Lesson Plan: Bird Identification



What Birds Do You Know?

Objective: Students will recognize the experience they already possess with birds, helping them to consciously relate to Claire, the protagonist in *An Odd Bird,* as well as obtain digital experience researching birds.

Necessary Preparation & Materials:

- Student printouts (four local bird species)
- 1-to-1 device (Chromebook/iPad/Laptop) **or** class-wide viewing/listening through flat panel displays or digital projector of relevant web pages.
- Headphones/Earbuds (if individual access)
- Direct Link: Cornell Lab: All About Birds

Teachers will want to make a preliminary visit to the web resource (*All About Birds*) to navigate the site's relevant pages and to test their computer's ability to open its audio files (requires QuickTime) of bird sounds.

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search

Class Activity

1. Organize the class into groups of four or more students. Distribute one **color** bird photograph handout to each group. Allow group members time to confer and then ask each group to identify its bird. **(10 minutes)**

2. As each group identifies its bird, write the name of the bird, creating four columns on the classroom white erase board. Then ask the class to generate facts, from their **experiences,** about each bird. For instance: Do they know what the bird eats? How it sounds? How it acts? Is it a year-round resident? What color are its eggs? Students can generate ***any*** information. (Later, students will research these birds at the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library** to compare their experience and knowledge with that provided through the web resource.) **(20 minutes)**



What Birds . . . Continued

Sample of Student Responses			
Northern Cardinal	**American Robin**	**Blue Jay**	**American Crow**
Female is less colorful than male.	Eats worms.	Is noisy with lots of different sounds.	Chases after hawks.

3. After the class has provided info on these four common birds, visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's web site ***All About Birds***: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search

4. Enter the first bird into the Bird Guide: Northern Cardinal. Be certain to check out **Cool Facts (**under the **Overview** tab**)** and to play **audio clips (**under the **Sounds** tab**).** Look up all four birds if time permits. Students will enjoy listening to the songs and calls of these birds. Too, you can always test students' song identification skills as a follow-up classroom activity. (**20 minutes)**

5. When students conclude this activity, lead a discussion using the following questions: **(10 minutes)**

    - What new information did you learn?
    - How can you obtain ***firsthand*** experience with these birds? For instance, observing a crow or blue jay in the backyard provides firsthand experience, which can be especially valuable if the bird watcher pays close attention to the bird's appearance, behavior, and sounds. Encourage students to observe the birds in their yards and neighborhood with an eye to selecting one to learn more about. You might even require them to take notes on at least one bird as a homework assignment.

    Conclude this exercise by congratulating your students on becoming birders! Like Claire in *An Odd Bird*, they too can possess birds in their hearts.



Learn More About the Birds You Know

Step-by-Step Student Guide (for independent or small group research)

Step 1: Locate Your Bird (Choose one and then another if you've time.)

1. Open the link provided by your teacher to the **All About Birds** guide.
2. Find the search bar (it's easy to find).
3. Type the exact name of one of the birds from your print worksheet and press Enter.

Step 2: The Sound Check

1. Click on the **"Songs and Calls"** or **"Sounds"** tab on the bird's profile page.
2. Put on your headphones and click the Play button on the first audio track.
3. **Analyze the sound:** Is it a *song* (musical, repeating) or a *call* (short, sharp, alerting)?
4. Write down 2–3 words that describe what the bird sounds like (e.g., *buzzy, whistling, rattling, high-pitched*).

Step 3: Expand Your Knowledge

Look beyond the picture on your printout to find **one hidden fact** on the website. Click the **"Life History"** tab to find:

1. **Cool Fact:** What is one surprising behavior of this bird?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Handout A: Bird A

Identify this bird (courtesy of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service):_____



Handout A: Bird B

Identify this bird (courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service):_____



Handout A: Bird C

Identify this bird (courtesy of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service): _____



Handout A: Bird D

Identify this bird (courtesy of NBII):_____

