

**CLASS TIME:** three classroom periods of 30 minutes each or longer

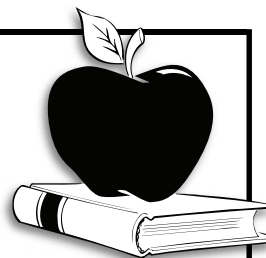
**VOCABULARY:** interview, reporting, anthropomorphism

**MATERIALS:** Fact Sheets in Appendix B; writing and research materials

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS:** English language arts  
MS Writing 2, MS Writing 3, MS Writing 4, MS Writing 7,  
MS Writing 8, MS Reading 1, MS Reading 4, MS Reading 6

**NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS:** MS-LS2-4

# TEACHER'S GUIDE



## ACTIVITY

# Interview a Bird

## OVERVIEW

Students will perform research, write a report and conduct an interview to learn more about a Neotropical migratory bird.

## CONCEPTS

Birds are similar but there is a great amount of diversity in the requirements species or groups of species have for survival.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to: 1) generalize that birds range in size, color, feeding habits and nesting requirements; 2) recognize some traits of Neotropical migratory birds; and 3) recognize that some birds migrate while others do not.

## KEY POINTS

Migratory birds have habitat requirements in Illinois and Latin America.

## TEACHER BACKGROUND

There are more than 9,900 species of birds in the world. About 800 species have been found in North America, and more than 400 species have been recorded in Illinois. Birds are warm-blooded vertebrates. They have three characteristics which distinguish them from other animals: feathers; hard-shelled eggs; and hollow bones.

As similar as birds are as a group, individual species often have unique characteristics and habitat requirements. All birds require habitat to survive. Habitat consists of food, cover, water and space. While two species may both live in the same forest, one may live in a hollow tree branch and the other on the ground. One may have a long, thin bill to probe tree bark for insects and the other a heavy bill to crack seeds.

The major purpose of this activity is for students to develop a working definition of birds, recognizing that they vary in any number of ways, including color, feeding habits and nesting requirements.

**CAUTION:** Students may have a tendency to project inapplicable human characteristics to birds, especially because the “interview” format puts the “birds” in a human situation. Assist the students in avoiding anthropomorphism. Stress that they should try to see the world from the bird’s perspective.

## PROCEDURE

1. **OPTIONAL:** Invite a local newspaper reporter to talk with your students. Ask him or her to describe what a reporter does and especially talk about the techniques of interviewing and writing used.
2. Have the students brainstorm a list of bird species. Check the list to make sure it includes many different types of birds, including migrants. **OPTIONAL:** Make available to the students a list of native species and Neotropical migratory species (Appendices A, B) to help them focus on nearby animals they might not have considered.
3. Work with the students to establish a research, interview and reporting format for their use as reporters. Divide the class into groups of two students each.

## Example

### RESEARCH

Each team of two students should complete the following items.

- A. Decide which bird to “interview.” Make sure that Neotropical migrants and nonmigratory birds are included.
- B. Write a list of questions to ask. Questions could be developed by the two-person teams or as a class project, providing a uniform set of questions.
- C. Each team of reporters selects a bird to study. The team will first need to gather information about the bird. They can do that by actually observing the bird, consulting resource materials or both!
- D. Use reference materials to take notes for appropriate responses to questions.

### **INTERVIEW**

It's time to conduct the interview! One student asks questions while the other student assumes the role of the wild bird and responds to the interviewer's questions.

Interviews may be conducted in front of the class, or just between the partners. Students then switch roles. Remind the students to convey the perspective of the interview bird without projecting inapplicable human attributes.

### **REPORTING**

Now it's time to organize the information gathered through the process of researching and interviewing the bird. Each team should use its notes as the basis for writing a newspaper article about the wild bird they interviewed.

4. Talk about the diversity of birds—including that birds range in size, color, feeding habits and nesting requirements. Ask each student to share some feature of their assigned bird which they felt was unique or interesting.

### **DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss why some birds migrate and others do not.

### **EXTENSIONS**

1. Have students make an artistic representation of their bird.

2. With the newspaper articles complete, either publish a wildlife newspaper for everyone to read and keep or read the articles aloud for everyone to hear.
3. Have the students try to observe their assigned bird in nature. Knowledge regarding behavior and migration times is essential.
4. Obtain pictures of the birds interviewed. Have the students learn to recognize the individual species by sight. You may also want them to learn the songs of these birds.

### **ASSESSMENT**

1. Write a newspaper article of several paragraphs in length which conveys the traits and behaviors of the bird selected for the interview.
2. Name three Neotropical migratory birds.
3. Name three nonmigratory birds.

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