 8.5 x 11 laminated “Birding Basics” guide which also goes in the backpack. The actual “Birding Basics are brighter, clearer, more colorful, and easier to read.

Birding Basics

You can bird watch in
a chair,
You can bird watch
anywhere!
Outside, inside, all
will do.
Anywhere you have a
view!



And even if you don't plan to bird,
Take your backpack wherever you go.
That way you'll be at the ready
Whenever a cool bird decides to show.

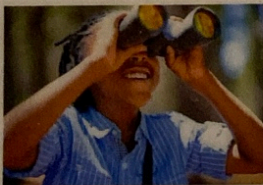
Never used binoculars before? Learning to use binoculars is easy, and you can practice with your binoculars by first looking at something that doesn't move, like a street sign, or fence post.

To get started, do you see how on one end of your binoculars the plastic cover is flatter, while on the other end the glasses are smaller and there is a plastic knob between them? Put the smaller glasses-and-knob-end of your binoculars up against your own eyes (or up against your own eyeglasses if you wear eyeglasses).

Second, experiment with making the binoculars best fit your own face and eyes by making them a little wider or a little narrower. How do you do this? By **bending** the binoculars a little bit in and out, and at the same time, a little bit up and down.

Third, keep your eyes on the street sign or fence post you are focusing on for practice. Then, without moving your eyes or head, bring the binoculars up to your eyes. (You can use this very same move later, when you want to use your binoculars to look more closely at a bird that you first spotted with your own eyes).

Fourth, while you are looking through the binoculars at the street sign or fence post, use your thumb and one of your other fingers to turn the knob just a little bit to the right and a little bit to the left. You do this until you find the spot where the letters on the street sign or the edges of the fence post are the most crisp and clear for you. That's it! Now you are ready to go look at a bird, or to go look for birds, and use these very same moves when you do. You got this!



How do you look for birds? One way to spot fun birds is to listen for them, and then search the spot or area where you hear the bird sound coming from. You can use your eyes, or your binoculars, to search the place you think the sound is coming from.

Another way you can search for birds is by scanning the edges of a lawn, playground, or parking lot. You can also search a meadow, marsh, pond, beach, or clearing, and the edges around them.

When you scan and search, look low, middle, and high. You may find different birds on the ground, in low bushes, in the trees, and in the sky!

Searching for birds can be so much fun! So is watching, or observing, just one bird, or a group of birds. Do you feel a little bit like a detective, searching for clues? You can ask yourself questions as you observe, like:

“What is my bird doing?”

“What do I notice about this bird?”

“What am I wondering about as I watch and listen to this bird?”

“What does watching this bird remind me of?”

“Would I like to draw or sketch this bird, or this bird and its surroundings?”



If you would like to draw or sketch this bird or group of birds, you can ask yourself a few more questions: “Would I want to use a regular pencil, colored pencils, crayons, watercolors?”

“How could I get the drawing supplies I would like to use? If I don’t know the answer, who could I ask for help in getting the supplies I would like?”

