The Birds Around Us

An Environmental Study Unit
For Kindergarten – 2nd Graders

Muhlenberg College
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- Bird list
- Bird Sounds
- Bird colors and markings
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- The End

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- Bird Body Diagram
- Birds Word Search and Answer Key
- Bird Body Part Clues
- Bird Food Match

*“Mamma Nature’s Pizza Parlor” Activity Copy Masters*
The Birds Around Us

Author: Laurie Rosenberg, Muhlenberg College
Grade Level: K-2nd
Lesson Time: Two hours for the field study, with an additional hour for the optional activities.
Suggested Class Structure: Guided discussion and demonstration, field study outside on school grounds, hands on activities
Subject Areas: Science and Language Arts

GOAL

Students will gain an understanding of what makes birds unique members of the animal kingdom. They will receive an introduction to the types of bird adaptations, including beaks, feathers and feet. Students will practice using observation of body shapes, relative size and feather coloring and markings to identify birds. They will gain an understanding of how birds’ adaptations help them survive and thrive in a variety of habitats. They will learn about how birds build nests and use songs to communicate.

MATERIALS

☐ Pictures or mounts of various types of birds, such as a hawk, crow, robin, catbird chickadee and goldfinch.
☐ Bird silhouettes made from black tagboard. There are sixteen patterns for bird silhouettes included in the lesson appendix, starting on page 14.
☐ PowerPoint Slides of bird types, or similar pictures from the books listed in the “Resources” section starting on page 7.
☐ Audubon “Identiflyer” birdcall player, or a tape or CD of bird calls. Ordering information is available in the “Resources” section beginning on page 6.
☐ Bird field guides.
☐ Bird Notes log books, one for each student.
☐ Pencil and set of crayons for each student.
☐ Bird nests (Optional, you need a collector’s permit from the PA Game Commission to posses a bird’s nest! Check the resources section for information on how to obtain a collector’s permit.)
☐ Set of noisemakers, two of each kind, enough for the class. (Optional)
☐ Blindfolds, enough for everyone in the class. (Optional)
☐ Small pictures of bird food mounted on tagboard with Velcro on the back and bird “pizzas” made from round cardboard with felt glued on so it resembles a pizza. There are copy masters for the bird food in the lesson appendix. (Optional)

ADVANCE PREPARATION

✔ Gather live mounts or bird pictures
✔ Get trade books and field guides
✔ Cut out the bird silhouette patterns, trace them onto black tagboard and cut them out. You can make additional silhouette patterns by enlarging and tracing pictures from bird picture books.
✔ Download “Birds” PowerPoint from Graver Web site or borrow the CD from Muhlenberg College.
✔ Run off a Bird Notes field log book for each student. Copy masters are in the appendix of this lesson.
✔ Buy Audubon “Identiflyer” or borrow one from Muhlenberg College. If this option is not available, buy or borrow a CD of birdcalls.
✔ Make a felt board, felt pizzas and food tokens with Velcro on the back. Gather birdseed, small stuffed bunny, plastic...
insect models, hook, small pliers, and forceps. (Optional)
☑ Purchase or gather noisemakers, or borrow a set from Muhlenberg College. (Optional)
☑ Buy or make a blindfold for each student. Bandanas make suitable blindfolds. (Optional)
☑ Get sheets of large white kraft paper and crayons for murals. (Optional)

**PROCEDURES – Outline and Narrative**

**Introduction – How To Identify the Birds Around You – 20 min.**

Explain to the students that this first part of the lesson is to prepare them for going out in the field and observing birds. They will learn about what kinds of things to focus on when looking at a bird that will help them identify it. These things are size, shape, (wings, beak, head, feet, etc.), colors and patterns, behavior and calls.

**Relative size**

One of the first things to notice when trying to identify a bird is its size. We will compare the birds we observe to the size of some common birds—a crow, a robin and a goldfinch. Show the students the mounts of these birds. If a bird is about the size of the crow or larger, we’ll consider that a large bird. If the bird is about the size of a robin, we’ll consider that a medium-sized bird. If the bird is the size of a goldfinch or smaller, we’ll consider that a small bird. Now we’ll look at some other mounts and compare them to the size of our sample mounts.

Show the students the mounts of a red-tailed hawk, a catbird and a chickadee. Compare the size of these birds to the crow, the robin, and the goldfinch. The hawk is a large bird, the catbird is a medium-sized bird, and the chickadee is a small bird. Show the class a mount of a song sparrow and ask them what sized bird it is. The correct answer is “small.”

