

Birds, Birds, Birds

A Unit Designed to Teach Phoenix-Area Birds
to Lower Elementary Students.



Objectives:

- To understand that there are different types of birds in our environment.
- To be able to identify different birds by appearance and song.
- To understand how birds have adapted to the urban environment.

Arizona Science Standards:

4SC-R3. Recognize and distinguish similarities and differences in diverse species.
4SC-F4. Identify characteristics of plants and animals (including extinct organisms) that allows them to live in specific environments.

Time Frame:

This unit will take about 45 minutes a day for 2 weeks and is an excellent predecessor to a nature field trip (e.g. Botanical Gardens, nature hike...).

Materials:

- Various field guides or bird pictures
- [book pages](#) (13 for each student)
- 11" x 18" white construction paper (1 for each student)
- Various artistic materials (crayons, markers, colored pencils...)
- Internet access (if possible)

Procedure:

1. Each day present two or three birds to the children with interesting facts (listed below) and related personal stories. Show the pictures to the students and have them point out distinguishing colors and body parts. To obtain pictures of the birds click on this link. <http://www.mbr.nbs.gov/Infocenter/infocenter.html> The students can hear the bird songs by clicking on this link. <http://www.naturesongs.com>
2. Distribute book pages (1 for each bird covered) and have children write the name of the bird on the given line. (This is a great time to practice our professional handwriting.) The students can look at the given pictures and draw each bird. It is important to remind the students that they will be using these pages to identify the birds later and they must draw them accurately.
3. The last day the students can use the 11" x 18" construction paper to create a cover for their book. Fold it in half and decorate the front.

Assessment:

Have the students create a chart to add as the first page in their books. [It should list all of the birds that they have learned and either contain a place where they can tally or check off if they have successfully identified the bird by appearance and/or song.] Here is an [example](#) of one that some Kindergarten and First Graders developed.

Extension:

You can also add to the book by studying about desert plants or animals.

Interesting Bird Facts:



Rock Dove (Pigeon)

- Likes to build its nest in building ledges
- Eats seeds and grain
- Lives in an urban environment...moved into Phoenix as the urban population started to expand. Relies on people to survive.
- Has iridescent (the color comes out when the sun hits it) green feathers on its neck. When flying the tail opens like a fan.
- Comes in a variety of colors

Mourning Dove

- Builds its nest out of clumps of grass
- Eats seeds and grain
- Lives in an urban or grassland environment...moved into Phoenix as the urban population started to expand. Is a native bird but now lives in the city.
- When flying the tail is pointed. Usually has black spots on its wings.

Inca Dove

- Builds its nest out of any available materials and anywhere it feels safe.
- Eats seeds
- Lives in urban or desert environment...moved into Phoenix as the urban population started to expand.
- Its almost solid grey in color. Is much smaller than the other doves.

Gila Woodpecker

- Builds its nest by pecking into the saguaro cactus, the saguaro builds a scab-like shell, called a "boot," that keeps the bird cool and dry
- Eats insects
- It is able to adapt to almost any environment, whether it's urban, grassland, wetland, etc...
- Has a red spot on top of its head; black and white striped wings

Cactus Wren

- Builds its nest out of soft hay-like material or takes over a saguaro boot after the Gila Woodpecker moves out; is known to build decoy nests to protect its eggs
- Eats insects
- Lives in successional scrub or neighborhoods with a lot of trees
- Is covered in black spots

Grackle

- Lives in grass or in holes on the ground
- Eats insects and fruit
- Lives in urban areas or grasslands
- Some have iridescent (the color comes out when the sun hits it) blue in its feathers



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Mockingbird

- Builds its nest on the ground
- Eats insects and fruit
- Lives in urban areas
- Has been known to mimic dogs, pianos, and car alarms

Gambel's Quail

- Can have up to 20 spotted eggs at one time, but usually has 10 - 15
- Has one black feather that sticks up off of the top of its head
- Its a ground dwelling bird, doesn't fly unless it has to
- Eats seeds and sometimes insects

Peregrine Falcon

- Eats smaller birds
- Are a dark gray in color
- Almost died off because of DDT use to control insect populations in farmland areas, the bugs ate the DDT sprayed plants, the smaller birds ate the bugs and the falcon ate the birds. The Falcon eggs would hatch with a very thin shell and would not survive. Now DDT has been banned and the species is recovering.

