

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVELS:** 4 - 6

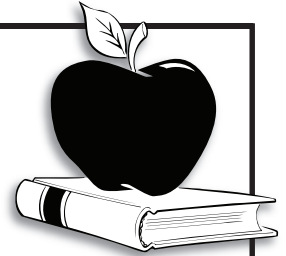
**ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS:**

English language arts 5.C.2a; science 12.B.2a, 12.B.2b

**SKILLS/PROCESSES:** observation, classification, data collection, art appreciation

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will demonstrate the ability to locate and identify birds.

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

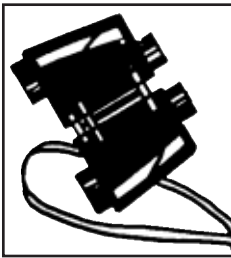


## UNIT 3 • LESSON 4

# Be a Birder

### BACKGROUND

**Birding** in America started with John James Audubon's (1785-1851) travels and publication of his collection of paintings of more than 1,000 birds. For the first time most people had the opportunity to "see" many of the birds and call them by a proper name. Birding was popularized in America in the 1930s when usable **field guides** were published.

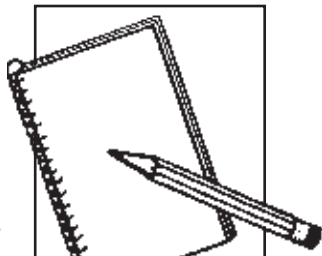


Why is birding a hobby or career that interests millions of people? Some enjoy the challenge of locating and identifying birds and seeing new places. Others see their birding time as a form of exercise and an opportunity to be outdoors.

No matter what the reason, birding is a fun sport that can be done year-round anywhere for little expense. Getting started is as easy as a trip outdoors with an experienced birder, joining a club or simply picking up a field guide and teaching yourself.

Your senses of sight and hearing are extremely important tools in birding. Observe the bird. The five basic **characteristics** used to visually identify a bird are its shape and posture, plumage and color, behavior, habitat preference and voice. Listen to its call or song. The best birders are able to identify 80 percent of the birds by sound only.

Becoming a birder requires studying bird habits and learning to move quietly and slowly. When you go birding remember to take comfortable shoes, a field guide, sketch book, pencil and **binoculars**. It is recommended that beginners use 7 x 35 power binoculars.



Birds can be found almost anywhere. Look in parks, forest preserves, your back yard, school yard and around a pond or wetland. The best times to look for birds are in the morning or early evening during their feeding times when they are most active.

You may want to attract birds to your school yard to observe them for extended periods of time. Feeding and watering stations will attract a variety of birds. Remember to offer a variety of feed to attract many types of seed-eaters. Provide suet in the winter to attract meat-eaters. Keep a daily record of the birds seen at your feeder. Over the years it becomes interesting to try and predict when the juncos first appear in winter or the red-winged blackbirds return for the summer. Recording data such as arrival and departure dates is called **phenology**.