**Silhouettes**

The next bird feature we will study is the shape of the bird. Different types of birds have differently arranged feathers, different shaped beaks and feet, and hold their bodies in different ways. Show the class several cutouts of bird silhouettes to illustrate this point. Examples are:

- ducks, swans and other birds that paddle on the water,
- woodpeckers with chisel-shaped beaks and stiff tail feathers that they wedge against the trunks of trees,
- wrens--small birds with upturned tails,
- cardinals and blue jays that have a crest.

**Different Kinds of Birds–PowerPoint and Classification Activity – 20 min.**

Explain to the class that you will be showing them a PowerPoint presentation with pictures of some common backyard birds, and they will be asked to observe the shape of the bird, the color and the markings. (Note: if you don’t have access to a computer, overhead transparencies, children’s books or pictures cut out from magazines can also be used for this activity).

After the PowerPoint, hand out a cardboard silhouette to each student or pair of students. Ask them to find someone with a silhouette that matches theirs. After the students are all paired up, quiz them on the silhouettes. Ask them:

- Which silhouette is a predator bird with a hooked beak and broad tail feathers for soaring above the ground searching out small prey? *(Hawk)*
- Which bird has a tiny narrow beak for picking small insects off of the tips of tree branches? *(Warbler, Wren, Chickadee)*
- Which bird has a large, heavy beak shaped like a nutcracker? *(House Sparrow, Cardinal)*
- Which bird has a flat beak for scooping plants up out of the water? (Duck)

**Bird Calls – 20 min.**

Gather students outside and have them listen for birds calling. Ask students why they think birds sing. Some possible answers are: to find a mate, to establish a nesting territory, to warn of danger, to communicate with young and to confuse predators.

Introduce the students to a set of simple bird calls. This may be done by using a bird call tape, CD, or the Audubon “Identiflyer” bird call player that can be borrowed from Muhlenberg College’s Outreach Program. The bird calls that are easiest to pick out and most often heard include: mourning dove, robin, cardinal, blue jay, flicker, downy woodpecker, chickadee and crow. Other bird calls that may be heard depending on the environment include redwing blackbird, Canada goose, mallard duck, nuthatch, tufted titmouse, red-bellied woodpecker, wood thrush, vireo, oriole, goldfinch, pigeon, song sparrow and house sparrow.

Bird watchers have long used calls as important clues to identifying birds. Many common bird songs have words associated with them, such as the barred owl, whose call has been described as “Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all!” Other birds have names evoking the sound of their calls, such as the catbird, the phoebe, and the whip-poor-will. In this next section, students will learn a common folksong and use it to help them remember bird calls and songs. The song is “Had Me a Cat,” and the words and chords can be found at the end of this lesson on page 13. The bird calls the students will learn are:
- **Robin** – “Cheer up cheerily, cheer up cheerily, pretty bird!”
- **Cardinal** – “Cheer, cheer, cheer, fritos, fritos!”

**Blue jay** – “Jay, jay!”
**Woodpecker** – “wik-wik-wik, wik-a-wik-a-wik-a!”
**Chickadee** – “Chick a dee, dee, dee!”
**Mourning dove** – “Coooo, coo, coo, coo.”
**Crow** – “Caw! Caw! Caw!”
**Wood thrush** – “Ee-o-lay”

After the students have learned the song, have them head out to a spot on the edge of the woods and sit or stand for 3-5 minutes, keeping track of the number of different bird calls they hear. Tell the students you will give them the bluejay call when you want them to gather back together. Have the students disperse by picking a quiet spot where they can stand or sit alone. Have the students record the sounds they hear in their *Bird Notes* log books. After at least five minutes of listening, call the group back together. When the whole group is assembled, discuss the bird calls they heard. Did they hear any of the ones they just learned? Did they hear any new calls? What pictures, words or sounds could be used to describe the new calls? Students can record their ideas in their *Bird Notes* log books.

**Note:** bird tapes or the “Identiflyer” can be used at other times during field study to call in birds if they are heard or seen nearby.

**Hike to Observe Birds – 45 min. (On school grounds or at Graver Arboretum)**

During this time the students will take a hike, stopping to watch any birds they see. They will look for certain bird behaviors and fill out the “Bird Behavior Bingo” portion of their *Bird Notes* log books. They will also check off any birds they see in the log books.
At the end of the bird observation hike, students should find themselves in an area bordering several habitats—forest, mowed school grounds, meadow, edge of stream, etc. They should be divided up into as many groups as there are habitats. Each group should examine the habitat for a few minutes, make note of any birds they see or might see, any bird homes, and potential bird food and water sources. Then they should draw a picture in their *Bird Notes* log books of a bird that is likely to live in this habitat. The drawing should include what the bird eats and where it finds shelter and water.

