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ACTIVITY: Backyard Birding

CHALLENGE

Be a Scientist, become an expert observer! Scientists are explorers. Science starts with curiosity and observation. Can you keep your ears and eyes open and record what you notice? Can you identify birds in your backyard and in nearby nature? Using science skills is a great way to explore nature.

MATERIALS

- Create a nature journal (any journal can be used to record observations in nature)
- Habitat and Bird Identification Activity Sheet
- Or a piece of paper
- Pen or Pencil

EXPLORE

How many different kinds of birds can you find? Where will you find them? What makes good bird habitat?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Use your senses to discover the birds in your backyard or in nearby nature. Follow along on the Habitat and Bird Identification Activity sheet to learn more about bird habitat so that you will have better luck finding some birds. Then, you will learn about Bird Groups and be able to identify some of the birds that you find.

SHARE

Using the information you collect about each bird you observe, you have a good chance of identifying your bird. You can use a field guide or app to help you find out what kind of bird it is, and you can learn more about it. If you have access to a smartphone or tablet, the Merlin Bird ID app can give you a list of birds you might have seen. www.merlin.allaboutbirds.org. Other Bird id apps you can try are: iBird, iNaturalist & eBird.

REFLECT

You've done a great job exploring your area for birds! Did you notice anything that made you wonder and want to learn more about it? Write down what you noticed as well as your questions so you can explore these topics further if you choose to. You can share these observations and questions with friends, family or your teacher.

EXTEND

You've learned a lot about habitat and the birds around you. Use your new skills to count birds and become a citizen scientist! Find a good spot to look for birds and carefully collect data during a 5 to 10-minute bird count. If you don't know the name of a bird, make notes or a sketch and look it up later.

HABITAT AND BIRD IDENTIFICATION ACTIVITY

Habitat Search:

Before you start looking for birds, it would be good to know what birds like to use as habitat. A good habitat has everything a bird needs to survive. There are four parts to a habitat: food, water, cover, and space.

<p><input type="checkbox"/> FOOD: Just like you, birds need a healthy diet. For example different birds eat different foods, for example seeds, fruits and insects.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> WATER: From a puddle to a pond, from a ripple to a river, birds need clean water for drinking and bathing.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> COVER: Birds need safe places to sleep and raise young, and shelter from bad weather and predators. Birds find cover in trees, bushes and in shelters made by humans.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> SPACE: Birds need room to grow and live. They need to be able to find enough food, water, and cover in the place they call “home”.</p>

Bird Search:

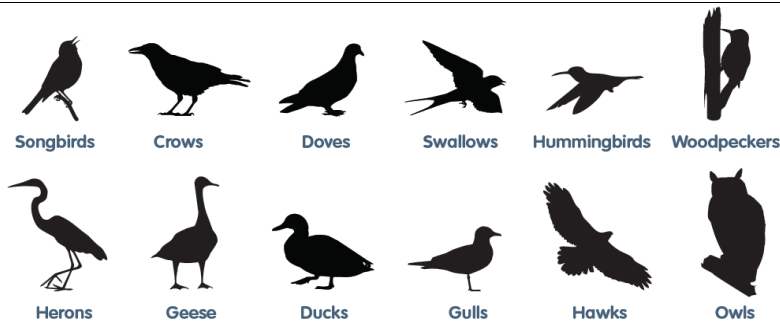
Now that you’ve considered what kind of habitat birds need, let’s see if you can find any birds. You can find out if birds are here by using your eyes and ears. Spend some time exploring your area to look for evidence, habitat and birds. How many items can you find and check off the lists below?

Bird Evidence	Variety of birds	Birds using habitat - Look for them:
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Feather <input type="checkbox"/> Droppings <input type="checkbox"/> A nest</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Group of three or more birds <input type="checkbox"/> Two birds together <input type="checkbox"/> Colorful bird <input type="checkbox"/> Bird that is mostly black <input type="checkbox"/> Bird with white on its body <input type="checkbox"/> Bird with a long tail <input type="checkbox"/> Bird with a short tail</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> On a branch <input type="checkbox"/> On a wire or roof <input type="checkbox"/> Flying or soaring <input type="checkbox"/> On the ground <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming <input type="checkbox"/> Eating <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking</p>

Bird Groups:

You are really becoming a great observer and explorer! Now that we know that birds are all around us, let’s start trying to identify them.

There are many different types of birds. They can be grouped by their shape. Species in each group have similar shapes. Here are just a few bird groups you might see as you explore.



Can you find a bird from any of these groups?

On a piece of paper or in your Nature Journal, record the group name (such as owl) and where in the habitat you saw it (such as in a tree).

Identification Clues:

Now that you can use shape to determine a bird’s group, let’s add more details to help you identify a bird by species. Bird watchers use many clues to identify birds. Knowing the shape, size, and color pattern of a bird, and where and when you saw it, can help you identify the birds you see.

Focus on one bird and gather information about it. You can check the boxes below or record it in your journal.

<p>Where was it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> At a feeder <input type="checkbox"/> In the water <input type="checkbox"/> On the ground <input type="checkbox"/> In trees or bushes <input type="checkbox"/> On a fence or wire <input type="checkbox"/> Soaring or flying 	<p>Circle up to three main colors you saw.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Brown <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Gray <input type="checkbox"/> Black
<p>What size was the bird? Put a star on the line closest to the size of the bird you saw.</p>	

Did you notice any interesting patterns on the bird? Were there stripes on the head or wings? Sketch or make notes about any patterns you observed.

Extensions: [Learn more](#) about hummingbird habitat in your backyard and the Hummingbirds at Home Project!