

Choose Your Nest Site

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This lesson is designed for grades 3 - 6. Lesson developed by participants of a summer workshop at Grant-Kohrs Ranch, National Historic Site.

Montana Science Standards:

Content Standard 2 – Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of properties, forms, changes and interactions of physical and chemical systems.

Content Standard 3 – Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures, and function of living things, the processes and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

Content Standard 4 – Students, through the inquiry process, demonstrate knowledge of the composition, structures, processes and interactions of Earth's systems and other objects in space.

Subjects: Science, Language Arts

Goal: Students will understand that the habitat of an area is what determines the birds and animals that live there. Students will realize that weather plays a factor in many bird's lives. Students will realize that history plays a role in the birds and other wildlife found in an area.

Duration: 4 lessons

Description: Matching poster activity where students find common birds to identify then match them to a water, forest, or grassland habitat, Dramatization activity where students select a bird to represent and find an appropriate place to live, including migration and change over time.

Note: As an alternative, this project could be adapted to a power point presentation instead of using posters.

Preparation/Materials:

- A Field Guide to the Common Birds by Habitat Type and Basic Color available from Grant-Kohrs Ranch: www.nps.gov/grko
- Bird magazines specific to North America and outdoor magazines specific to North America (like Montana Magazine, Bugle, etc.) that can be cut up.
- Or computers with Internet access and with printing capabilities. MT specific sites:
 - <http://fwp.mt.gov/fieldguide/relatedOrders.aspx?hlt=B>
 - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MOB-Montana/>
- Poster Board
- Glue
- Scissors

- Prepared picture cards of habitat areas, some with fold-over sections (see day 2 activity).

Discussion questions:

- What does your bird eat? How does this affect where the bird will live?
- Where does your bird nest? How does this affect where the bird will live?
- What effect does the weather have on your bird's choice of home?
- Do all birds look for the same things in a choice of home?
- Can you think of any other animal that migrates? Do humans migrate?
- What are some dangers for birds following migration routes?
- What happens when the habitat changes over time?

Activities:

Day One: Students work in groups of 3. One person will represent the forest birds, one will represent grassland birds, and one will represent water (riparian) birds. They will find a magazine picture of a landscape that shows water, one that shows forests, and one that shows grasslands. These pictures will be glued across the top of poster board to form 3 categories. Then they will cut out magazine pictures of different birds that they may have seen outside in our area. Using the Field Guide to common birds and other bird resources, they will identify the bird and glue it under one of the three habitats. As an alternative, they could find their pictures and print them from the Internet.

Day Two:

Part I: Dramatization of birds associated with water, forests, or grasslands. Divide students into 3 new groups. One group will be all of the water birds from yesterday, one will be forest birds, and one will be grassland birds. Each student chooses to be one of the birds from their category. Have picture cards (see prep) of different scenic areas for the "birds" to fly over. "Birds" choose whether to make their home in that area or keep flying.

Part II: Show various winter scene cards to see which birds will "fly south" when the weather changes.

Part III: Show picture cards with a fold-over section showing change to an area. See if they will still choose to live there. Ex: mountains folded over to logged area, grassland turned into a town, hillside turned into a mining pit, streamside willows turned to washed/stripped away streamside.

Day Three: Writing Activity: Students use the discussion questions posed earlier (have a copy) to write a report about their bird specifically. Must use complete sentences and include reasons why. Attach reports to the bottom of the poster in the appropriate habitat area.

Day Four: Student groups will orally present their poster, each telling about their own section.