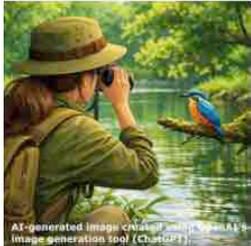


Birdwatching could protect against ageing, say scientists

26th February 2026



Birds are fascinating and beautiful creatures. Looking at them in the wild could be good for us. That is what researchers in Toronto, Canada say. The scientists found that birdwatching could protect our brains against age-related diseases. Lead researcher Dr

Erik Wing said: "Skills from birding could be beneficial for intelligence and thinking as people age." Dr Wing and his colleagues compared scans of the brain activity of 29 veteran birdwatchers and 29 newbies. The brains of the veteran birders were a lot more active. Dr Wing said the veterans had a longer attention span and a better memory than those new to the hobby. He added that the veterans could also process information more quickly.

The scientists believe birdwatching benefits the brain like learning a musical instrument. This is because the brain learns new skills, which add new pathways and connections. Dr Wing said birdwatching combines the ability to search for and identify things with a sensitivity to movement and pattern detection. Other scientists recommend the hobby. They say it is good for our mental health and can reduce stress. It is also good for our physical health because we are outside in the fresh air and sunlight. Other benefits include connecting with nature and becoming aware of the environment. Birdwatchers say their hobby is good for their social life because they meet many like-minded people.

Sources: [newscientist.com](https://www.newscientist.com) / [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com) / [thesun.co.uk](https://www.thesun.co.uk)

Writing

Birdwatching is a better hobby than gaming. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

birds / beautiful creatures / in the wild / birdwatching / age-related diseases / hobby / musical instrument / new skills / movement / patterns / stress / fresh air / nature

True / False

- 1) The article says birds are the world's most beautiful creatures. T / F
- 2) The article says keeping a bird as a pet can fight age-related diseases. T / F
- 3) Researchers scanned the brains of 58 birdwatchers. T / F
- 4) Veteran birdwatchers had more active brains than newer birdwatchers. T / F
- 5) Birdwatching activates brains more than playing a musical instrument. T / F
- 6) Birdwatching can help build new pathways in the brain. T / F
- 7) The article says birdwatching can help lower stress. T / F
- 8) Birdwatching can help people meet other like-minded people. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. beautiful | a. discovered |
| 2. found | b. recognize |
| 3. beneficial | c. old-timers |
| 4. colleagues | d. links |
| 5. veterans | e. coworkers |
| 6. believe | f. advantages |
| 7. connections | g. think |
| 8. identify | h. attractive |
| 9. benefits | i. make contact with |
| 10. meet | j. helpful |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) Which is better, going birdwatching or learning the piano?
- c) What new skills do you want to learn?
- d) What do you think of being outside in the fresh air?
- e) How do you feel when you 'connect with nature'?
- f) How good is your social life?
- g) Do you like to meet like-minded people?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Birds are fascinating and | a. with nature |
| 2. Looking at them in the | b. more quickly |
| 3. protect our brains against age- | c. air and sunlight |
| 4. the veterans had a longer attention | d. related diseases |
| 5. veterans could also process information | e. minded people |
| 6. like learning a musical | f. beautiful creatures |
| 7. They say it is good for our mental | g. span |
| 8. we are outside in the fresh | h. health |
| 9. benefits include connecting | i. wild |
| 10. they meet many like- | j. instrument |

Discussion – Student B

- How beautiful are birds?
- Are all birds beautiful?
- What do you think of birdwatching as a hobby?
- What birds do you see every day?
- Why might birdwatching be good for us?
- How can we watch birds more often?
- Is a bird a good pet?
- What things do you need to go birdwatching?

Spelling

- Birds are giiiasnntfc
- beautiful trasreeuc
- skills from birding could be iaflbnecie
- Dr Wing and his aoscelgleu
- veterans had a longer nitotenat span
- the veterans could also crespo information
- learning a musical smtitnunre
- new pathways and onniecocsti
- search for and fidityey things
- other scientists rcemdomne the hobby
- good for our syhcliap health
- becoming aware of the nnroieenvmt

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. a	3. j	4. e	5. c
6. g	7. d	8. b	9. f	10. i

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions. (Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What does the article say birds are besides beautiful?
2.	What kinds of diseases might birdwatching protect our brains against?
3.	How many people in the research had their brain scanned?
4.	Whose brains were more active?
5.	What could veteran birdwatchers process more quickly?
6.	What did the article say birdwatching was like doing?
7.	What did the researcher say people could detect?
8.	What can help our physical health when we are outside?
9.	What can people connect with when they go birdwatching?
10.	Who might people meet when they go birdwatching?

Speaking – The Best Bird

Rank these with your partner. Put the best bird at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| • Eagle | • Hummingbird |
| • Flamingo | • Parrot |
| • Penguin | • Owl |
| • Kingfisher | • Dove |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	T	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.