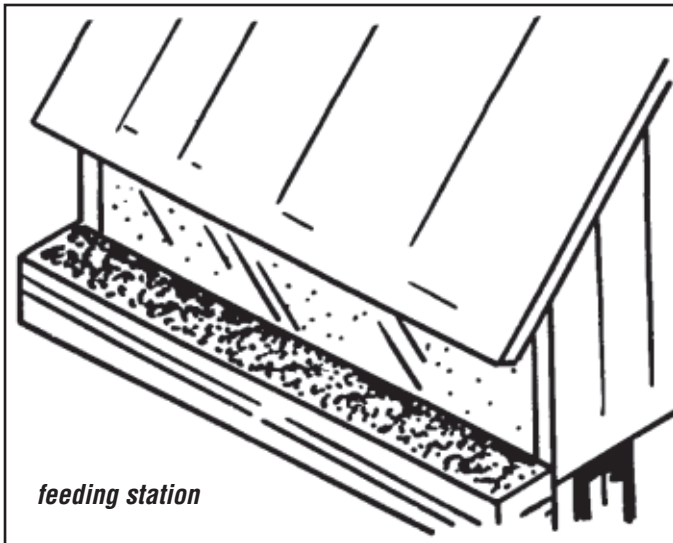


A variety of careers are available to people interested in birds. **Ornithologists** are people who study birds. **Biologists** and **naturalists** study the connections between birds and people, assist others in understanding the role of birds in the world and help people learn to identify birds. Most ornithologists, biologists and naturalists have a college degree. Birds are the focus for many famous artists, including John James Audubon and Roger Tory Peterson and writers such as Pete Dunne (*The Feather Quest*) and Donald Culross Peattie, a famous Illinois nature writer.



## PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Create a **feeding station** with a watering source. Make feeders using recycled materials (plastic pop bottles, milk containers) to attract specific birds. Remember to feed birds from the first snowfall until spring. Suet should be placed only from November to the last frost in the spring. Feeding migratory birds in the fall may delay their migration and result in death. Don't use metal products for watering sources!



2. To encourage birding, teach students how to use binoculars. To practice locating birds, make "binoculars" out of toilet tissue tubes, and then progress to binoculars.
3. Visit the Illinois Birders' Forum at <http://www.ilbirds.com/> or the Illinois Rare Bird Alert at [http://www.illinoisbirds.org/illinois\\_rare\\_bird\\_alert.html](http://www.illinoisbirds.org/illinois_rare_bird_alert.html). These sites list the rare and notable birds seen in an area and are updated often.

## EVALUATION

1. Students should identify five common birds in their area and describe behaviors observed throughout the year. Select one **species** of bird. Make a journal or diary and record bird behaviors and activities. Explore why a species is or is not present in a specific area. Include sketches and a section for field study data collection in the journal. Bind the journal and decorate the cover.

## EXTENSIONS

- Take a bird hike at a nature center, park or preserve.
- Set up a permanent feeding station at school. Keep phenology records and, after a period of time, compare recent records with preceding years.
- Invite speakers from the Audubon Society, a museum or a nature center to discuss birds and birding. Ask for a banding demonstration.
- Go to an art museum or gallery to see birds in art.
- Read about the artist John James Audubon and how he chronicled the birds of North America in his paintings and lithographs.

### VOCABULARY

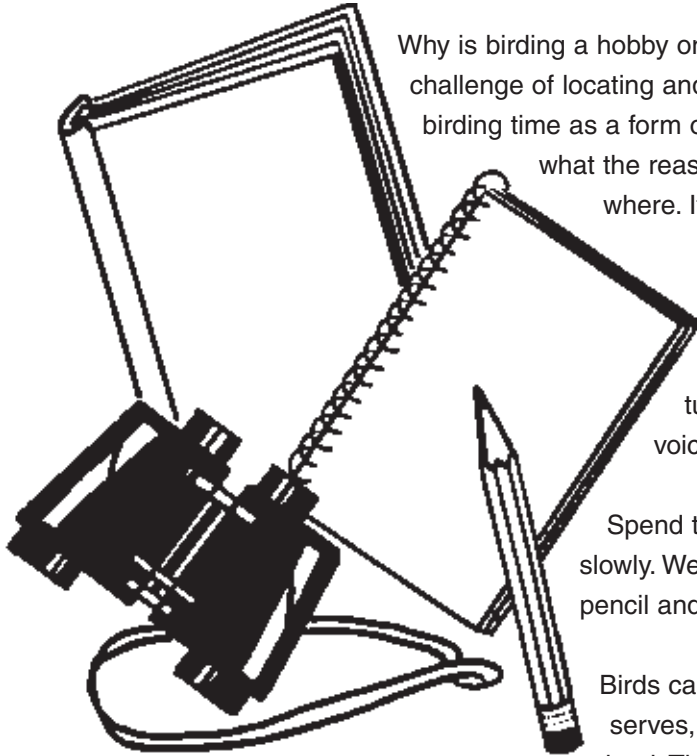
binoculars	field guide
biologist	phenology
birding	naturalist
characteristics	ornithologist
feeding station	species

