

HCAS Guidelines for Ethical Use of Playback to Attract Birds

Why Is This Important?

Birding has an effect on birds, so the overarching goal for birders should be to minimize disturbance to wildlife and to have as small a negative impact on birds as possible.

Playback, which is playing a recording of a bird's song, may cause birds to become agitated or may affect the status of a breeding male in the eyes of its neighbors and mate depending on how successfully it appears to "defend" its territory. Playback may also divert birds from important duties such as attracting mates, nest-building, or feeding and protecting their young.

Although there are few studies on the effect of playback on birds and the results of these studies are mixed, there are some absolutes in this largely-gray area.

1. In almost all cases, the use of playback on public lands technically requires a research permit or permission from a manager or superintendent. Public lands include the Blue Ridge Parkway and other national parks; national forests; and state parks.
2. Most negative (or positive) effects of playback are lessened outside of the breeding season.
3. Playback should be used sparingly (or not at all) in those areas that are heavily frequented by birders or where it is known that a threatened or endangered or locally-rare species is occurring.

Guidelines: During events sponsored by HCAS, we commit to the following:

1. HCAS will strive to be an ethical role model and educate others through word and example.
2. HCAS will use playback sparingly, especially during breeding season and in areas heavily frequented by birders.
3. HCAS **will not** play a song/call in the following circumstances:
 - a. in areas where it is not permitted by law or policy.
 - b. more than twice to attract a bird that we **suspect** is nearby.
 - c. to attract a threatened, endangered, or locally-rare species in an area where we know it is occurring.
 - d. in order to get photographs or recordings of a bird.
 - e. to attract a bird that has already been seen and identified