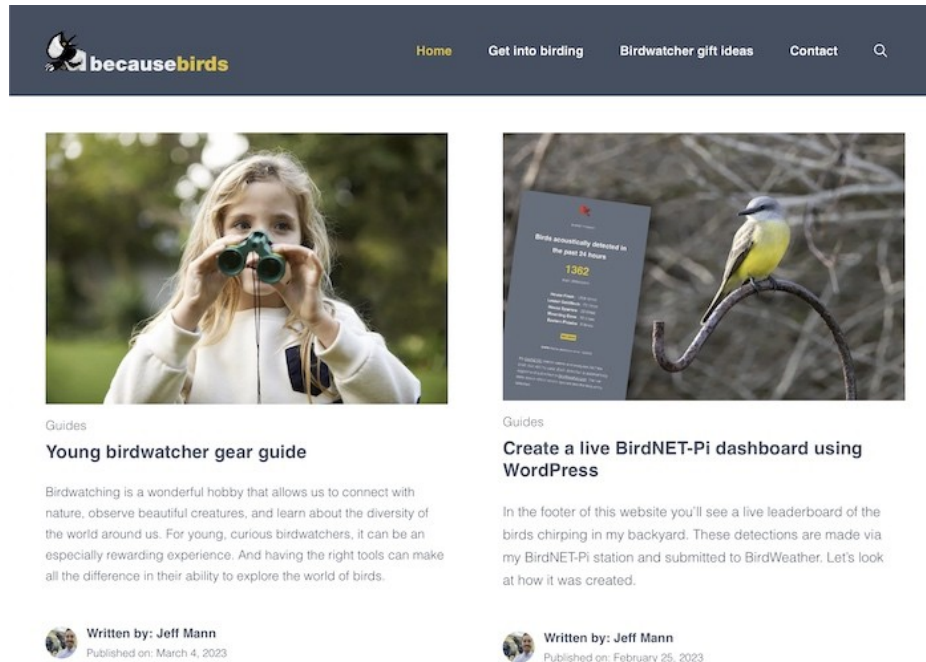


Web projects

Information about the blogs, social platforms, analytics, and this wiki can be found here.

- becausebirds.com
- birding.blog
- birding.wiki
- [Self-hosted website analytics](#)

becausebirds.com



The current 2023 design of becausebirds.com

Description

becausebirds.com is a self-hosted birdwatching WordPress blog launched in 2013. It often has a tech focus and is written to be accessible to new and seasoned birders alike.

History

Because Birds has been a passion project of mine since 2013. It began as a Tumblr blog in March 2013. After finding a humor niche and growing a large audience there, I yearned for more. I wanted my own place to write, be creative, and sharpen my technical skills. Christmas of that year, my previous companion gifted me a WordPress blog that he set up, which would get me started with formal blogging. I transferred my domain to the new WordPress and got to work.

Focus

Since launch, Because Birds has grown and evolved as I've gotten deeper into my birdwatching hobby. I write about my birding experiences & trips, reviews, guides, and anything else that sparks my curiosity. Whatever I'm feeling inspired by at the moment is a candidate for a new blog entry.

Monetization

The blog has been monetized in various ways throughout the years, with the goal of at least covering the costs of operations and ongoing maintenance.

Display ads

Initially, [Google AdSense](#) display ads were shown throughout the site. The traffic was fairly minimal at the time, and these ads brought in pennies at the expense of the website loading slower and looking spammy. Display ads were quickly removed after a few months to improve the visitor experience. To be honest, even with the traffic I get today, ads would still not be worth the compromise to the viewership.

Affiliate marketing

Affiliate marketing, which is linking to products sold by third-party resellers (mainly [Amazon](#) in this case) was a great fit for this blog. When visitors click an affiliate link and make a purchase, a small commission is earned by the referrer. This monetization method is a good fit for the website because it is unobtrusive and can be organically included in content without being detrimental to the experience.

Because Birds' approach to affiliate marketing has always been to only link to products I have had a personal positive experience with and would recommend to birder friends. The exception to this is the blog's [Birdwatcher Gift Ideas](#) page. While I have personal experience with a lot of these products, many are found through my own research on what may make good gifts for birdwatchers.

Brand sponsors

Occasionally, brands or companies will [reach out to me directly](#) to provide products for review. [Reviews](#) written on these products come from an honest perspective and do not necessarily skew positive because they are provided for free.

Technical details

Because Birds was originally launched on shared hosting via BlueHost but as my knowledge and experience grew, I transitioned to a faster virtual private server (VPS) on [Digital Ocean](#).

