

# TO PLAYBACK, OR NOT TO PLAYBACK

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The recent sightings of the Sage Thrasher, Townsend Solitaire and Sora and Virginia Rail at Colony Farm Regional Park highlighted the need to raise the issue of bird disturbance, particularly concerning the use of playback.

Like everything else, the use of playback years ago in moderation wasn't a big deal as most people didn't have recordings with them in the field. With the recent explosion of interest in birding and digital bird photography combined with apps that make bird song available on every cell phone, the need for us to consider the welfare of the birds first has dramatically increased.



Photo: Singing Yellow Warbler

**At the end of the day, the interests of birds must always come first.**



Photo: Birdwatching is fun

At the end of the day, the interests of birds must always come first. Birds respond to people in different ways, depending on the species, location and time of year. Disturbance can keep birds from their nests, leaving nestlings hungry or enabling predators to take eggs or young.

During cold weather or when migrants have just made long flights, repeatedly flushing birds can mean they use up vital energy they need for feeding and



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continuing long migrations. Most species of birds in Canada are protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 (MBCA), and the intentional or reckless disturbance of birds at or near nest sites is illegal.

Whether your particular interest is photography, bird banding, sound-recording or birdwatching, we must all remember that the safety and welfare of the bird must always come first.

Repeatedly playing a recording of birdsong or calls to encourage a bird to respond can divert a territorial bird from other important duties, such as feeding its young and negatively impacting breeding success. Therefore, playback should never be used to attract a species during the breeding season.



Photo: Nestlings awaiting the return of an adult

We have asked MetroVancouver to consider banning the use of playback in the park(s) but at the very least to post significant signage to discourage people from its use. Birds face so many anthropogenic challenges with habitat loss and degradation, climate change and light pollution, window strikes, cat predation, the continuing use of insecticides and rodenticides and plastic pollution that we can ill-afford to add another challenge to the list.



Photo: Plastic pollution is just one of the dangers birds face everyday

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