

Taking Your Time in Nature Often Reveals Hidden Wonders

It's something Luca and I have both noticed on so many of our trips. The difference between a rushed drive and one where we just... slow down a little. Not chasing the next sighting, not worrying about what we might be missing further ahead, just letting the moment play out where we are.

And more often than not, that's when something special happens.

We spend so much of our time moving quickly. Even in nature, it's easy to fall into that rhythm, drive a little further, walk a little faster, scan quickly, move on.

Arrive, tick, next.

But birding, more than anything, has taught me that the real magic doesn't happen at speed.

Some of the most memorable moments I've had haven't come from chasing a lifer or rushing between hotspots, they've come from slowing down enough to let the environment settle around me. To stop being the disturbance, and start becoming part of the space.

This really rang true on one of our recent outings, when not just Luca and I, but a whole group of us sat quietly in a hide, waiting for a Wilson's Phalarope to appear. There were really only two choices, sit it out, be patient, and take in everything else happening around us, or leave and risk missing what, for many, would be a once-in-a-lifetime sighting.

And in that waiting, something shifted. The pressure to see the bird faded slightly, and the experience itself took over. The sounds, the movement, the shared anticipation. And when the Phalarope finally did appear, it felt earned in a way that a rushed sighting never could.

It's a small shift, but it changes everything.

When you slow down, the details begin to show themselves. The kind you'd never notice from a moving car or a rushed walk. A tiny bird flicking through the undergrowth that you would've missed completely. The subtle movement of leaves that gives away something hiding just out of sight. Even the way different species use the same space in completely different ways.

You start to realise how much is happening all the time, whether you're paying attention or not.

Sound becomes a whole different experience too. Instead of just hearing "birdsong," you begin to pick things apart. A call you recognise immediately. One you don't. A contact call nearby, a warning call further off. Slowly, it stops being background noise and becomes a language.

And once you tune into that, you don't need to see everything to know it's there.

There's also something about slowing down that naturally brings a sense of calm. Not in a big, dramatic way, just in the quiet moments. Sitting under a tree, waiting without really waiting. Watching light change. Letting time pass without feeling the need to fill it.

It's in those moments that nature seems to offer its best.

A bird suddenly appearing exactly where you're already looking. A species calling just long enough for you to pick it up. An interaction you would've missed if you'd moved on thirty seconds earlier.

Those are the sightings that stay with you.

Not always the rarest, not always the most impressive, but the ones where you were fully present when they happened.

And I think that's the biggest lesson in all of this. Birding isn't just about how many species you see, it's about how you experience them. Slowing down shifts the focus from chasing to appreciating, from ticking to understanding.

It teaches patience without you even realising it.

So next time you're out, whether you're chasing a target or just spending time in the bush, try hold back a little. Stay a bit longer. Listen a bit more. Let the space come to you instead of always moving through it.

Because sometimes, the best moments don't happen when you go looking for them. They happen when you finally slow down enough to let them find you.