To make managing multiple WordPress websites easier, I use the [SpinupWP](#) platform.

Content management system	WordPress.org
Domain registrar	Porkbun
Server type	Virtual Private Server (VPS)
Server host	Digital Ocean droplet
Server details	2GB memory / 50GB disk
Server management	SpinupWP
Theme foundation	GeneratePress
Analytics	Plausible Analytics (view live dashboard)

Design

Current design

Homepage

Because Birds currently leverages a [Full Site Editing](#) (FSE), open source, block-based theme from [GeneratePress](#). This lightweight theme allows for a focus on the content with extremely-high [PageSpeed](#) scores across mobile and desktop.



Guides

Young birdwatcher gear guide

Birdwatching is a wonderful hobby that allows us to connect with nature, observe beautiful creatures, and learn about the diversity of the world around us. For young, curious birdwatchers, it can be an especially rewarding experience. And having the right tools can make all the difference in their ability to explore the world of birds.



Written by: Jeff Mann

Published on: March 4, 2023



Guides

Create a live BirdNET-Pi dashboard using WordPress

In the footer of this website you'll see a live leaderboard of the birds chirping in my backyard. These detections are made via my BirdNET-Pi station and submitted to BirdWeather. Let's look at how it was created.

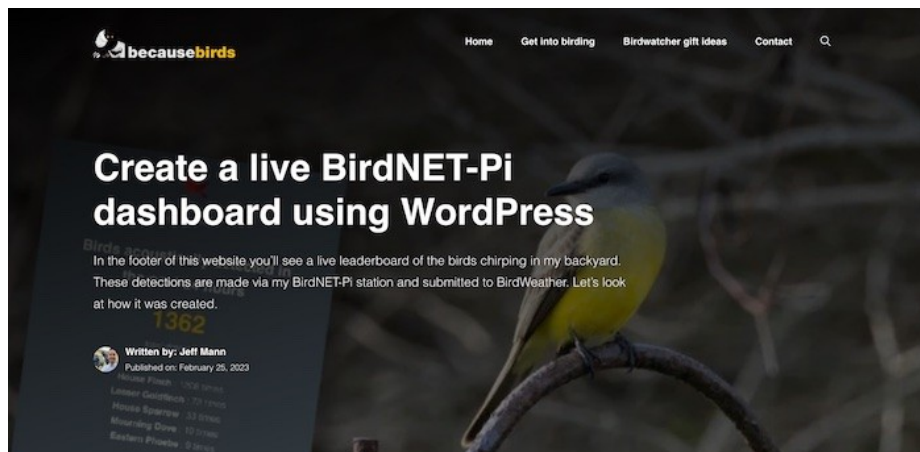


Written by: Jeff Mann

Published on: February 25, 2023

Single post

The GeneratePress theme shines on single posts with a bold hero title section.



A leaderboard for bird chirps

In the footer of this website you'll see a live leaderboard of the birds chirping in my backyard. These detections are made via [my BirdNET-Pi station](#) and submitted to [BirdWeather](#). Let's look at how it was created.



About Jeff Mann

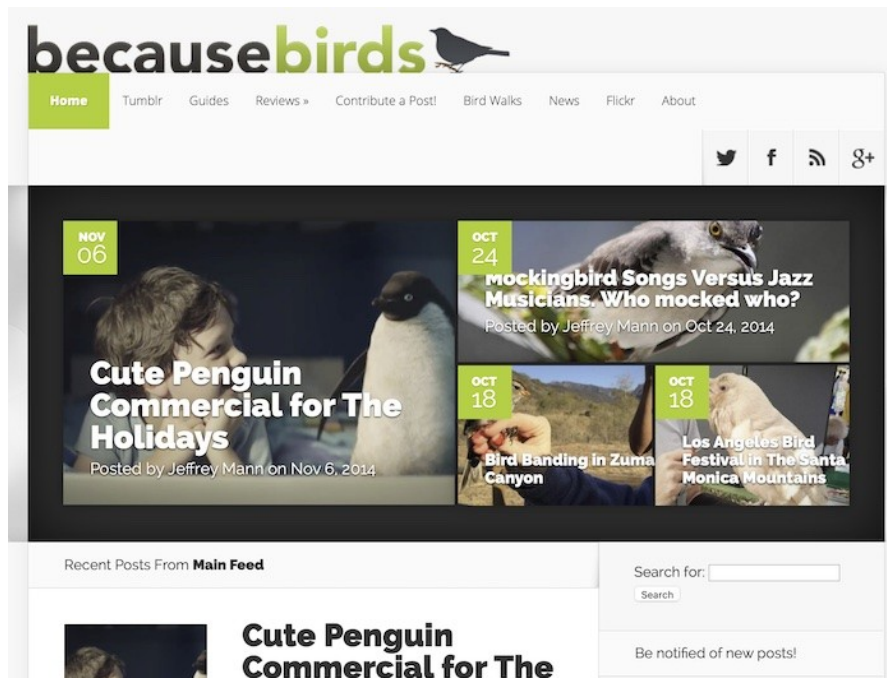
Jeff is an early-30s birder living in San Antonio. He enjoys birding on the weekend and loves to check out new areas in Texas to photograph and record birds. When not obsessing about birds, you can find him cross-stitching, working on tech projects, and playing Nintendo games. He is currently working on his Texas Master Naturalist certification.

