Quick & Easy Habitat Education Activities

Bird Beak Buffet

Adapted from ‘Bird Beak Buffet’ in Ranger Rick Naturescope: Birds, Birds, Birds

Kindergarten
20-30 Minutes
Outdoors/Indoor

Description: This activity introduces students to the concept that characteristics of animals and plants are related to their survival. Students learn that different birds have different types of beaks. They use models of these beaks to gather different types of ‘foods’ and learn that gathering success is limited by the type of ‘beak’ they have.

Objectives:
• Students understand that birds have different types of beaks and that the beak type reflects the kind of food eaten.
• Students learn that habitats provide a variety of foods for many different birds.

Print Materials:
• ‘How-to-do Activity: Bird Beak Buffet Food’
• Images: ‘Bird Beaks’ (hummingbird, robin and grosbeak)

Kit Materials:
• Model ‘Beaks’: 10 ea. forceps (robin), clothespins (crow), plastic pipettes (hummingbird)
• Model ‘Stomachs’: 1 small plastic cup/student
• Model ‘Food’: (See ‘How-to-do Activity’)
  – ‘Worms’ (thick yarn): at least 20 ‘worms’ in each of two shallow containers
  – ‘Nuts’ (shelled hazelnuts): at least 20 nuts in each of two shallow containers
  – ‘Flowers with Nectar’ (plastic vials of water): at least 10 hung on branches
  – ‘Bugs’ (plastic spiders or other): at least 40 to be placed on rough wood or stone.

Before Activity: Set up feeding stations in habitat area (this is a good job for a classroom assistant). Stations should be arranged along a trail and spaced within sight of each other.

Activity:
• Show Images: ‘Bird Beaks’ to the class and discuss the different types of beaks. Tell students that they will pretend to be these birds. Using household items as their ‘beaks’, they will gather ‘food’ at various food stations, and then place it in their ‘stomachs’. Show students the model ‘stomachs’.
• Divide class into three groups: robin, hummingbird and evening grosbeak. Show the robin group the picture of the robin they will pretend to be. Then hold up the forceps to show what they will be using for their model beaks. Repeat for the other two groups: evening grosbeak modeled by a clothespin ‘beak’; hummingbird modeled by a plastic pipette ‘beak’.
• Point out the ‘food’ stations. Describe the food: worms, nuts, flower nectar and bugs. Tell students that they will use their ‘beaks’ to collect these ‘foods’ and place them in their ‘stomachs’.
• Give each student a ‘beak’ and a ‘stomach’ and show students the boundaries defining the location of the food stations.
• Discuss the Rules:
  – Beaks only, not hands, must be used to pick up food.
  – Food must be moved from beak to stomach for storage.
  – Stomachs need to stay in your hand not on the ground.
  – No one may steal food from another bird.
  – Students must move from station to station to allow others to feed.
• Have students visit the food stations and “eat.” Assist students in understanding that some beaks are better for certain foods, and not suited for other foods. Refill ‘Flower Nectar’ with water if necessary.
• After about 5 minutes, gather as a group and look at which beaks were able to get which food. Discuss the different functions of the different beaks. Refer to the photos of the birds as you ask questions such as, “Which food was the hummingbird best able to gather? What happened when the robins tried to gather nectar? What kinds of food could the evening grosbeak eat easily?” State that, “Birds with one kind of beak eat one kind of food. Birds with other kinds of beaks eat other kinds of food”.
• Ask, “What happens if there is only one kind of food in a habitat area? What if there were only flowers in the habitat, and no nuts? (Etc.)”. Look around and point out that there are many different plants providing different food in the habitat.
• Switch beaks, if time allows, and play again.
• Cleanup – Have students help sort foods and beaks into the correct storage containers.

Vocabulary

Adaptation: modification of an organism or its parts that makes it more fit for existence under the conditions of its environment

Washington State EALRs
Science 1.1 Use properties to identify, describe, and categorize; and use characteristics to categorize living things.
2.1 Develop abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry.

Communication 1.1, 1.2 Focus attention, listen and observe to gain and interpret information.

Seattle School District Standards
1.2 Identify, describe, and categorize living things based on their characteristics, some animals are a lot alike and some are very different from one another.
1.2, 1.4 Plants and animals have features that help them live in different environments.
1.4, 1.5 Animals eat plants or other animals for food and may also use plants for shelter and nesting.

Science Kit: Animals 2x2