

SciGirls

Activity: Bird is the Word

Birds are fascinating animals to watch, and it is fun to learn how to identify them. Your family can use the same techniques to identify birds that scientists use.

Here's How:

1. Make a list of some of the birds that you see in your daily life, or have seen in the past. How do you know how to identify them? (For example: size, shape, colors, location, habitat, behavior, sound.)
2. Go bird watching. Head to your local park or your own backyard and look for birds. Do you see some that you already know? What about birds you aren't familiar with? Take pictures with your camera, draw pictures, or write a description of at least one of the birds you don't know.
3. Head to the local library, the internet or bird id books to identify at least one of the mystery birds. Become an expert in identifying that bird by considering the following characteristics: overall size and shape, field marks (breast color, rump color, tail color and length, wing shape and color, eye stripe, eye ring color, head color) and behavior (tail movements, eating on the ground, flight pattern, sounds the bird makes). Drawing a picture of the bird and labeling key parts is a great way to help remember what it looks like.
4. Go bird watching again. Do you see your bird? What things do you notice this time that you didn't notice that last time you went bird watching?

Celebrate Urban Birds

The Celebrate Urban Birds citizen science project connects participants to birds through the arts, greening activities, and neighborhood events. Watch birds for 10 minutes and share your observations by mail or online with Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists. Watch birds anywhere – home, school, or a park. It's easy!

Celebrateurbanbirds.org

You'll Need:

- Journals, sketch pads, or blank paper
- Pencils
- Markers or colored pencils
- Bird field guide (If you are in North America, Audubon has a free guide at <https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>)
- optional: SciGirls Nature Nurture Journal (pbsparents.org/scigirls)
- optional: binoculars, bird feeders, bird identification app (Merlin)

Take the learning further: collect all of your observations, and sort them into the different birds you saw. For example, you may have drawings, pictures, and written words about each bird. Bind all of these observations together into a book, or glue them onto a poster. **You've made your own bird guide!**

Mentor Moment

Dr. Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez is a senior scientist at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Her research focuses on studying resident and migratory bird populations in Latin America and their responses to environmental change. A native of Costa Rica, she is the third Costa Rican ornithologist (scientist who studies birds) with a Ph.D., and the first female. Viviana likes to smile and laugh often and says her older sister still holds secret powers over her. She loves mammals as well as birds and will soon be adopting two rabbits.



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