[More from this author](#)

Previous design

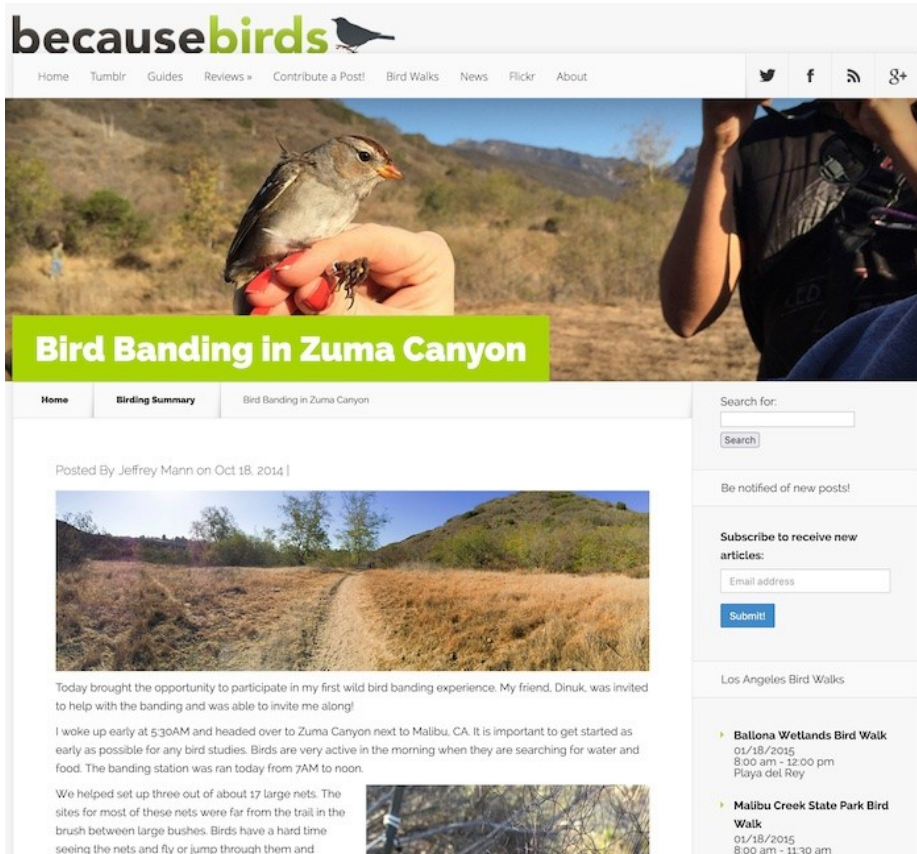
Homepage

The initial theme for Because Birds was called *Divi* by [Elegant Themes](#). Divi is one of the most common WordPress themes out there and the website used Divi's specific magazine-like *Extra* theme. Divi is less of a theme and more of a WYSIWYG platform with its own themes. It looks pretty, but it came at the expense of slow, bloated code and performance.



The initial design of becausebirds.com. Pretty, but it had a large variety of visible categories to keep fresh.

