

Observing Bird Behaviors



Grade Levels

Pre K-2

Overview

The following activity is an introductory lesson in the basics of observation skills for young children. Students will construct a bird feeder using basic materials, hang their feeders at a safe outdoor location, and observe the behaviors of the birds who visit. They will learn about what makes birds unique among animals, why birds are important to ecosystems, and different seasonal patterns of birds such as nest building and migration.

Background

Phenology is the study of the timing of life cycle events, done mostly through personal observations. We can observe the seasonal changes of birds that include migration, nest building, and raising young.

Real-world Connection

Observation skills are necessary for scientific study and are included throughout the elementary standards. In addition, observation skills are necessary for all aspects of learning academically, socially, and emotionally. Observing birds is can help students build connections to the natural world.

Citizen Science Connection

Nature's Notebook is not critical to completing the activity, rather can be used as an addendum to the activity.

Estimated Time

20-30 mins to create the bird feeders

20 minutes per day for 5 days for observations

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Make observations about the natural world
- Understand the importance of birds to ecosystems
- Explain the seasonal patterns of many bird groups

Next Generation Science Standards

LS: Life Science			
	Kindergarten		Grades 1-2
K-LS1-1	Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive	2-LS4-1	Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats
K-ESS3-1	Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and animals (including humans) and the places they live	2-LS2-2	Develop a simple model that mimics the function of an animal in dispersing seeds or pollinating plants

Conducting the Activity

Materials

Resources needed

- Cardboard tube
- Paper plates
- String
- Vegetable shortening
- Craft sticks
- Bird Seed
- Natural fibrous material such as cotton (optional)
- Observation book either printed as a sheet or cut and stapled into a booklet

Engage

Connect to prior knowledge

- Ask your students about different types of animals - mammals, fish, reptiles, birds. How can you tell these different types of animals apart?
- What are some things that are special about birds? What makes birds different
- Discuss observation, and what senses we use to make observations
- Discuss the life cycle of birds and how adults will make a nest and lay eggs, protect them and keep them warm, and then feed the nestlings after they hatch.

Resource created by:

Samantha Brewer,
Volunteer Engagement
Coordinator, USA-NPN

NOTES ON ACTIVITY

Conducting the Activity

Explore

Hands-on learning

1. Provide each student with a cardboard tube, a paper plate with bird seeds, some vegetable shortening, a craft stick, and 1 ft of string.
2. Using the craft stick, have the students cover the cardboard tube with a thin layer of vegetable shortening
3. Roll the toilet paper tube over the bird seed, evenly coating it.
4. Put the string through the toilet paper and tie the ends together
5. If using fibrous material, fill the inside of the cardboard tube with material, with some sticking out of each end of the tube. Birds can collect this for nesting material.
6. Hang the bird feeders in an area that can be easily viewed by the group. Sprinkle some seeds under the feeders.
7. It may take a few days for birds to find the feeders. When you start noticing birds arriving, plan a trip outside where students can bring their observation books and observe the bird behaviors.
8. Have the students draw any behaviors that they see.
9. Continue observations on five different days.

Explain

Listening and communicating understanding

- After each observation period, allow the students to discuss any observations they noted. Are they able to tell different birds apart? Did the birds show any interesting behaviors in how they collected food or communicated with each other?
- Discuss the different types of birds they noticed. Did different birds collect seeds from the feeders than from the ground?
- The fibrous material can be used by birds to make nests. Did any birds collect that material? Is it a season where birds are nesting?

Extend

Group projects, real world connections

1. Create a guide with common birds that students may see in your area. What are ways that we can tell these birds apart? Can you identify any of the birds in the guide at your feeders?
2. Think about what behaviors people do each season. Are there things that we do in the spring, summer, fall, and winter? What about plants?
3. Teachers can create a *Nature's Notebook* account and enter observations.

Evaluate

Summarize, check for understanding, assess

- The drawing and reflection pieces embedded within the activity are the best way to evaluate
- Share one observation you made
- Share one thing you know about plant growth and/or pollinators (or one thing you have learned)
- Share one place would benefit from increased plant growth
- Share any questions you may have

My Observation Book

Day 1

Name _____

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5



What Birds Do

Birds are amazing animals. They all have feathers and wings to help them fly. Birds have different things to do in every season. In the winter, many birds live where it's warm. In the spring, they fly many miles to take care of their babies. This long flight is called a migration. When they find a place to live for the summer, they build a nest and lay eggs. In the summer, birds will sit on their eggs to keep them warm until they hatch. Once the babies have hatched, the adults will bring them food until they are old enough to fly. In the fall, when the babies can fly, they will all migrate back to where it is warm for the winter.

What do all birds have?

What is a migration?

What do birds do in the summer?
