

TRB 4:5 - Investigation 9 - Bird Study

Summary

Students will learn about specific bird characteristics and become more aware of the ecosystems that support each bird.

Group Size

Large Groups

Materials

- [Chart of a bird with labeled parts](#)
Binoculars
Numbered index cards for teacher
- [Pictures of Utah birds](#)

Additional Resources

There are several agencies that have sets of binoculars available for checkout in many areas of the state. Some of these are:

Utah Society for Environmental Education (USEE) 328-1549
Utah Audubon Society
Division of Wildlife Resources/Project Wild
National Park Service
Forest Service
Bureau of Land Management

Background for Teachers

Birds are a group of animals with very specific characteristics. They are warm blooded, have feathers and hollow bones, and lay eggs. All birds have wings, but not all birds fly. They all have beaks, but each type of bird has a different type of beak, depending on the kind of food it eats.

Common birds in Utah include the red-tailed hawk, barn owl, lark, robin, pinyon jay, magpie, and crow. There are also many other birds that live here, as well as the thousands that migrate through Utah on their journeys to warmer climates, or those returning north in the spring. This activity not only helps students learn about specific bird characteristics, but also make them more aware of the ecosystems that support each bird. Students will practice using binoculars and identifying various birds by color, size, and physical characteristics.

Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Use a Science Process and Thinking Skills

Instructional Procedures

Pre-Assessment/Invitation to Learn

Play "What Am I?" to introduce this activity. Give descriptions of some locally common birds, one part at a time, and have the students try to guess what you are describing. Don't tell them that you are describing birds (e.g., "The chin is black," "The chest is yellow," "Favorite food is sunflowers," "Enjoys winter in South America").

Instructional Procedures

Discuss the characteristics all birds share and what types of ecosystems they live in.

If possible provide each student with a pair of binoculars (see additional resources). Have students take the binoculars out of the cases and experiment with how they work. Through

inquiry, they will find out how to focus the image. Show them how to focus the image.

Encourage peer teaching if some students have used binoculars previously. After investigation, each student should be able to adjust the eyepiece and focus. Emphasize that these are expensive pieces of equipment and help the class develop a set of rules for using the binoculars and penalties for misusing them.

Use a set of cards with small letters and numbers printed on them to have binocular speed quizzes. To pass the quiz, a student must take a pair of binoculars that is out of focus and set to the wrong eye width and adjust them so that they can read the card in 5 seconds or less. This activity can go very quickly if a relay game is set up. It is also a good time to practice the proper precautions in handling the binoculars.

Discuss some of the variety of bird species that will be found in your area. Using the correct names for bird parts, show pictures of these birds and discuss their behavior. (Use pictures from the sources given.)

Show the pictures one at a time and have the students practice focusing the binoculars on the bird and identifying its name. As each is named, review the colors, bird parts, and beaks that help identify the bird.

Repeat the last activity, but this time have the birds fly through the air. (Take each card and have it pass in an arc through the air for about 5 seconds.) This will help students learn to focus their binoculars quickly. Most birds are constantly moving to stay away from predators and look for food, so this behavior will occur when students move to the neighborhood for practice.

Now we are ready to stalk the birds! With permission from your principal and prior arrangements, begin direct observation and recording of birds and their behavior. Be sure to set up ground rules for behavior and respect for people's property. If students know that the class will come in immediately if these rules are broken, behavior is much more appropriate.

After several days of bird walks, take a special mapping walk. Help students draw a map of the area by providing them with a handout with the blocks around the school outlined. As you walk, draw in landmarks and use symbols to show the locations of birds and nests that you have found in the area. Keep the map up to date by adding newly discovered nests and birds by recording the activity in and around the same area. Develop a map key to use on this sheet.

Extensions

Math-

Create maps of neighborhood bird recording activity. (*Standard III, Objective 2*)

Place bird feeders in areas around the school that are visible to students and have them record species and number of birds that visit. (This can be done very successfully with the Cornell Feeder Watch Program.) (*Standard V, Objective 1*)

Science-

Visit a nearby habitat and practice identifying birds. If possible, visit two different ecosystems, such as a freshwater wetland and the Great Salt Lake. Compare the birds that live in each. Do they have different adaptations to survive in that environment? Do they eat the same food? (*ILOs 1,4*)

Homework & Family Connections

Have students take home a handout so that they can teach their parents about birds.

Encourage families to practice proper behavior for bird watching together at home. Take a "quiet" walk and see how long they can go without talking. Sit and record ten things they hear in nature and ten things they hear that are manmade.

Assessment Plan

Have cooperative learning groups create posters of bird characteristics. Use a rubric that will outline

information students need to have for their poster. Have each group share in the creating and presentation of the poster. Display them in the classroom.

Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](#)