Single post

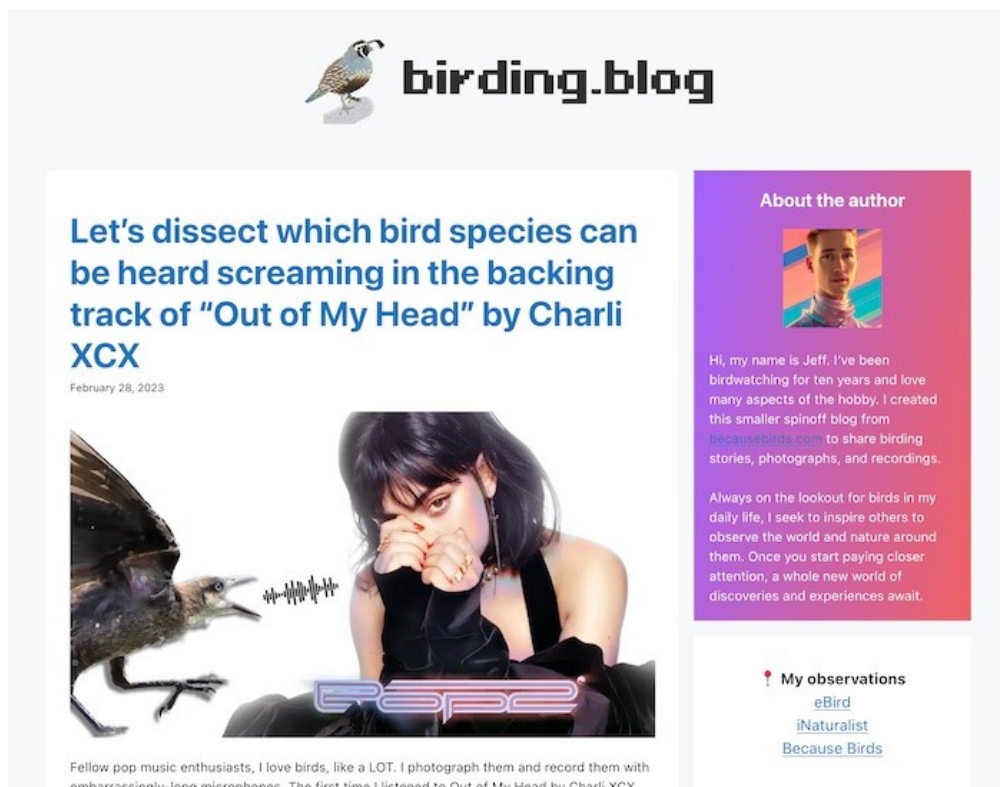


Logo

The Hooded Merganser pixel art logo was designed by the talented pixel artist [alurasheans](#).



birding.blog



The current 2023 design of birding.blog

Description

[birding.blog](#) is a spinoff birdwatching WordPress blog launched in 2022. It is a place to share smaller birding experiences and random thoughts.

History

In December 2022, Birding Blog was launched to compliment my main efforts on [Because Birds](#). I loved the domain name birding.blog so much I felt the need to grab it and see what it can turn into.

Focus

Birding Blog is a secondary place for me to share bird-related thoughts and experiences that come to mind. I plan to continue using it to write about ongoing bird recording trips, photography, and other fun things I may not want to post on directly on Because Birds.

Technical details

Birding Blog runs on a virtual private server (VPS) on [Digital Ocean](#).

Content management system	WordPress.org
Domain registrar	Porkbun
Server type	Virtual Private Server (VPS)
Server host	Digital Ocean droplet
Server details	1GB memory / 25B disk
Server management	SpinupWP
Theme foundation	GeneratePress
Analytics	Plausible Analytics

Design

Current design

Homepage

Birding Blog currently leverages a [Full Site Editing](#) (FSE), open source, block-based theme from [GeneratePress](#). This lightweight theme allows for a focus on the content with extremely-high [PageSpeed](#) scores across mobile and desktop.



birding.blog

Let's dissect which bird species can be heard screaming in the backing track of "Out of My Head" by Charli XCX

February 28, 2023



Fellow pop music enthusiasts, I love birds, like a LOT. I photograph them and record them with embarrassingly-long microphones. The first time I listened to Out of My Head by Charli XCX

About the author



Hi, my name is Jeff. I've been birdwatching for ten years and love many aspects of the hobby. I created this smaller spinoff blog from becausebirds.com to share birding stories, photographs, and recordings.

Always on the lookout for birds in my daily life, I seek to inspire others to observe the world and nature around them. Once you start paying closer attention, a whole new world of discoveries and experiences await.

My observations

[eBird](#)
[iNaturalist](#)
[Because Birds](#)