The teacher may wish to have each student or group of students pick a different bird from the habitat. For example, in the forest one student can draw a woodpecker in its habitat, another draw a chickadee, and a third can draw a catbird. In the field, one student can draw a goldfinch, another a tree swallow, and a third can draw a robin. The instructor may want to bring along some field guides so students can check the details of how their bird looks.

Another option for this activity is to have students work in groups to draw murals of their habitat on large sheets of white kraft paper, which can be taken back to school and displayed on bulletin boards.

**Example of nests include:**
- Barn Swallow – mud nest
- Woodpecker – hollow log with entrance hole
- Mourning dove – nest of small twigs and leaves
- Goldfinch – grass nest lined with thistle down
- Chimney Swift – twig nest
- Cardinal – nest made of grapevine bark
- Bluebird – bluebird box

*Note:* This activity can also be done with pictures of birds and their nests, collected from nature magazines, or the instructor can do the activity “Songbirds and their Nests” from the *PA Songbirds Teachers’ Guide and Activity Book*. See the “Resources” section for information on obtaining the activity book.

**Mamma Nature’s Pizza Parlor (Optional Activity – 15 min.)**

Take the students to a table displaying three model felt pizzas and some examples of bird food—seeds, stuffed bunny rabbit, plastic insect models. Then show the students pictures of three types of birds and their beaks—hawk, sparrow and woodpecker. Compare the beaks to tools for eating—the owl’s beak is like a hook for holding and tearing flesh, the sparrow’s beak is like a small pair of pliers for cracking open seeds, and the woodpecker’s beak is like a forceps for extracting insects out from cracks in the bark of trees.

Next, show the students the felt board with the bird food picture cutouts attached to it with Velcro. Ask the students which of the food cutouts would go on a hawk pizza. Students select their choices and create a hawk “pizza” using the felt pizza models. Next ask them
what types of food would go on a sparrow pizza, and a woodpecker pizza.

After students have created the model pizzas they should draw them in their Bird Notes field log books. A shorter and easier option is to give student groups copies of the “menu” sheets and have them select and draw in their log books the appropriate food pictures that each bird would eat.

**Find a Mate (Optional Activity – 15 min.)**

*Note:* You will need at least one assistant for this activity, preferably two or more.

Gather the students together in a large, unobstructed area, and assign them to a partner. Explain that they and their partner are going to pretend to be birds using calls to find their mate. Instead of using their voices, the students will be using noisemakers. Pass out a set of noisemakers to each partner group. Have each group demonstrate their noisemaker’s sound and discuss if certain noisemakers sound like any birds, insects or other animals.

Next, tell the group that to make it more challenging for them to find their mate, you are going to blindfold them and mix up the groups. The students will then have to find their mate again by using their noisemaker to make their call, and listen for their partner with the same call and then walk slowly towards where the sound is coming from. Tell the class that the game will begin when you give the crow warning call “Caw, caw!” and if they hear the call again during the game they should freeze in their tracks.

Students should put their blindfolds on and tie them behind their head. The instructors will probably have to help the students tie their blindfolds. **Once their blindfold is on, students should not move again until you give the signal.** Move the students around until the pairs are separated and the group is well mixed. Then give the crow signal to start the melee. The instructors will have to keep an eye on the students to make sure they don’t smash into each other or wander far from the group. The activity is over when every student has found his or her “mate.” Once the students have found their mates they should stop making their noise. You may want to have students who have found their partner take off the blindfolds and move out of the playing area.

After everyone is all matched up, discuss what it was like for the students to use their ears to find their way around instead of their eyes. Many animals rely on senses other than sight. Can they think of any other senses that animals use? An example would be the sense of smell, which is used extensively by dogs and bears. Ants, bees and moths are another example, they use their antennae to detect scents and vibrations in their environment.

**Assessment**

*Bird Notes* journals/log books, bird worksheets (See the lesson appendix page 14 for a complete list of worksheets.)

**PA Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology Covered by the Unit:**

4.6.4 Ecosystems and Their Interactions

A. Understand that living things are dependent on nonliving things in the environment for survival.
- Identify plants and animals with their habitat and food sources.
- Describe how animals interact with plants to meet their needs for shelter.
4.7.4 Threatened, Endangered and Extinct Species

A. Identify differences in living things.
   • Explain why plants and animals are different colors, shapes and sizes and how these differences relate to their survival.

