

BIRD TALK Editor's Note - Adventures In Birding

By Laura Doering, BIRD TALK Editor

[Click Image to Enlarge](#)

BIRD TALK Editor Laura Doering on her birding trip in the Extremadura region of Spain.

Whenever I tell someone I work for BIRD TALK magazine, a typical response is the equivalent of a verbal double take: "Say what?" "Yes," I respond, "I work for a magazine devoted to pet birds." Some find this hard to believe: "A magazine for birds?" I then clarify a bit; "A magazine on pet birds. We like all birds of course, but our focus is on caring for pet birds." Some interpret this as me being an expert on all things feathered. I point out that we have a sister publication, Wild Bird magazine, devoted to wild birds and birding, which is an entirely different avian community. Even then, I'll still be asked, "What kind of bird is that in the tree over there?"

So when the opportunity arose this past February to join an international contingent of professional birders on a tour in western Spain, I signed on. I needed to see what birding is all about.

Traveling with birders, I quickly learned, means that every sound and movement deserves a thorough investigation. A speck flying by immediately warrants a pan and scan with binoculars, and with every twitter, a brief moment of silence. Once a bird is spotted, whoever makes the find quickly gives the basic visual coordinates to everyone else. Next, out come the field notebooks so everyone can check off that species from the long list of birds they hope to one day see.

What amazed me most was how well the birders knew the birds, even when seeing a particular species for the first time (the birding books helped of course). Once they identified the class of bird, they zeroed in on plumage color, wing beats, calls and other features. I only wished I could be so adept at identifying birds. Once back in the office, I began to think, however, that maybe I do have some birding ability, and you probably do too without even realizing it.

Like many pet bird owners, I am pretty accurate in identifying birds over the phone. Yesterday I received a call from a reader who confirmed my suspicion that it was indeed a nanday conure shrieking nearby. And that definitely was a 'tiel whistling in the background of this morning's phone message and, the day before that, I recognized that the caller was competing with a cockatoo wanting equal phone time.

I hope to use my familiarity with pet birds to fuel my enthusiasm in learning a whole new world of bird as a birding novice. I can start with those that frequent my own backyard, the ones my flock at home already likes to watch.