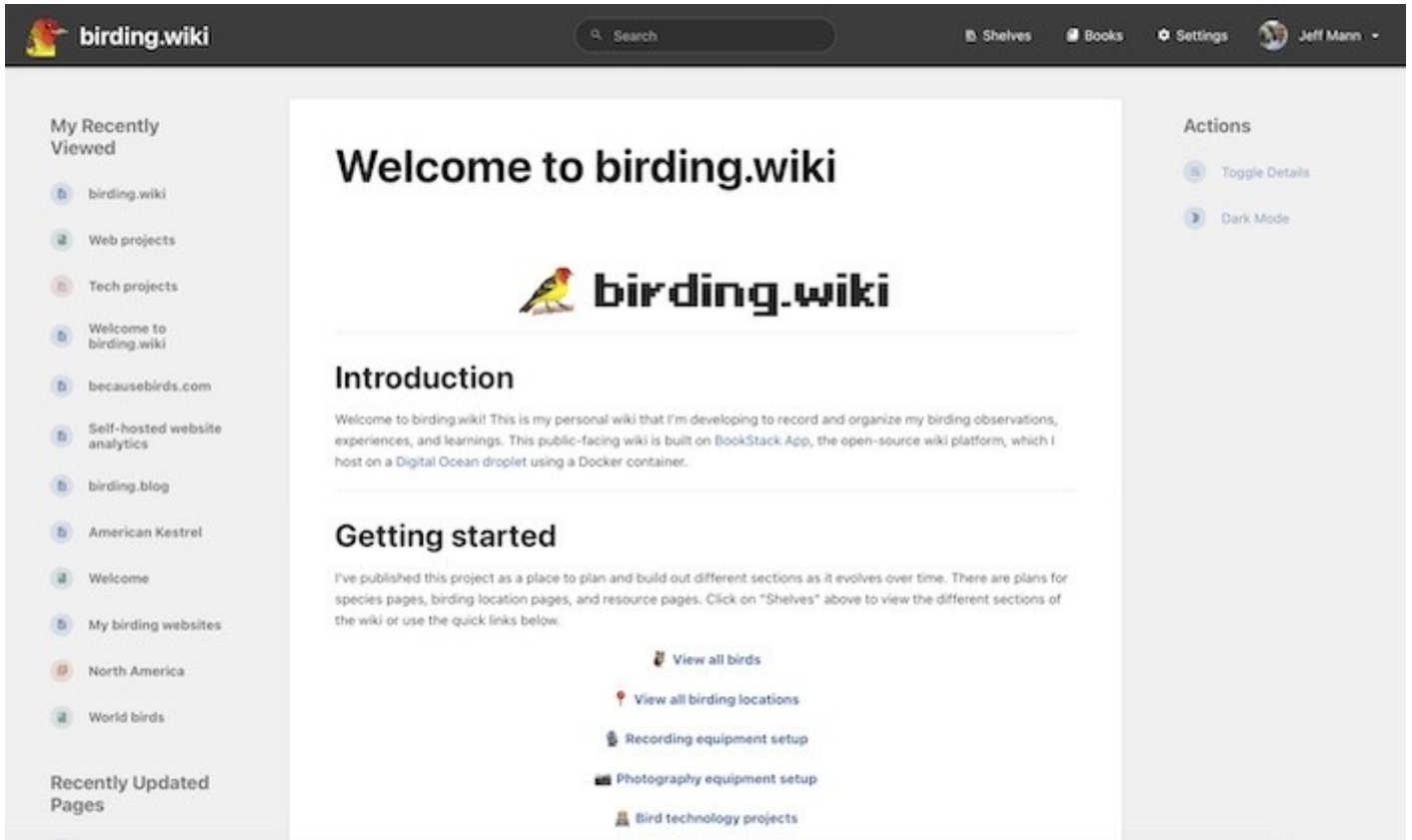
Logo

The California Quail pixel art logo was designed by the talented pixel artist [alurasheans](#).



birding.blog

birding.wiki



The birding.wiki homepage. This wiki uses the open source BookStack App platform.

