
Team Flight

Introduction to Field Study

Summary: This field journal is designed to introduce students to the concepts of birds and their habitats. It is divided into several activities that can be done before your class goes on the field experience, activities that are done in the field, and post-field activities to reinforce what they learned and give the students opportunities for further investigations. The various activities are described below.

Objective: Students will learn about bird habitat through field investigation, classify the habitat according to the vegetation present, and observe birds that are using the habitat. Students will then infer why certain species prefer particular habitats.

Grades: 3 - 5

Subject: Science, botany, language, art

Skills: Research, communication, identification, team work

Materials: Field journals, binoculars, pencils, clipboards, stop watch, plant field guides, bird field guides (Golden Guides)

Background

What Do We Know About Birds?

This gives students a background on what a bird is and different facts about them. This article can be a starting point for students to do their own investigations on birds or it can stand alone as a short background article.

Habitat

What is a habitat and why is it necessary for all living things? This activity will enable the students to decide what is necessary for life and be able to compare if all living things need the same essential items.

Field Guide of Common Birds

This field guide is a small compilation of common birds that may be found in your community. This field guide was originally developed for habitats in the Eastern United States. The American Goldfinch, Downy Woodpecker and Tree Swallow occur in both the Eastern and Western United States. The Western or Mountain Bluebirds can be



substituted for the Eastern Bluebird. One of several Western species of thrush such as the Hermit Thrush can be substituted for the Wood Thrush. One of several Western species of hummingbird such as the Rufous Hummingbird can be substituted for the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird. This activity is two-fold. Before the students go on their field study, have them look at the birds, read about where their habitat is, what they eat, etc. then have them color the birds. This will enable the students to be better prepared when they go into the field because they are familiar with some birds and they will be better able to identify the birds. It is important that the students have some identifying skills before they go out otherwise they will get confused and lose interest quickly.

Bird Observations

This activity will give the students an opportunity to test their observation skills in the field. They are to focus on one or two birds in a given site and fill out the bird observation sheets in the guide. There are extra pages in case a student is very interested, or if the bird they are observing flies away and they have to start over. It is important to remind the students that when they are doing their observations that they stay in one place and sit quietly so as not to disturb their study subjects.

Bird On A Stick

Although the name implies something quite different, this activity will enable the students to take pictures of birds on sticks and work in cooperative groups to decide what habitat each bird belongs to. When they decide on the appropriate habitat, the students will place the “bird on a stick” in that particular habitat. In the field guide the students will list the habitat in which they placed the birds beside the name of the bird. This will enable you, as a class, to have a discussion on appropriate habitats when you return to the classroom.

Answers to habitats:

- Eastern Bluebird – field
- American Goldfinch – field, open forest
- Tree Swallow – field, forest edge, near water
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird – forest, field
- Downy Woodpecker – forest
- Wood Thrush – forest

If western species are substituted the habitat types remain the same.

My Wonder Journal

This give students an opportunity to write down questions they may have at any time during this bird study. They may have questions when they are first learning bird identification or they may have a question that pops up when they are in the field. This journal can be used to actively investigate these questions either in cooperative groups or

as individuals. As they investigate these questions, hopefully they will lead to more questions, which will spark the student's interest in what actually happens in the natural world.