

ZOOMING IN ON BIRDS

A series of activities to review bird forms and adaptations.

ARIZONA SCIENCE

STANDARDS:

SC01-S1C1-02, SC00-S4C3-02, SC01-S4C3-03, SC03-S4C3-01, SC02-S4C1-02, SC03-S4C1-02, SC03-S4C4-01

OBJECTIVES

Students should:

- Observe birds on the school grounds and describe their features and behaviors.
- Construct “pretend” binoculars to help focus attention on birds.

MATERIALS

- Empty toilet paper or paper towel roles (2 per student).
- Masking tape
- String
- Paper and crayons
- Field guide to birds. See Resource List for recommendations.
- 1 Copy for each student of the handout: *Bird Observations*

VOCABULARY

- Camouflage
- Prey
- Habitat
- Raptor
- Glide
- Scavenger
- Raptor
- Talons

GETTING READY

Collect materials. Take a practice bird walk yourself. Identify some of the characteristics of birds that the children might see and select the area for the walk.

SETTING THE STAGE

Explain that birds come in many different shapes and sizes. They might look alike, from a distance, but when you get close to them, you can see that there are lots of differences between different kinds of birds. Explain that the class will be looking for birds and noticing their different beaks, wings, feet and behaviors. Explain that they will make “pretend” binoculars to help focus on birds around the schoolyard.

DOING THE ACTIVITY

- 1) Have the children make their own pretend binoculars to take with them on a bird watching walk. The binoculars won't really work, of course, but they will help young children focus in on the birds they see. Here's how to make them:
 - a. Place two paper rolls side by side. (Two toilet paper rolls work well. You can also use a paper towel roll that's been cut in half.)
 - b. Tape the rolls together with a long piece of masking tape.
 - c. Punch holes in the sides of the binoculars near the top of the rolls.
 - d. Tie a piece of string to the holes. Be sure the string is long enough for the binoculars to hang around the child's neck.
 - e. Children may then decorate their binoculars using paints, crayons, etc.
- 2) Next, demonstrate how to use the pretend binoculars: Stop walking. Put the binoculars up to your eyes. Keep your elbows down. Look carefully at an object in the classroom. Notice how these pretend binoculars help you focus carefully on one object and see it more clearly. Explain that you will be trying to spot different kinds of birds and then look at them through their binoculars. Explain that they must walk very quietly and be very still when they see a bird. (What might happen if they are noisy?)
- 3) Brainstorm with the children where some

good places are to look for birds: flying, sitting in bushes or trees, on tops of poles, on roofs, under plants, etc. Explain that the best time to look for birds is early in the morning or in the late afternoon; both are times that birds are looking for food.

BIRD WATCHING

- 1) Take along a bird field guide (See the *Resources* in the beginning of this packet.). Divide the class into groups. Take the class outside. Give each group an observation sheet on a clipboard. As students locate birds, have everyone put the binoculars up to their eyes and focus. Point out different bird shapes, colors, sizes, feet and beaks. Look at bird sizes. Observe the bird's shape. Is it chunky? Long and slender? Tall and thin? Does the head have crest? Does it hop or walk? How does it fly? Does it sing or call? Sound often helps to identify the bird before it is seen. Habitat is also important; different species of birds prefer different habitats.
- 2) To each student, hand out the *Bird Observations* sheet on a clipboard. Have a place for the children to sit down. Ask them to choose a bird they saw and complete the observation sheet.

DISCUSSION

Discuss what you saw outside. Describe the birds. What were they doing? Where were they doing it? Have recorders report what the group saw.

EXTENSIONS

- 1) Create charts and bulletin boards showing the birds observed. Show where they were seen, what they were doing, what size they were.
- 2) Have children draw pictures of the birds seen on the bird walks.
- 3) Write descriptions or poems about the birds.
- 4) Bird walks could be taken at different seasons of the year. Do the children see different birds? Different numbers of birds? Are they in different locations? Make graphs and bulletin board displays.