House Sparrow

- Live in cavities, such as holes in trees, bird boxes, or saguaro boots
- Eats insects
- Lives in urban areas
- It has a brown back, head and wings, a white breast, and a white line that passes over its eye

House Finch

- Builds its nest in the middle of trees
- Eats seeds
- Lives in urban areas
- Is a commonly a part of the pet trade
- The male has bright red feathers on its head and breast

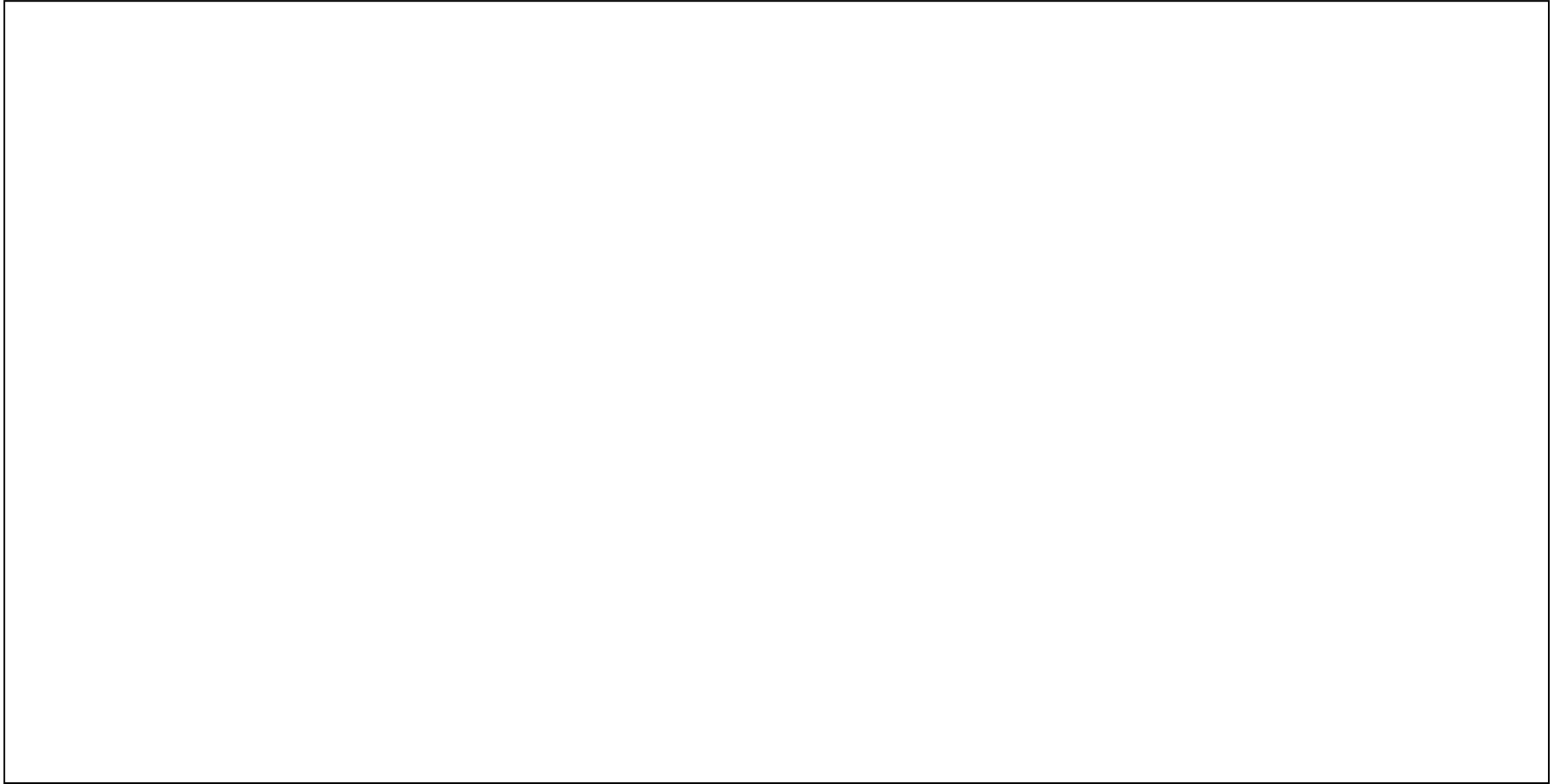
Anna's Hummingbird

- The female builds a tiny nest in shrubs or low trees
- The male sleeps openly on hidden branches
- Eats nectar and sometimes small insects
- Lives in gardens or where there is a lot of flowers
- Has iridescent (the color comes out when the sun hits it) feathers

Greater Roadrunner

- Can run up to 15 mph
- It has spiked feathers on top of its head
- Eats insects, reptiles and amphibians
- Is found in the southwestern part of the United States





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