**Quick & Easy Habitat Education Activities**

**Bird Observation Walk**

*Developed by Starflower Foundation*

**Description:** Students go into the habitat area and use their binoculars and ears to look and listen for birds. They try to find three birds by sight, and three birds by sound. Students discuss the behavior of the birds and their association with plants.

**Objectives:**
- Students observe similarities and differences between various birds, using ‘binoculars’ as tools to focus attention.
- Students use their senses of sight and hearing, ID sheets, audio recordings and field guides to gain skills in recognizing key characteristics used to identify birds.
- Students recognize it from the audio recording.

**Print Materials:**
- ‘How-to-do Activity: Paper-roll Binoculars’
- Master: ‘Bird Observation Study Sheet’

**Kit Materials:**
- Audio Recording: ‘Common Urban Bird Sounds’
- ‘Binoculars’: 1 per student
- Class set of ‘Bird Observation Study Sheet’: 1 per student or set of students

**Teacher supplied:**
- Local area bird field guide as teacher reference such as:
  - *Familiar Birds of the Northwest* by Nehls
  - *Seattle Birds* by Kavanaugh
  - *Birds of the Pacific Northwest* Coast by Baron, Acorn

**Before activity:** In the habitat area, locate a good spot for bird-watching. Thickets, shrubs and small trees are favored by small birds. Shrub areas that border forests, meadows and water (these are called edge zones) have a greater diversity of bird species.

**Activity:**
- Listen to the audio recording, ‘Common Urban Bird Sounds’. Discuss familiar bird songs, and share stories. Show related ‘Bird Observation Study Sheet’. Ask students if they have ever seen any of these birds. Share stories.
- Say, “How might we look for birds? What do birdwatchers need to do? (stay still, use quiet voices)”. Remind them of the “Everybody Needs a Home” story. If starting in the classroom, move to the habitat area.
- Gather students near observation area. Tell students that for this activity they will each need to try to see three different types of birds and hear three different bird sounds (vary these numbers as needed).
- Say, “Birdwatchers use tools to help them see birds. What tools might they use?” Show ‘binoculars’ and show the “binoculars” and demonstrate how to use them. Say, “Once you see a bird, put the binoculars up to your eyes. The binoculars will help you focus on the bird. Be sure to use the binoculars only when sitting/standing in one spot—not when walking. You might trip!” Discuss appropriate behavior once you spot a bird (don’t yell, chase it, etc.)
- Say, “Once you see a bird, try to identify it using the ‘Bird Observation Study Sheet’. If you hear a bird song, try to recognize it from the audio recording.”
- Pass out ‘Binoculars’ and ‘Study Sheets’ to students. Ask students to find a spot in a forest or meadow, ideally a thicket-like area. Tell students they will crouch or sit and remain silent and still for 4-5 minutes (adjust time as needed for individual class needs) while bird watching and listening. Decide on a signal to indicate the ‘observation time’ is over.
- Begin bird-watching. Assist students in identifying similarities and differences. Use the Study Sheet: ‘Bird Observation’ and field guides to help students recognize key characteristics and correctly identify birds.
- After 4-5 minutes gather students together to discuss their observations. What were the birds doing? (eating, flying, preening, calling, singing). How did they move? Did they make sounds? How big were they? What colors were they? How were the birds using plants? (food, perching, hiding place, nest, nesting material). Share other observations.
- Ask, “Which bird songs did you recognize from the audio recording? From birds you observed?” Share observations.

**Extension:** Have students lay or sit quietly with their eyes closed. Tell them that when they hear a bird song they raise their hand with one finger up. When they hear another, different bird song, raise a second finger. Repeat to a given number (3-5). This extension may be done after listening to the audio recording, or after activity is complete.

**Vocabulary**
- **Identify:** to make known by observing recognizable characteristics
- **Identity:** the sameness of characteristics in different instances
- **Observation:** an act of noting a fact or occurrence, often involving a measurement, a record or description

**Washington State EALRs**
- **Science 1.1** Use properties to identify, describe, and categorize; and use characteristics to categorize living things.
- **Science 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.

**Science Kit: Animals 2x2**