

Field Guides

Field guides for birds. That is what Roger Tory Peterson is known for. Field guides—those small books that you can tuck in a pocket and carry with you out into the field—to help people see and know the birds all around them.

Peterson started birding in seventh grade motivated by his teacher who organized a Junior Audubon Club that organized field trips, not simply looking at books. This began his lifelong habit of walking, traveling, and being in the field. Peterson studied art and became a teacher himself of science and art, and then on the advice of a friend combined his knowledge of birds and talent in painting to create his first field guide.

His guides did something new. Not only could they be taken in the field, they emphasized and illustrated how birds could be identified by careful observation of specific markings. Earlier books on bird identification assumed that a reader had a dead bird in their possession to measure and observe.

The Peterson field guides opened the way for people to see and know the living birds all around them. This is what Jesus does for us as well. He walked and traveled all around, seeing people and loving them. His teaching and actions—his art—have now become our guide for ministry.

Chris and I are very amateur birders, but I cannot describe how much joy it brings me to notice, see, watch, and care for birds. Once you start, you see birds all around and at all times of year. One of the gifts that I gave to Chris (and sort of to myself) for Christmas was a field guide to wildlife on trails in Vermont. I can't wait to walk, travel, and see life.

All of us who are followers of Jesus are also amateurs (compared to our Lord) in the art of seeing and loving others. But we do learn this from our scriptural guide: there is joy in spending time with the living. When we take the time to observe and learn we realize the wonder and beauty of each unique person. And so love begins. . .

God, may we walk, and work with each other so we may see and they may know we are Christians by our love. Amen.

by Rev Karen Oehl

*Jesus returned
in the power of the
Spirit to Galilee*

Luke 4:14

*Jesus went down to
the city of Capernaum*

Luke 4:31

*"I must preach the
good news of God's
kingdom in other
cities too, for this
is why I was sent."*

Luke 4:43

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