

Bird Watching

Designed by Kerri Rosen | May 2020



Grade Level: pre-K-6th grade

Season: Fall/Winter/Spring

Approximate Time: 20 minutes

Subject Area: Natural Science

Educational Benefits & Standards:
Developing observation skills,
Extending oral and written
communication skills, Making a
connection to nature, Increasing focus
and attention

Description

Children will take binoculars and bird guides into the garden to identify birds and document their observations.

Materials

1. Binoculars for each child
2. Field guides with photos and facts about local birds
3. Paper, pencils, and colored pencils

Set-Up

1. Gather binoculars and guides and arrange them on a table
2. Set out paper, pencils, and colored pencils

Opening Discussion

Ask the children if they have noticed birds in the garden, in their yard, or on a walk. If so, what skills/senses did they use to observe them? Allow a few responses and use their collective experience to introduce the lesson. Show the children the materials, taking time to explain how to adjust the binoculars, and use the field guides. Point out the writing materials and encourage them to draw and write about the birds they see. Define the limits of the search area, if any. Before they start, ask the children what they think they need to do to get close enough to observe birds? Use their ideas to explain that bird watchers try to be quiet and still, so they don't scare birds away.

Activity

Invite the children to look for birds. Help them choose partners or groups, if necessary. Observe the children, stepping in to ask questions to further their understanding, make suggestions to encourage their success, and help them keep track of the remaining time.



Processing

Ask the children to share their personal experiences. How did their group work together? Was it hard to find birds to observe? Were they able to identify any of the birds in the field guides? Did any of them draw or write about the birds? Would they like to share their work with the group?

Extensions & Variations

To build on students' interest in bird watching, make journals for them to record their observations. Ask them to draw pictures, write words and sentences to describe each bird they see, in particular their size, color, and where they saw the bird. Teach them how to use their notes to identify birds using local field guides and the Merlin Bird ID app from the Cornell Lab. To build younger students' interest in birds, make simple bird feeders out of pine cones, peanut butter, and birdseed and hang outside the classroom. Invite older students to design and construct birdhouses out of recycled milk cartons, branches, or wood.

Literature Connections

Bird Watch by Christie Matheson

Crow not Crow by Jane Yolen and Adam Stemple

Owl Babies by Martin Waddell

Fly With Me: A Celebration of Birds Through Pictures, Poems and Stories by Jane Yolen, Heidi E.Y. Stemple, Adam Stemple, and Jason Stemple

Counting Birds: The Idea That Helped Save Our Feathered Friends by Heidi E.Y. Stemple

Educational Benefits & Standards

Children develop a connection to the natural world through bird watching, which encourages interest and concern for the environment. They use and refine their observational skills by learning to identify, classify, and distinguish between a variety of birds. Documenting and sharing their observations provides opportunities to improve their oral and written communication through discussions, journaling, and sketching. Bird watching is an engaging activity that helps children slow down and focus their attention for increasing lengths of time.

Source Material & References

Cornell Lab of Ornithology—Home | Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Birds, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Perspective: Let's Start Teaching Ornithology in High School

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