



Welcome to

Birding at Dornix

Judy Fjell

I hope that you are ready for a quiet and exciting adventure. It's easy to spend at least an hour birding along the Dornix Homestead loop. Depending on the time of year and time of day, you might see or hear at least half of the birds in this guide. Binoculars and your eyes and ears are the only things you'll need, but it's good to bring along a field guide and water bottle.

"Birding" is not necessarily about being an expert at identifying birds. "Birding" is all about observing and

LOOK & LISTEN: SKY, WOODS, GRASS, WATER

listening. And if more than one of you is on a birding trip, the chances are greater that you will make more discoveries. Everyone's eyes and ears are important in seeing and hearing what is around.

If you walk slowly and quietly, you'll notice birds perching on a branch or treetop, flitting through the leaves, or climbing a trunk. Binoculars will help you to see the birds more clearly, but your naked eye and your listening ears are the first ways to identify and locate the birds. Bird behavior provides many clues for identification.



It's not always that easy to remember what a bird looked or sounded like even if you just saw or heard it a minute ago. A good way to help yourself remember is to speak out loud about what you see. I do this even when I am birding by myself. Important things to notice are:

- 1) size and shape (robin size? sparrow size? slender? plump?)
- 2) general color(s)
- 3) head shape (round? low crest? sharp crest?)
- 4) bill shape (long? narrow? dark? thick?)
- 5) eyes (eye ring? eye color?)
- 6) wings (are there wing bars? how many? if it's flying, what is the shape? patterns?)
- 7) tail (length? color? bars on it? solid color?)

- 8) general behavior (quietly perching? perching on a branch and flying out and back? climbing up a tree trunk? soaring? hovering? diving in the water?)
- 9) location (high in a tree? deciduous? coniferous? flying just above the ground? at the water's edge?)
- 10) sounds it made as it flew or perched (Try to imitate or describe the sound. Is it a melodious song? A buzz? A chatter?)

Communicating with other birders about what you are seeing or hearing can be frustrating. Quiet voices and slow movements are best when pointing and describing. It's helpful to be as specific as possible when you're letting others know where the bird is. For instance "on the bare branch on the right side of the cottonwood just ahead," or "at the top of the willow in front of the pond," or "on the branch just above the third fencepost."



Increasing numbers of people are watching and identifying the birds in and around Big Timber and Sweet Grass County. Please let me know if you see any other species at Dornix Park so I can add them to this guide. Thank you. Judy Fjell
 (406)930-1650 judyfjell@mac.com