



WHAT MAKE A BIRD A BIRD?

Activity Guide

Objectives

- identify the physiological characteristics of birds.
- learn how feathers are important to birds in many ways such as providing insulation, control of flight, mating, and camouflage.
- play a short game of "Simon Says" to imitate how birds act.

Materials

For the lesson

- Slides (provided)
- tape measurer
- feathers (optional)
- magnifying glass (optional)
- pencil (optional)

Summary of Activities

The following information is presented so you can follow along with the images and information that is provided on the slides.

Slide 1. Ask participants, "What do you think makes a bird a bird? Listen to their responses. They may say birds have feathers, bills/beaks, wings, etc.

Slide 2-3. Birds are especially known for their feathers! Explain: The shaft of the feather is like the trunk of a tree with the barbs of the vane coming off of it like branches. Each barb is lined with barbules that hook to other barbules. Barbules work a bit like Velcro (an example of velcro are the laceless shoes).

Optional Try It Activity: Pass out a few different feathers to each participant and allow them to examine the feathers. (You can purchase feathers any hobby store or you can order them online). Have them look at each feather using magnifying lenses if available. Have participants split the feather's barbs part, and then try to comb them back into place using a pencil as a "beak." Tell participants that birds constantly clean and repair their feathers, a process called preening.

Slide 4. Ask participants what they think feathers are useful for. Listen to their response, then explain the different functions of feathers:

- insulate birds from water and cold temperatures
- are used for display purposes (especially during the nesting season)
- help control flight
- may serve as camouflage
- may serve to attract mates
- may be plucked to line the nest and provide insulation to the eggs and young



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Summary of Activities (cont'd)

Slide 5-7. Birds are also able to fly! Explain: Not all birds are able to fly but those that can are not all the same; their wings may be different shapes and sizes. Tell them to raise their arms as far as they can to their side. When birds do the same thing with their wings, we call that their wingspan. Use the measuring tape to measure their arms from one finger tip to the other. How does their wingspan compare to that of other birds?

Slide 8-9. Birds can also communicate! Explain: Birds make different noises like chirping, quacking, whistling, etc. Have participants create different bird noises by whistling, hooting, quacking, squawking, and chirping.

Slide 10-11. Birds also have incredible vision! Ask them if they know any birds with incredible vision (a Golden Eagle can see a rabbit from a mile away and raptors can see up to 8 times more clearly than the sharpest human eye!). Have them write their name on a piece of paper and place it 10 feet away from where they stand. Can they read their name? Have them place it 5 feet back and then repeat it until they can no longer read the word. How far away can they see?

Slide 12 . Simon Says Review Game. Here are some examples to help you gets started!

- Stand on one leg like a heron.
- Sing like a bird - (whistle, hoot, quack, squawk, chirp).
- Fly like a bird - (soar like a hawk, fly like a songbird, flap their wings really fast like a hummingbird).



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