



A John Stott birding retreat

'It was Jesus Christ himself in the Sermon on the Mount who told us to be bird-watchers! (Matthew 6:26)...We have the highest possible authority for this activity.'

John Stott

'The Birds our Teachers: Biblical lessons from a life-long bird-watcher'
(Candle books, 1999)

To celebrate Reverend Dr John R W Stott's contribution to the Church and the world, and to affirm his love and passion for birds, we invite you to join us in going out to watch the birds as a personal or group retreat.

You could use this resource to structure your day, or you might prefer to just head out with open eyes and ears and let the birds you see and hear lead you into worship and wonder at the beautiful world God has made. The Bible is full of references to birds, from Genesis to Revelation. You might get out a concordance and list some of the places where birds are mentioned in the Bible and choose one or two to write out and take with you.

What you need

Comfy clothes, appropriate footwear, a pair of binoculars if you have them, a journal to write down thoughts and observations, some water and a snack, and maybe a camera.

You might want to take a bird book (a light one dedicated to your area) or an app on your phone if you like, something like Merlin from The Cornell Lab, available on App Store.

The Day

PRAY

“ Father God, Lord of all Creation, thank you for this day. Make me attentive to your voice and teach me more of you as I consider the birds – their songs, their patterns and colours, their behaviour, their habitats. Your glory is revealed through all you have made and I am in awe. Please reveal more of yourself to me today. Amen.

READ

“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” *Matthew 6: 26-7*



REFLECT

- Watch for birds feeding. What are they eating? How much work is involved for them in sourcing food?
- In what sense does the Father feed them?
- What did Jesus want us to learn about anxiety from the birds?

PRAY

“ Thank God for his provision of ‘daily bread’ and acknowledge your dependence on him for sustenance. Pray for those involved in farming, fishing and food production and supply.

READ

‘...birds sing for the joy of it, and for the necessary release of emotional energy. The variety of their noises is phenomenal. They whistle and warble, trill, twitter and tweet, chirp, croak, quack and cackle, coo and crow, squeak and squawk, scream and shriek, wail and whine, hoot, honk, boom and pipe. Human language is not rich enough to express all the sounds they make.’ *John Stott, ‘The Birds our Teachers’*

REFLECT

- Take some time to listen to and enjoy the birdsong around you.
- Let the sounds inspire you to praise God too (you could even sing if you are brave!)

PRAY

“ Lord my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendour and majesty. Your trees are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that you planted. There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. How many are your works, Lord! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. I will sing to the Lord all my life. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord. Amen.’
(From Psalm 104)