

8,000 BIRDS TO SEE BEFORE YOU DIE

NAME: _____

Read the article

Phoebe Snetsinger had just returned from a trip to Alaska when her doctors told her that she had cancer. She had less than a year to live. Phoebe was 50. As soon as she heard the news, she decided to spend the rest of her life doing what she loved most – watching birds.

She immediately went off to some of the world's most amazing natural paradises. Her trips were extremely hard. But Phoebe surprised her doctors and her family as she carried on travelling. A year came and went, and she was still alive. She was doing something that she loved and that helped her to be healthy for another ten years.

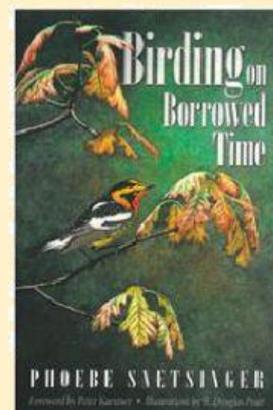


The cancer came back, but even then Phoebe Snetsinger decided not to stop. As she continued with her trips, the cancer went away again. By now she was becoming internationally famous in the birdwatching world. At the age of 61, when she had seen 7,530 species, she was named 'the world's leading bird spotter' by the Guinness Book of Records.

Four years later, during a trip to Mexico, she set a new record when she spotted species number 8,000: the very rare Rufous-necked Wood-Rail. Snetsinger had become a legend. Nobody had spotted so many different bird species before. In fact, at that time only 12 people around the world had seen more than 7,000 species of birds!

Phoebe's interest in birdwatching started in Minneapolis. Then she moved to Missouri with her family. There, she joined a group of people who were interested in birds, insects and plants around the Mississippi River. She became very worried about pollution and its impact on the environment. 'We have to protect nature,' she said. 'If we don't, future generations won't be able to enjoy watching these beautiful birds.'

Sadly, when Phoebe was 68, she died in a car accident on the island of Madagascar off the East African coast. She was there enjoying the hobby that had probably saved her life. She had been there for two weeks, and had added another five to her list of over 8,400 species. Four years after she died, the American Birding Association published her memoirs, *Birding on Borrowed Time*. Many people have enjoyed reading this moving book. It isn't just a story about a bird spotter's travels, but a touching human document of how her hobby helped her to live much longer than expected.



Choose true or false

- 1 Phoebe Snetsinger learned about her illness after she came back from Alaska.
- 2 When she got the bad news, she took some time to recover and then started travelling.
- 3 After travelling for about ten years, she had won the fight against her illness forever.
- 4 Only 12 other people were as successful with their bird spotting as Phoebe.
- 5 Phoebe liked breaking records, but she didn't care a lot about the environment.
- 6 When Phoebe finally died of cancer, she was on holiday doing what she loved most.
- 7 Just before she went on her last trip, she published her famous book *Birding on Borrowed Time*.
- 8 The book is both about birdwatching and the heroic way Phoebe got on with her life.