



Field Trip: eBirding for Beginners, October 16, 2021

submitted by Matt Wangerin, Field Trip Leader

On Saturday, 10/16/21, a small group gathered at Price Park in Greensboro to learn more about and use electronic applications while birding. Mobile phones, with their vastly diverse and conveniently immediate utility, have become as useful to the field birder as a pair of binoculars. Complete field guides, supported now with recordings of bird songs and calls, are available on your handy mobile device. These can greatly aid in field identification, as can other apps, like Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Merlin*. The Cornell Lab also promotes *eBird*, the foremost, modern method of field observation listing and recording.



Ruddy Duck by Jim Gant



Hooded Warbler by Chris Bame

The trip leader was able to show participants ways to quickly shortcut field observation entries into an active *eBird* report, obviating the need for a sharp pencil and a dry notebook. *Merlin's* new sound ID feature was employed, whereby a real-time recording of bird vocalizations can quickly present likely identified candidates. Participants were awed that the high pitched "see" call of the Golden-crowned Kinglet, which they barely registered as present, led to a positive observation and identification of that spritely migrant.

Through troubleshooting, we discovered that one reason a user might have inoperable sound ID functionality with *Merlin* is interference with Bluetooth hearing aids—ah, well, we cannot always simply have every convenience of modern technology—another bug to be worked out!