Even the most common birds engage in surprisingly complex behavior. You can spy on their secret lives right out your window.

Marie Read says birdwatching is a great way to learn about nature and reduce stress. Read is a wildlife photographer and author of “The Secret Lives of Common Birds.” She advocates a kind of Zen approach to birdwatching.

“Just sit quietly or go to a park where there are birds that are used to seeing people and just sit quietly and relax and breathe. And kind of open your mind and your senses and the birds will start behaving in front of you and you’ll be able to watch them go about their lives.”

Read says you might witness some intriguing behavior, like the broken-wing display seen in killdeer and other shorebirds. An adult bird flutters along the ground, dragging a wing as if it’s broken.

“It usually is doing this when the nest is nearby, or when there are newly fledged chicks nearby. And it’s trying to distract the attention of whoever is trying to approach or inadvertently approaching on that bird’s nest.”

This fakery is meant to draw predators away from the bird’s young. Even sandhill cranes have been reported to employ this trick.

Read says if you watch long enough, personalities emerge from individual birds. She says you don’t even have to leave your home to see these behaviors, as long as your yard has plenty of shrubs and wildflowers.

“The more things that you can let run wild in your yard, the more different kinds of birds, not only will they find food there, but when it’s a little bit wilder and there’s more trees and shrubs, they’ll feel a bit safer there. One thing birds need is cover; they don’t like to be out in the open too much for fear of attracting predators.”

That’s Marie Read, author of “The Secret Lives of Birds.”