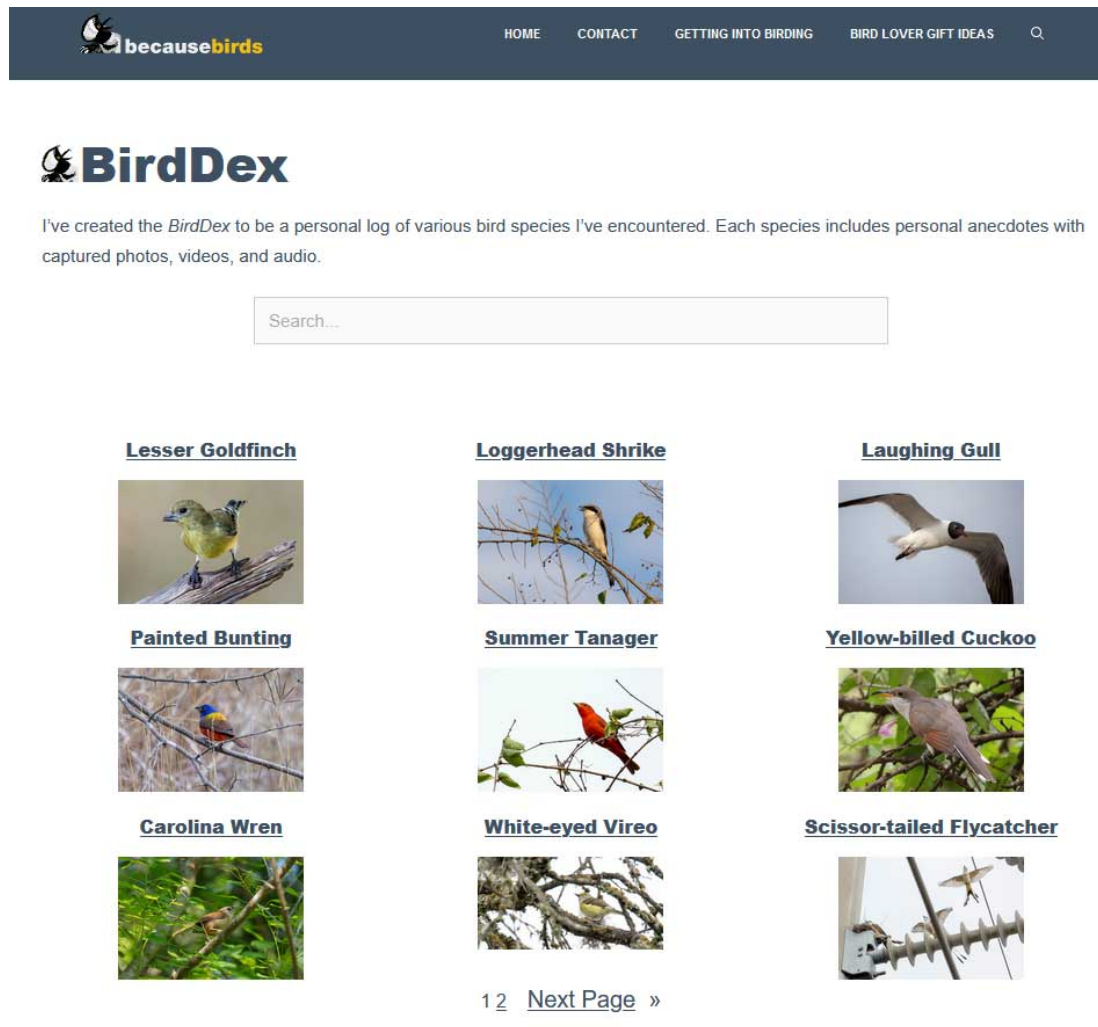
Description

[birding.wiki](#) is a self-hosted birdwatching wiki launched in 2022. It's a place to document my birding observations, media, projects, and equipment setups. This wiki is run using a self-hosted instance of [BookStack App](#).

History

In 2022, I toyed with the idea of creating a wiki-like experience to organize and document anything related to birds and my hobby of birdwatching.

Initial concept



The *BirdDex* main page with search feature. Handmade in WordPress.

BirdDex

← view all Birds

Painted Bunting

Passerina ciris


First Seen

05/12/2019

San Antonio, TX

Captured media details

	M	F	U
📷	3	3	
🎵	3		





Notes & Observations

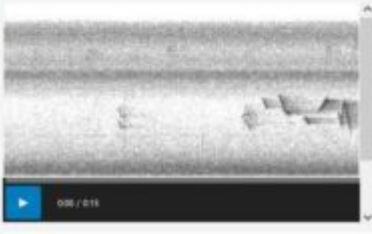
5/25/22 – My first solo experience of the Painted Bunting was at Pearsall Park in July 2021. At the park there is a disc golf course and birds of all kinds like to perch on the goal. That day, I spotted a small bird on a distant goal. Getting a closer look I could see the dull yellow color of the female Painted Bunting. It was exciting but not as thrilling as seeing the brilliant colors of the male. It wouldn't be for almost another year that I'd see this bird. On my regular weekend visit to the park in May of 2022, it was finally my moment.

I was walking down the trail toward the creek and shortly before arriving, I saw the flash of a red bird. Thinking it was a Cardinal, but always checking, I held up my binoculars and a rush of colors. The male Painted Bunting had finally revealed itself. I struggled with my camera and it flew only to land on a branch even closer. It managed to stay put for a moment or two and allowed me to capture its photo. I've seen it a few times since at Cibola Nature Center bringing friends along with me to share in the spectacle.

