

BACKYARD BIRDING



Observing Birds

Grades: 1-3

Objective: Students will know and be able to:

- Understand the basic needs of birds and all animals
- Learn how birds meet their basic needs in order to survive through pictures, models, and observation of live birds in the schoolyard
- Understand bird adaptations and behaviors for nesting and feeding
- Identify bird habitats
- Understand that birds are living things that grow, reproduce, and need food, air, shelter, space, and water
- Understand the bird life cycle and compare it to life cycles of other animal groups

Sources: Massachusetts Audubon Society



Birds in the School Yard

Through visual presentations, prompted discussions, hand-on activities, and guided schoolyard explorations, students will be taught the basic essentials for the physical survival of birds, and all animals. Students will be introduced to the concept of habitat as a place where an animal can find everything it needs (food, water, shelter, air, and space) and that different species have different habitat requirements. Students will learn how to behave to maximize their chances of observing animals in the schoolyard and elsewhere. Students will be introduced to a variety of nests and nesting resources and will create one of their own.

Lesson Objectives

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Activity Set #1 – What birds need to survive

Materials and Resources

- Various printed images of birds featuring shelters (nests, habitats, nesting boxes) and feeding behaviors (birds catching food, eating, feeding young) from calendars, posters, magazines, or online sources
- A storybook to read aloud. One suggestion is *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon
- Any field guide or laminated field sheet of birds that includes your state.
- For background reference: “The Birdwatcher’s Companion to North American Birdlife” published by No. Princeton U. Press, written by Chris Leahy: www.amazon.com/Birdwatchers-Companion-Christopher-Leahy/dp/0517189089
- Nest building materials– sticks, dried plant materials, leaves, string, yarn, etc. These can be collected around the schoolyard by the students, or they can be brought in by the teacher or volunteer. You can also supply paper cups, bowls, or bags to use as a base, and some mud to use as “glue.”

Vocabulary

Nest
Shelter

Habitat
Camouflage

Behavior

Procedures

I. What birds need to survive

Lead a prompted discussion of what we need to survive – food, water, a place to live, adults to care for us, staying safe and clean, etc. Using the various printed images of birds featuring shelters, lead a prompted discussion of what birds need to survive – food, water, parental care, and shelter. Introduce the word habitat to describe a place where a bird can find everything it needs (food, water, shelter, air, and space) and give examples of habitats - meadows, forests, marshes, schoolyards, and backyards.



2. Nests

Explain that birds need nests to shelter and protect their eggs and hatchlings. Show images of various types and sizes of nests – woven sticks and plant materials, baskets, tunnels, mounds, etc. Discuss that nests are made of many different materials – sticks, stems, leaves, sand, mud, pine needles, moss, hair or fur, bark, feathers, spider web silk, etc. depending on what is available in a bird’s habitat and how that species of bird has evolved. Explain that birds nest on the ground, in and on buildings, in the branches of living trees and shrubs, in holes and cavities in both living and dead trees, in nest boxes people provide, and sometimes in the nests of other birds. Some birds make no nest at all, just scrape a little depression in sand, for example. Using various nest building materials, have each student (or small group of students) build a nest. Ask students to imagine building a nest with only a beak to work with. When nest-building with students, it may be helpful to provide a base structure such as a paper bag or bowl. After gathering materials for nests, mud may be used as the ‘glue’ for the rest of the materials. Students can also make simple nests in a sand pit/digging area to learn how this is done by some ground nesting birds.

3. Birding Expedition

When the nests are completed, have students cut out their birds and eggs from the Lesson One worksheets, and arrange their nests. The nests (containing birds and eggs) can be placed, or hidden, around the classroom or school yard. When all the birds are in the nests, go for a “classroom bird watching expedition” and see if the students can find all the birds and nests.



Fun facts

Birds build nests with their beaks and feet!

A Bald Eagle’s nest is added to each year and may get to weigh more than a ton!

Few birds use their nest other than when they are raising their young, unlike people that live in houses year round.

Activity Set #2 – Exploring the School Yard

Materials and Resources

- Copies of “School Yard Bird Habitat Bingo” (one for each student or small group of students)
- Pencils
- Copies of “How many birds can you find around the schoolyard?” tally sheet



- Any field guide or laminated field sheet of birds that includes your state.
- For background reference: “The Birdwatcher’s Companion to North American Birdlife” published by No. Princeton U. Press, written by Chris Leahy: www.amazon.com/Birdwatchers-Companion-Christopher-Leahy/dp/0517189089

Vocabulary

Habitat
Niche

Nest

Procedures

I. Schoolyard bird habitat safari

Explain to the students that the class will be going out to the schoolyard to look for birds, signs of birds, and things birds need in their habitats. Ask students how they think they should behave if they see birds in the school yard. Encourage the students to step slowly and quietly, using their ears as much as their eyes. Ask them to “freeze in place” if they see or hear a bird and slowly raise their arms and point to what they observed.

Take a walk around the schoolyard and look and listen for birds. If there are any birds, stop and observe them for as long as possible.

Give each student (or small group of students) a copy of the School Yard Bird Habitat Bingo and a pencil. Using this bingo game, they will look for birds, nests, sources of food and water, places for shelter, and other things birds need in their habitats.










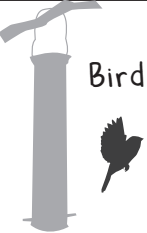


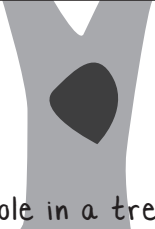











After the students have found as many of the items as possible, come back together and have the students orally share what they observed.

Students can also complete the tally sheet “How many birds can you find in the schoolyard?”



School Yard Bird Habitat Bingo

B I N G O

<p>Bird on a branch</p> 	 <p>Feather</p>	 <p>Food-berries</p>	 <p>A bird looking for food</p>	<p>Food - an insect</p> 
<p>Flying bird</p> 	 <p>Signs of a Woodpecker</p>	 <p>Walking bird</p>	 <p>Food - a flower</p>	 <p>Bird feeder</p>
 <p>Material for nest building</p>	 <p>Bird call</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">Free Space</p>	 <p>Hole in a tree</p>	 <p>Bird tracks</p>
<p>Singing bird</p> 	<p>Water for a bird to drink</p> 	 <p>Food - seeds</p>	<p>Shelter for a bird</p> 	 <p>Hiding bird</p>
<p>Bird with more than one color</p> 	<p>Food - a nut</p> 	 <p>Nest</p>	 <p>Flying bird</p>	<p>Food - pine cone</p> 



Your Name

Date

How many birds can we find in the schoolyard?

Habitat	Number of Birds Count the birds you see in each area. Draw a tally mark for each bird that you see
Outdoor classroom and garden	
Playing field	
Front entrance of school (trees and bushes)	
Sky	

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