

# Home on the Range



## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn the difference between a bird's territory and its range.
- Understand that their schoolyard or community are all part of the ranges of the birds they see there.
- Learn why birds and other wildlife range or live where they do.



## Method

Students do research, role-playing, and interviewing to learn why birds live or range where they do.



## Materials

- Research materials
- Range maps for various bird species (from a field guide or book)
- "Microphones" for interviewing (constructed from cardboard or recycled material)

## Background

All birds have a **range**. This is the geographical area where the species can be seen at different times of the year. Range can be divided into **breeding range** and **wintering range**.

**Territory**, however, is the area that one specific bird stakes out to use for breeding, feeding, or both, and that it defends against other birds of the same species.

Range size can vary greatly.

- Some species are very flexible in their survival needs so their ranges can be huge. The European starling for example, flourishes in practically every corner of Canada. It can live in the country, the suburbs, or a city with no problem.
- Other species have tiny ranges. The Acadian flycatcher, for example, is found only in what's left of the Carolinian forests of southern Ontario. As its habitat needs are so specific and that habitat is disappearing, the species is listed as endangered on the COSEWIC list. (Endangered means it is in imminent danger of vanishing altogether.)

The ranges of many species have changed dramatically in past decades. Some are expanding in response to a species' adaptable habitat needs and/or increased protection.

Other ranges are shrinking alarmingly, often due to environmental changes.

For additional resources visit:

[CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education](http://CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education)

When you see a bird in your schoolyard, that means your schoolyard is part of its range. On the other hand, if you don't see a certain bird in your schoolyard, it could mean one of two things:

1. Your schoolyard does not fall into its range.
2. The bird does range in your area, but there is nothing in your schoolyard to attract them: no water, no worms or insects, and no trees to perch, nest, or shelter in.

## Activity

1. Discuss with students:
  - The meaning of range.
  - The difference between range and territory.
  - The fact that the range for some birds is huge while for other birds it is small.
  - Why ranges can differ in size.
2. Show students examples of the range maps of various species, as maps are often easier to understand than a written description of range.
3. Pick five species of birds that are commonly seen in your schoolyard.
  - Explain that their regular presence means your schoolyard is part of that species' range.
  - Discuss with students if the ranges are large, small, or medium in size.
4. Divide students into pairs. Assign each pair one of the five species. Ask pairs to research the biology and the range of their assigned bird collaboratively.
5. Explain that one student in each pair will play the role of the bird, while the other student will interview the "bird" about his or her choice of range. Interview questions could include:
  - Is your range large or small? How many provinces or territories does your range cover?
  - Has your range grown or shrunk in the past 50 years? Can you explain why?
  - Tell me more about forces that are damaging to your range, such as toxic chemicals, damming, and new roads.
  - What are some features of your range that are special to you? (For instance, a meadowlark would head for the meadows in its range, while a marsh wren would seek marshes.)
  - Do you migrate?
  - Is your winter range in healthy condition?
6. Students take turns being "birds" and interviewers.

For additional resources visit:

[CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education](http://CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education)