📷 Captured

🎵 Recorded



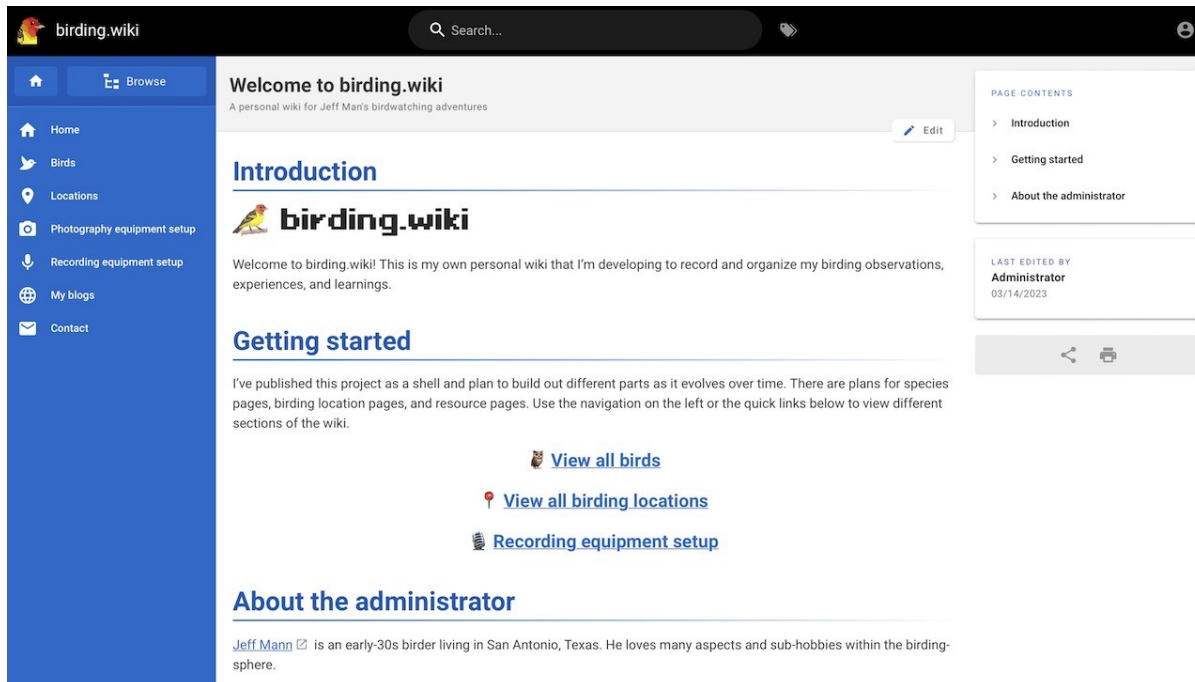
A BirdDex entry of the Painted Bunting.

The first concept of birding.wiki was launched on [Because Birds](#) as the [BirdDex](#). This was a fun project where I learned and leveraged WordPress' [custom post types](#) to create and add "Bird" entries into the CMS. It gave me space to design a basic experience and begin to solidify what type of information I would include in these entries. Think of it as a bird Pokédex. I literally researched how to create Pokédex on WordPress to serve as a starting point in the project.

On these pages I included observation statistics, photographs, audio recordings, and personal anecdotes. But as with most of my projects, I yearned for more: more ease of use, more flexibility, more space. So, I began setting my sights on a dedicated platform for this information.

In Late 2022, I bought the domain birding.wiki and began researching self-hosted wiki software solutions. I came across many options and decided to take the plunge and set one up: [Wiki.js](https://wiki.js)

Wiki.js



For the first few months of the birding.wiki project, I learned and began building out content in the platform. This exercise in organization and content management showed me ways in which I could display different types of content and helped me clarify what I wanted out of a wiki software.

Wiki.js is a one-man show as far as development is concerned. While the software was visually appealing, it was slow and cumbersome to use and half of the features in the platform were 'coming soon.' Development on the product felt slow, with releases of new versions coming out sporadically.

Next...BookStack App

In Early 2023, as my frustration with Wiki.js grew, I began to revisit a few of the wiki platforms from my previous research. [BookStack App](https://bookstack.app) app intrigued me the most due to its passionate user base and high praises on Reddit.

BookStack's organization follows the idea of physical books: shelves, books, chapters, and pages. I wondered to myself if this type of structure would work for my use case so I decided to spin up an instance and try it out for myself.

I began by recreating all my existing Wiki.js content into a few "Books" on my new BookStack server. The ease of use and speed of the platform became apparent as soon as I started. The content organization approach started simple and I reworked it as more content was added.

Organization

Shelves

Sort



Birds

A list of all birds in the wiki organized by region.

★ Created 6 days ago
✔ Updated 6 days ago



Equipment

Equipment I use for photographing and recording birds.

