

Birds of Washington

Subject	Grade Level	Time
Science	2nd (Adaptable Pre-K to 6th)	1 hour

Overview

Whatcom County has a rich and varied assortment of birdlife, which has always attracted ornithologists. The first collection at the Whatcom Museum was the Edson-Edson-Booth Bird Collection, containing hundreds of taxidermized birds, most of them local. The North Cascades Audubon Society has partnered with the museum to provide context to this amazing collection. This tour, aimed at 2nd grade standards but adaptable for a range of ages, helps students learn close observation skills, develop a love of birds, and discover how birds adapt to fit their environment.

Objectives/Standards

Science (2nd Grade)

- 2-LS4-1 Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.
- 2-LS2-2 The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s).

Art (Elementary)

- 3.2 Uses the arts to communicate for a specific purpose.

Vocabulary

Ornithology: The scientific study of birds.

Taxidermy: The art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals with lifelike effect.

Adaptation: The act or process of changing to better suit a situation

Materials and Resources

Tech Components: Video of 11 local bird species set up on projector

Bird Observation Slips: Slips of paper with a bird on one side and space to write 3 things they noticed about the bird on the other.

Edson-Edson-Booth Ornithology Collection

Filling the Bill book by Aileen Fisher

Sketch pads or paper, with colored pencils

Lesson Body

- Anticipatory Set- Play video of local birds for students, asking them to watch with an eye on the birds varying bills and feet.
- After video, distribute bird observation slips. Explain these are all birds from the video that we have in our displays. Instruct students to hunt for their bird, and then think about 3 things they noticed that makes the bird unique. Let students explore, find their bird, and examine it for 5-10 minutes. Instructor spreads around to assist.
- Gather together and share some of the things we noticed about different birds. Discuss with students how, before certain technologies, one of the best ways to closely observe birds was to taxidermy specimens. Introduce EEB Ornithology collection and North Cascades Audubon Society (including volunteer if available). By close observation, we can discover many interesting and unique things about birds. Many of these things we observe are adaptations, helping the bird survive and thrive.
- Read Filling the Bill book together. Explain that by looking closely at a bird's beak, we can find out what it eats. Show examples of different beaks and what birds use them for.
- Beaks aren't the only things that birds adapt to different tasks. Ask students if any of them like swimming. Have they used a fin to swim faster? Some birds have feet that are webbed to propel them faster. Other birds have feet adapted for other circumstances. Show examples of different feet and what birds use them for. For larger groups, split group with instructor taking beaks and assistant taking feet (or vice versa).
- After learning about beaks/feet, let students sketch a bird in the collection. Ask them to pay extra attention to depicting what we just learned. Gather and share some sketches.
- Transition to Backyard Birds. Explain that all the birds in our video are local to this area. Ask students how can we make our neighborhoods, backyards, and patios bird friendly? Discuss...
 - Pets: Cats hunt birds, Dogs barking scare birds away from food and startle them.
 - Untamed Space: Birds need untamed space to gather branches for nests, find bugs to eat, and have shelter from predators.
 - Native Plants: Plants native to the area host bugs native to the area, which native birds prefer to eat.

Assessment

Informal assessment via question participation and sketching activity. While sharing sketches, inquire about the bills and feet of the birds they sketched, what type they are, and how they were used.

Add-on Components

- Build a Bird- After learning about the different adaptations of birds, have students build an imaginary bird, with a specific type of beak and feet. Then have students explain why their bird has those features. This can be done via sketch or, with enough planning, mock beaks and legs.
- Touch Objects- Procure examples of beaks for touching and closer inspection.