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Birdability Week 2025

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October 20-26, 2025

Bird-a-Thons and Belonging: Stories from the Blind Birder Community

With Blind Birder Bird-a-Thon Organizers and Participants, Jerry Berrier, María-Elena Montero, Qudsiya Naqui, and Donna Posont

October 23, 2025
7:00 P.M. ET

A FREE Program celebrating Birdability Week
with thanks to our generous sponsors

Bird-a-Thons and Belonging: Stories from the Blind Birder Community

Discover how a shared love of birds can unite people across borders and experiences. The Blind Birder Bird-a-Thon brings together blind and low-vision

birders for a celebration of birds, connection, joy, and community. Hear from organizers and participants of the 2025 event as they share stories of belonging, impact, and birding while blind. Learn about the plans for the 2026 international event and how you can be part of this growing movement, whether blind or sighted!

With Jerry Berrier, Maria-Elena Montero, Qudsiya Naqui, and Donna Posont,

Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 7:00 PM ET

Free to attend

ASL Interpretation provided

Meet the panelists:



Image description: Jerry Berrier is standing outdoors on a sunny day near a pond with several geese gathered along the water's edge. He is wearing sunglasses, a knit hat, a bright blue Birdability T-shirt with a design featuring a bird and Braille lettering, a blue jacket, and jeans. He is smiling warmly, holding a white cane in one hand. Leafless trees and clear blue sky frame the background, giving the scene a crisp, early spring or late fall feel.

Jerry Berrier (he/him) worked in the field of assistive technology for over 20 years after an 18-year career in human resources. He spent six years as an assistant manager at the Verizon Center for customers with disabilities, followed by seven years as an assistive technology consultant specializing in work with Deafblind consumers. Most recently, he ended a nine-year stint at the Perkins School for the

Blind in the field of assistive technology. He retired from full-time employment in June of 2021. Jerry is past president of the Bay State Council of the Blind and is currently co-chair of that organization's advocacy committee. His interests include audio production, accessible web design, and birding by ear. He has consulted on numerous accessibility projects with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, including fifteen all-persons trails projects. He has conducted birding by ear workshops and nature walks, both for blind and sighted audiences of all ages.



Image description: María-Elena is perched on a large rock outdoors, holding a pair of binoculars close to her chest. She is smiling and looking upward, surrounded by lush green trees and foliage. She is wearing a burgundy headscarf, dangling purple earrings, a black jacket and pants, and black trail shoes. A backpack is visible behind her as she is out birding and exploring in nature.

María-Elena Montero (she/her) is President of DC Bird Alliance, where her love of birds is rooted in the simple joy of being in nature. She delights in the magic of moments — chimney swifts spiraling at dusk, or a surprise flash of color in a city

park — and believes birds invite us to pause, connect, and belong. For her, birding is less about checklists and more about wonder, community, and the reminder to always look up.



Image description: Qudsiya Naqui, a woman with long dark hair pulled back is speaking, with her mouth slightly open and her hands not visible in the frame. She is wearing a light blue top with a bold black floral pattern and a zippered collar. The background shows a corrugated metal surface with dim lighting, casting some shadows across her face and surroundings. Her expression appears animated and engaged, as if she is mid-conversation or explaining something.

Qudsiya Naqui (she/her) is a former board member for the Metro Washington Association of Blind Athletes (MWABA), a nonprofit organization that creates sports and recreational opportunities for blind and low-vision residents of the DC, Maryland, and Virginia metro area. Qudsiya launched MWABA's hiking program in 2021, which has enabled dozens of blind and low vision nature enthusiasts to explore local, national, and state parks. She was proud to partner with the DC Bird Alliance to facilitate MWABA's participation in the inaugural National Blind Birder Bird-A-Thon sponsored by Birdability. In addition to her love of mountain trails, Qudsiya is an avid runner and tandem cyclist. She has completed four marathons and two century bike rides. She is also the creator and host of [Down to the Struts](#), a podcast about disability and design, where she amplifies the expertise and advocacy of others in the disability community dedicated to creating a more just, equitable, and accessible world.



Image description: Donna Posont is standing outdoors on a wooded trail surrounded by lush green trees and sunlight filtering through the leaves. She is holding a long white cane in one hand and another cane in the other, wearing a turquoise shirt and gray pants. The ground beneath her is covered in dirt and leaves, and she is birding and exploring nature.

Donna Posont (she/her) is an Environmental Interpretive Center staff member and UM-Dearborn alumna, and has been honored for her work as an inclusive naturalist educator and advocate, including her monthly program called *Birding by Ear and Beyond*. It's held one Saturday each month. During the program, Posont leads visually-impaired people through 120 acres of campus forest. Attendees learn to tell the sometimes subtle differences between bird species. They also learn how each fits into their habitat. "The world is designed for sighted people, but nature is a place where it's okay to be blind," Posont told The Washington Post. "You can use your other senses to learn why birds and nature are important and how it all works (as one). To me, that's the beauty of it." Posont is 67. She has been blind since second grade. She was born with retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative condition that affects the back wall of the eye.