

# BC Bird Trail Invites Nature Lovers to Try a 'Big Year' Challenge

BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA, January 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As January brings the annual rush of New Year's resolutions and gym memberships, the BC Bird Trail is inviting British Columbians to consider a different kind of goal for 2026: a personal "Big Year" birding challenge that costs nothing, supports mental wellness, and connects people with BC's incredible biodiversity.

A Big Year is a birding tradition where participants challenge themselves to spot as many bird species as possible within a calendar year. Unlike expensive fitness memberships that often go unused by February, this nature-based goal can be tailored to any lifestyle - from ambitious province-wide adventures to simple lunchtime walks or backyard bird watching.

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*Kirsten Ovstaas, BC Bird Trail*

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## Why Winter Is the Perfect Time to Start

Contrary to popular belief, winter is one of BC's most exciting birding seasons. From rare Snowy Owls and majestic Bald Eagles feasting on spawning salmon, to massive flocks of waterfowl on coastal estuaries, British Columbia's winter landscapes are alive with avian activity.

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opportunities, especially for beginners.” says Kirsten Ovstaas of the BC Bird Trail team. “Winter brings great opportunities for backyard birding, less foot traffic and calmer trails at local birding hot spots, and with less leaves on the trees some birds can be easier to spot. You can even spot a few rare species.”

Winter birding hotspots across the province include the Langford Bird Trail for Bald Eagles, the

Vancouver Coast & Mountains region for massive flocks of Dunlin and shorebirds, and the Kootenay Rockies for Bohemian Waxwings and Northern Shrikes. Many of these species are only present during the colder months, making winter an essential season for any birder's Big Year list.

### A Resolution That's Free, Flexible, and Good for You

Unlike gym memberships, a Big Year requires no special equipment or fees to get started. Participants can set their own parameters—whether that's exploring every region of BC, focusing on their local community, or even just counting species visible from their kitchen window. The flexibility makes it achievable for all ages, abilities, and schedules.

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"Birding is one of the most inclusive outdoor activities you can do," adds Ovstaas. "It's family-friendly, beginner-friendly, and you can start right now, right where you are. All you need is curiosity and a commitment to getting outside."

The mental and physical health benefits are significant too. Studies show that spending time in nature reduces stress, improves mood, and encourages regular physical activity, all while contributing valuable data to citizen science projects through apps like eBird.

### Getting Started With Your Big Year

The BC Bird Trail has created comprehensive resources to help beginners and experienced birders alike embark on their 2026 Big Year journey. Their recently updated blog posts cover everything from [winter birding tips](#) (including gear recommendations and where to find winter species) to a [complete guide on planning your Big Year](#) with goal-setting strategies and tracking tools.

The BC Bird Trail website offers curated, self-guided itineraries across five regions, highlighting the best birding locations from coastal rainforests to interior valleys. Whether you're chasing a provincial Big Year record or simply want to get started on your birding journey, the BC Bird Trail provides the roadmap.

For those interested in winter birding specifically, the BC Bird Trail recommends starting with backyard bird feeders—a simple way to observe species like chickadees, juncos, and the stunning Anna's Hummingbirds that have become year-round residents on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. Just remember: if you put out a winter hummingbird feeder, it's a commitment to keep it filled with the correct food, and unfrozen throughout the season.

### Join BC's Birding Community

Thousands of birders across BC are already tracking their sightings through eBird, contributing valuable data that helps scientists understand migration patterns, climate impacts, and conservation needs. By taking on a Big Year challenge, participants become part of a vibrant community of nature enthusiasts while supporting important environmental research.

The BC Bird Trail invites everyone - from curious beginners to lifelong birders—to follow along on

Instagram (@bcbirdtrail) for winter birding tips, species highlights, and inspiration for your 2026 Big Year adventure.

**About BC Bird Trail:** The BC Bird Trail is a collaborative initiative showcasing British Columbia's top birdwatching regions. Partnering with local DMOs and supported by Destination BC, the Trail offers curated itineraries and resources to help birders of all skill levels explore BC's rich avian diversity. Since 2020, the BC Bird Trail has been connecting people with nature through accessible, self-guided birding adventures across the province.

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