B. Know that adaptations are important for survival.
   • Explain how specific adaptations can help a living organism to survive.

4.6.4 Ecosystems and Their Interactions

B. Understand that living things are dependent on nonliving things in the environment for survival.
   • Describe the basic needs of an organism.
   • Identify basic needs of a plant and an animal and explain how their needs are met.
   • Identify plants and animals with their habitat and food sources.
   • Describe how animals interact with plants to meet their needs for shelter.

PA Academic Standards for Science and Technology Covered by the Unit

3.1.4 Unifying Themes

C. Illustrate patterns that regularly occur and reoccur in nature.
   • Identify observable patterns (e.g. bird beak shapes bird size, bird silhouettes, bird color and marking patterns).
   • Use knowledge of natural patterns to predict next occurrences (e.g. identify a bird by looking at its size, shape, color, beak and markings)

3.2.4 Inquiry and Design

A. Identify and use the nature of scientific and technological knowledge.
   • Provide clear explanations that account for observations and results. (Use observations of an bird’s size and shape to identify it—for example: cardinals are medium sized birds with red coloration and a crest.)

B. Describe objects in the world using the five senses.
   • Recognize observational descriptors from each of the five senses (e.g., see-blue, feel-rough).
   • Use observations to develop a descriptive vocabulary.

3.3.4 Biological Sciences

A. Know the similarities and differences of living things.
   • Identify life processes of living things (e.g., growth, digestion, react to environment).
   • Know that some organisms have similar external characteristics (e.g., anatomical characteristics; appendages, type of body covering, number of body segments, etc.) and that similarities and differences are related to environmental habitat.
   • Describe basic needs of plants and animals.

RESOURCES

To obtain a collector’s permit to possess bird nests and feathers, you must contact your local PA State Game Commission office and ask for form # PGC 12. To find your local office, go to http://www.pgc.state.pa.us, and click on “Regional Information.” The phone number for the Lehigh Valley office is (610) 926-3136.

Bird Call CDs


To buy an “Identiflyer” check out their Web page, http://www.identiflyer.com/index.html. There is a link for finding “Stores Near You.” In the Lehigh Valley, try Wild Birds Unlimited, 4235 Tilghman St., (610) 366-1725.

Books for the teacher:

**Books for the teacher continued**


**Books for the students:**


**Web sites**

Since the Web is constantly changing, check Muhlenberg’s Outreach Web site for updated listings.

[http://www.muhlenberg.edu/cultural/graver/](http://www.muhlenberg.edu/cultural/graver/)

Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [http://birds.cornell.edu/](http://birds.cornell.edu/)

The Lab is a nonprofit membership institution whose mission is to interpret and conserve the earth's biological diversity through research, education and citizen science focused on birds. Topics include: All About Birds, Bird Facts & FAQs, Bird of the Week, Classroom FeederWatch, and an Educator's Guide to Bird Study.
Bird PowerPoint Outline

Bird Shapes

Birds With A Crest
- Cardinal
- Cedar waxwing

Woodpecker

Key characteristics:
- Chisel shaped beak
- Feet – 2 toes in front, 2 toes in back
- Stiff tail feathers balance against tree

Doves

Pigeon (Rock dove)

Key characteristics:
- Small heads
- Plump body
- Long tail in shape of folded fan

Mourning dove

Wren

Key characteristics:
- Small body
- Upturned tail
- Small, thin beak

Ducks

Mallard

Key characteristics:
- Broad, flat beak
- Float on surface of water
- Slightly S-shaped when walking or floating
Swallow

**Key characteristics:**
- Long, pointed, bent wings
- Short bills
- Swooping flight
- V-shaped tail

Bird Colors

Red Birds

- **Cardinal**
  - Photo courtesy of Michael Kors.
  - [http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html](http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html)

- **House finch**
  - Photo courtesy of Michael Kors.
  - [http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html](http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html)

Blue Birds

- **Blue jay**
  - Photo courtesy of Michael Kors.
  - [http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html](http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html)

- **Bluebird**

Grey Birds

- **Catbird**
  - Photo courtesy of Dr. Daniel Kors.
  - Muhlenberg College Biology Department

- **Tufted titmouse**
  - Photo courtesy of Michael Kors.
  - [http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html](http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html)

Yellow Birds

- **Goldfinch**
  - Photo courtesy of Michael Kors.
  - [http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html](http://www.tele.co.uk/wildlife/gallery.html)

- **Warbler**
  - Photo courtesy of Dr. Daniel Kors.
  - Muhlenberg College Biology Department
Brown and Tan Birds

Mourning doves
Photo courtesy of Michael Myers, http://www.nature.com/nature/photos.html

