



HOW TO IDENTIFY A BIRD

GRADE LEVELS
1 - 6

OBJECTIVE

To gather data for the classification of bird species.

MATERIALS

For each student:

- Bird Data worksheet (Figure 6)
- Bird Identification Marks worksheet (Figure 7)
- clipboard
- pencil

PREPLANNING

1. Make one copy each of Figures 6 and 7 for each student in the class.
2. Make a larger teacher's copy of the Bird Data worksheet to which the students may refer. It should include the explanations of each classification category (noted below for teacher reference).
3. Arrange for a class field trip to one of the recommended habitats or set up bird feeders on the school grounds so that a variety of birds are attracted.

PROCEDURE

1. Discuss the classification categories with the class. Use the teacher's copy of the Bird Data worksheet.
2. Have the students observe at least one bird and complete the descriptions in each category. Continue making observations of other birds for comparison.
3. Using the descriptions, identify the species in a field guide to birds.

FOR TEACHER REFERENCE –
EXPLANATIONS FOR CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORIES:

Compare sizes. Use a familiar bird for comparison: small - sparrow; medium - robin or pigeon; large- crow. Observe the new bird and compare. This bird is “larger than,” “smaller than,” “same as” a sparrow, or robin, or crow.

Note shapes. Is the bird chunky or slender? Does it have long or short legs? What shape is the bill? What shape is the tail?

Note field marks (Figure 7). What marks, patterns, or colors does the bird have that are unique and identifiable?

Note flight. What type of flying is the bird doing? Is it soaring, or undulating, or diving? Is there a pattern to its flight? For example, does it flap, sail, flap, sail?

Note sounds. What does the song or the call sound like?

Note behavior. What is the bird doing? Is it scratching on the ground or pecking at buds on a tree?

Note site. In what type of habitat did you see the bird? Where exactly was it? For example, a bird might be on the beach, wings tucked and facing the wind.

Note season. What season is it?

Accepted species name: What name is given to this bird in the field identification guide?

FOLLOW-UP

Keep a class list of birds observed and identified.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Peterson, Roger Tory. *Birds of Eastern and Central North America: Peterson Field Guide Series.*

Latimer, Jonathan P. and Karen Stray Nolting. *Songbirds: Peterson Field Guides for Young Naturalists.* Note: This series also includes *Backyard Birds, Birds of Prey, and Shorebirds.*



NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

Figure 6

Name: _____

Bird Data

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Bird Name: | |
| Size | Shape |
| Field Marks | Flight |
| Sound | Behavior |
| Site | Season |

© 1992 New Jersey Audubon Society

NEW JERSEY
AUDUBON
SOCIETY

Figure 7

Name: _____

Bird Identification Marks

