



*Revised 4/17/20
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge*

What do Birds do on the Prairie?

Kindergarten

45 Minutes

Spring

Summary

After reading *About Birds* by Cathryn Sill, students share what they already know about birds and bird behavior. Students predict which types of birds and bird behavior they will see on the prairie. Students are provided with simple data sheets that have pictures of bird behaviors (singing, flocking, flying, bathing, etc.). Students are asked what they think they will see birds do today in the prairie. As the field leader reviews the behaviors, students pretend they are birds and act them out. Next, students head out into the field and search for birds and observe their behavior. As students observe bird behaviors, chaperones use tally marks to record their observations on the data sheets. Afterwards, students share all the different types of bird behaviors they found in the prairie. They compare their findings to their predictions.

Next Generation Science and Iowa Core Standards

Next Generation Science

- **K-LS1-1**
 - Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.
- **K-ESS2-2**
 - Construct an argument supported by evidence for how plants and animals (including humans) can change the environment to meet their needs.

Literacy

Reading and Literature

- **RL.K.10**



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Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

- Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

Speaking and Listening

- **SL.K.1**
 - Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- **SL.K.2**
 - Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
- **SL.K.6**
 - Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

Materials and Resources

- Whiteboard
- Laminated bird data sheets
- Dry erase markers
- Bird behavior images
- Clip boards
- Book- *About Birds*, Sill, C.

Presentation

Explain to students that today, they will be learning about one of your favorite animals. Draw some birds on the board. Ask if the students can guess what it is. Birds! Write the word “bird” on the white board and have the students read the word with you to practice pronunciation. What do birds need to survive? How are their needs similar and different to other animals?

Directions

1. Gauge students background knowledge by asking students, “What do you already know about birds?” If students need extra guidance, ask them



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Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge*

specific questions such as: “What birds live in the prairie? What types of birds do they know? What makes a bird, a bird? What types of things have they seen birds do?” Record their answers on the board under the column labeled “know.”

2. Tell students that today they are going to be going outside and trying to answer the question, “What do birds do on the prairie?”
3. Now they are going to listen to a story about birds on the prairie. It is called, *About Birds* by Cathryn Sill. Explain that as they listen, they should be thinking of how to answer the question, “What do birds do?” Engage students by having them repeat, or ask them to act out the birds in the story. When finished with the book, ask students, what did they learn about birds? Which bird behaviors help the birds to stay alive? Are there similarities between birds and other animals?
4. Explain to the students that in a few minutes they will be going outside to find the answer to their question, “What do birds do on the prairie?” They will be looking to see if they can find birds and record what behaviors they are demonstrating.
5. Before handing out data sheets, make sure students understand the behaviors we are looking for. Show the bird behavior images and ask the students what the bird is doing. Have the students mimic the behavior.
6. Have students work in small groups with an adult leader if possible. Hand out a datasheet, pencil, and clipboard to each adult leader in the group. Review and read the entire data sheet to the students. Show them a completed data sheet. Walk around the room to make sure that everyone had a chance to see it.
7. Once the groups are divided, have all the groups form a single file line to get ready to head outside. Make sure that the students have all their materials. Remind students that naturalists are happy outside, explorers, adventurers,



Revised 4/17/20
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

respectful, and quiet. They ask questions, use words, numbers and pictures, and share their discoveries.

8. Once outside, point to different birds and ask adult leaders and their groups to record the different types of behaviors they see birds doing outside.
9. After about 15 minutes, ask students and adult chaperons to come together. Line up to head back inside. Instruct students that while they are walking to go back inside, they should think about the discoveries they made and get ready to share them with other naturalists.
10. Once inside, walk around the room and look at the students' data sheets. Ask students what discoveries did they make about birds today? Ask students to look closely at their data sheet and tell you which bird behavior did they find the most of? Write the behavior on the board. Ask students again to look at their data sheet and tell you which bird behavior they found the least of? Write the behavior on the board. Ask students to explain why they think they found one behavior more often than another. Ask students which bird behavior did they personally like the most?
11. At the end of the lesson, explain to students that today they discovered how magical birds can truly be if they just take the time to watch them. Tell students that the wonderful thing about birds is that they can watch them nearly anywhere, at any time of the day!

Background Information

Prairies are home to a wide variety of grassland birds. Many types of grassland birds have been declining throughout the continent since the first settlers arrived. This decline has continued in recent decades as agriculture has intensified. The loss of native prairie habitat is a major cause of this decline. **Grassland birds** nest on or near the ground and eat seeds, insects, or rodents. Some are migratory and may be here for a season or only a few days, while others are year-round prairie residents. As far as habitat is concerned, some birds prefer certain types of plant structure on the prairie, such as grazed areas with shorter grass; tall, thick vegetation that has not been burned recently; wet areas like sedge meadows;



Revised 4/17/20
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scattered shrubs or thickets; or large areas of grassland without trees.

Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge provides one of the biggest areas of treeless grassland habitat in Iowa. As a result, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of grassland birds on the refuge since it was established, as we have increased the size of our prairie. Some of the grassland bird species that use Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge include the northern harrier, short-eared owl, upland sandpiper, sedge wren, Henslow's and grasshopper sparrows, common yellowthroat, dickcissel, eastern and western meadowlarks, and bobolink.

Birds provide an excellent medium for engaging students in the outdoor classroom as they can be found almost anywhere. Encourage your students to first think about the birds they already know and commonly see before expanding their thinking to what birds may live on the prairie.



Revised 4/17/20
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Resources

Board Set-up Example

<u>We Know</u>	<u>Birds</u>	<u>We Found</u>
What birds have: *Wings/Feathers Robin *Beaks *Hollow bones	Cardinal Eagle	Bathing Eating Flocking Flying Singing Hiding +Cleaning its feathers +Looking for food
What birds do: *lay eggs *sing *most fly *bathe (water and dust)		
<p><i>**In the column "Know", write down students' answers to what they know about birds. If students need guidance, ask them "What makes a bird, a bird? What birds live on the prairie? What types of birds do they know? What things have they seen birds do?" Under the "We Found" column, list the bird behaviors that students found outside and have them read their tally numbers. +You can add that when birds clean their feathers, it is called "preening" and looking for food is called "foraging".</i></p>		