Wood thrush
Photo courtesy of Dr. Daniel Elam, Middlebury College Biology Department

Black Birds

Grackle
Photo courtesy of Dr. Daniel Elam, Middlebury College Biology Department

Starling

Markings

Black-capped Chickadee

Photo courtesy of Michael Myers, http://www.nature.com/nature/photos.html

Downy Woodpecker

Black and white checkered pattern on wings
Red spot on the top of the male’s head
Black and white stripes across the head

Flicker

Black mustache
Spotted jacket
Photo courtesy of Michael Myers, http://www.nature.com/nature/photos.html
White throated Sparrow

White throat patch
Yellow spot between eye and beak

House Sparrow

Red/brown patch behind eye
Grey head
Black throat
White cheeks

Bird Beaks

Golden eagle

Spears

Heron
Kingfisher

Hooks

Bald eagle
Seed and Nut Crackers
- Cardinal
- Finch
- Sparrow

Straw and Tweezers
- Hummingbird
- Robin
Had Me a Cat

Traditional, adapted by Laurie Rosenberg

Had me a cat, the cat pleased me,
Fed my cat under yonder tree,
Cat went “Fiddle-i-fee,”
“Fiddle-i-fee.”

Had me a robin, the robin pleased me,
Fed my robin under yonder tree,
Robin went “Cheer up, cheerily!”
Cat went Fiddle-i-fee,
Fiddle-i-fee.

Had me a . . .
Cardinal – “Cheer, cheer, Cheer cheer!”
Crow – “Caw, caw, Caw caw!”
Woodpecker – “Wik-wik-wik, Wik-a-wik-a-wik-a!”
Dove – “Coooo, coo, coo, coo, Coooo, coo, coo, coo”
Blue jay – “Jay, jay, Jay, jay!”
Chickadee – “Chick-a-dee, dee, dee, Chick-a-dee, dee, dee!”
Thrush – “Ee-o-lay!”
Kindergartener, First grader, Second grader, etc. - “Peanut butter and jelly, Peanut butter and jelly!”
The Birds Around Us - Lesson Appendix

Copy Masters for:

Bird Silhouettes
- Sparrow/Mocking Bird
- Cardinal/Blue Jay
- Great Blue Heron/Duck
- Robin/Swallow
- Starling/Mourning Dove
- Hummingbird/Woodpecker/Wren
- Hawk/Warbler/Chickadee

Bird Notes Journal/Log Book
- Cover page
- Bird Sounds I Heard
- Bird Behavior Bingo
- Draw a Bird Habitat
- Bird List
- Bird List - Continued
- Mother Nature’s Pizza Parlor – Draw Bird Pizzas
- The End

Bird Worksheets
- Bird Body Diagram
- Birds Word Search and Answer Key
- Bird Body Part Clues
- Bird Food Match

Mamma Nature’s Pizza Parlor Activity - Food Tokens
House Sparrow

Mockingbird
Duck

Great Blue Heron
Bird Notes
These are the bird sounds I heard.
# Bird Behavior Bingo

How many of these behaviors can you see?  
Match three across, down, or diagonally for bingo.

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<th>Hiding</th>
<th>Feeding</th>
<th>Preening</th>
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<td>Flying</td>
<td>Flocking</td>
<td>Freezing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sitting still)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Bathing</td>
<td>Giving an alarm call</td>
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Draw a Bird Habitat
Bird List

- Vulture
- Crow
- Robin
- Chickadee
- Goldfinch
- Swallow
Bird List-continued

- Cardinal
- Bluejay
- Woodpecker
- Bluebird
- Wood Thrush
- Other
Momma Nature’s Pizza Parlor
Draw Bird Pizzas

What kind of topping would these birds like on their pizza?
The End
Directions: Fill in the word that matches the correct part to the bird.

Word Bank

Feathers  Feet
Beak      Wing
**Birds**

Find each of the following words.

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<td>BIRD</td>
<td>FEET</td>
<td>NEST</td>
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T E R T F S T W R B N
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Answer Key

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Directions: Use the word bank to fill in the word that matches the definition.

**Word Bank**

- Feathers
- Beak
- Feet
- Wings

1. A bird uses these to stay warm and dry. ____________

2. A bird uses these to stand, hold on to a branch, swim or grab prey. ____________

3. A bird uses this to eat. ________________

4. A bird uses these to fly. ________________
These hungry birds need some food. Match the bird to its food.
Menu for “Mamma Nature’s Pizza Parlor” Activity
Copy Masters
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Copy Masters