*blue jay*



# Be a Birder

# STUDENT'S GUIDE



Why is birding a hobby or career that interests millions of people? Some enjoy the challenge of locating and identifying birds and seeing new places. Others see their birding time as a form of exercise and an opportunity to be outdoors. No matter what the reason, birding is a fun sport that can be done year-round anywhere. It costs little and getting started is very easy!

Your senses of sight and hearing are extremely important tools in birding. Observe the bird. The five basic characteristics used to visually identify birds are shape and posture, plumage and color, behavior, habitat preference and voice. Listen to its call or song.

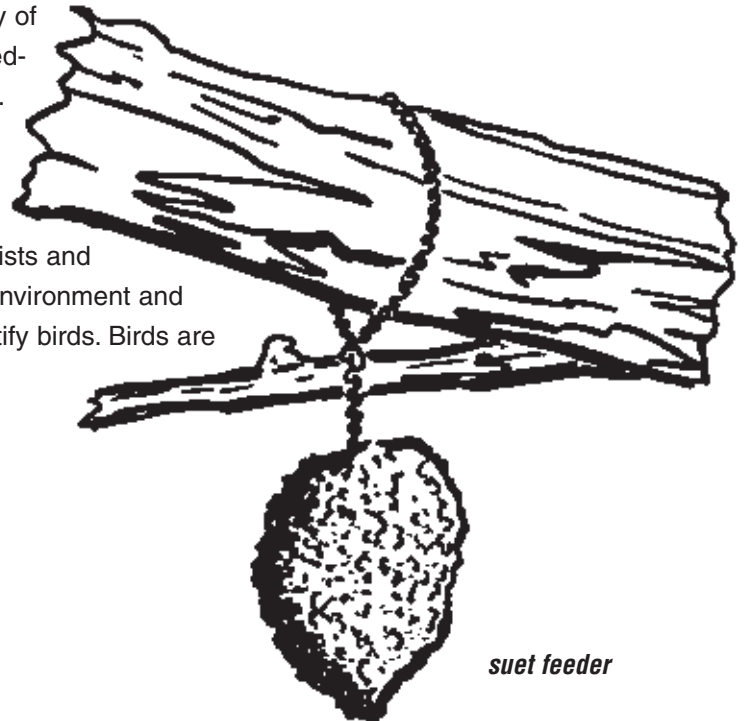
Spend time outdoors watching birds. Learn to move quietly and slowly. Wear comfortable shoes. Take a field guide, sketch book, pencil and binoculars.

Birds can be found almost anywhere. Look in parks, forest preserves, your back yard, school yard and around a pond or wetland. The best times to look for birds are in the morning or early

evening during their feeding times when they are most active.

You may want to attract birds to your yard so that you can observe them for long periods of time. Feeding and watering stations placed near your house will attract a variety of birds. Remember to offer a variety of feed to attract seed-eaters. Provide suet in the winter to attract meat-eaters. Keep a daily record of the birds seen at your feeder.

Many careers are available to people interested in birds. Ornithologists are people who study birds. Biologists and naturalists study the connections between birds, their environment and people. They help people understand and learn to identify birds. Birds are the subject for many famous artists and nature writers.



*suet feeder*

# ACTIVITY PAGE

## Feathered Friends Journal

Use the format below as a guide to start your own back yard bird behavior notebook. You may be surprised at the variety of birds seen in your neighborhood or during your outdoor adventures.



Set up your bird journal with basic information about sightings. Leave room for sketches and notes. Feel free to personalize your birding journal.



Look for different species in parks, forests, your back yard and around a pond or wetland. Move quietly and slowly. Look in the morning and early evening during the feeding time when birds are most active.