★ Created 5 days ago
✔ Updated 5 days ago



Locations

This is a list of locations where I enjoy birding. Each location includes details about the area, photographs, media, and perso...

★ Created 6 days ago
✔ Updated 6 days ago



Tech projects

Learn more about web projects, home projects, and workflows in my birdwatching hobbies.

★ Created 12 hours ago
✔ Updated 3 hours ago

The wiki has four main "shelves".

- [Birds](#)
- [Locations](#)
- [Equipment](#)
- [Tech projects](#)

Birds shelf

The bread & butter of the birding.wiki is the Birds shelf. In the "[World birds](#)" book there are entries about many species throughout North America and the world. Birds are organized into chapters based on geographic region and contain personal statistics, media, anecdotes, and links to related blog posts on Because Birds.

Locations shelf

The Locations shelf is home to the book of "[World places](#)" where I have started to create entries for birdwatching locations that I have enjoyed. Chapters organize these locations based on geographic region. Each page includes photographs, recordings, descriptions, and experiences I've had.

Equipment shelf

The Equipment shelf and respective book contain a detailed breakdown of the gear setups I use in my photography and audio recording endeavors. You'll find the tools I use and why I use them, as well as links to learn more about each.

Tech projects

The Tech projects shelf contains several books describing the various bird-related web and home projects I use or have created. There is a book for workflows that details the processes I follow to find, capture, and catalogue bird observations and media.

Technical details

birding.wiki is run on a virtual private server (VPS) on [Digital Ocean](#).

Wiki software	BookStack App
Domain registrar	Porkbun
Server type	Virtual Private Server (VPS)
Server host	Digital Ocean droplet
Server details	1GB memory / 25GB disk

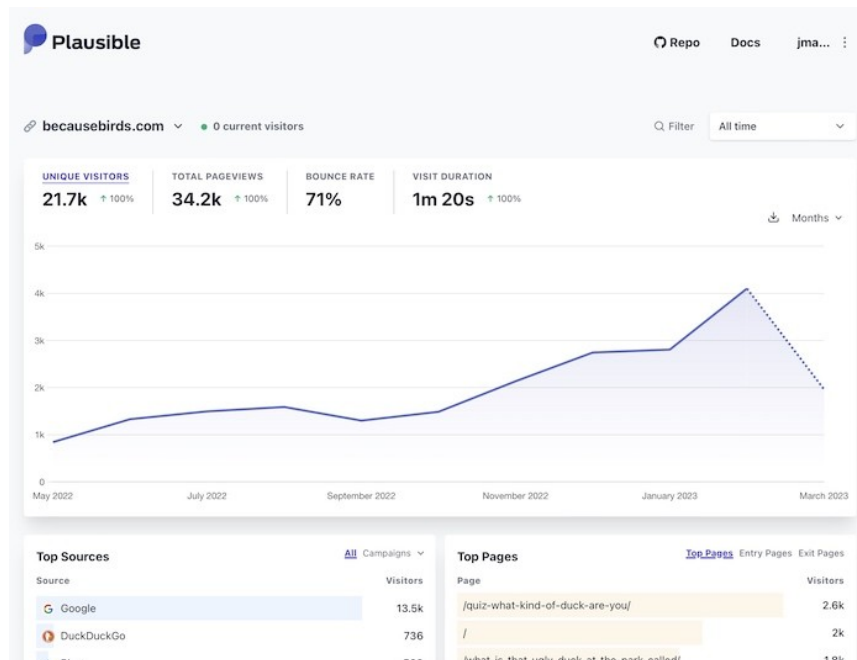
Logo

The Western Tanager pixel art logo was designed by the talented pixel artist [alurasheans](#).



birding.wiki

Self-hosted website analytics



The Plausible Analytics dashboard which shows aggregate data only.

Description

I value user data privacy and have made efforts to remove unnecessary tracking scripts and code from organizations like Google from my websites. For many years I ran, like most websites, [Google Analytics](#) to measure and understand visitors.

In May 2022, I learned of an open-source website analytics software with a focus on user privacy, called [Plausible Analytics](#). I chose to set up a new webserver to run this self-host this software and replaced Google Analytics completely with it.

In the spirit of transparency, my website analytics are public-facing and can be viewed by anyone.

Technical details

Plausible Analytics uses no cookies and is fully compliant with GDPR, CCPA, and PECR. It's lightweight and easy to set up in a Docker environment.

Platform	Plausible Analytics
Domain	metrics.becausebirds.com
Server type	Virtual Private Server (VPS)
Server host	Digital Ocean droplet
Server details	1GB memory / 25GB disk