

Buddy Up to Birds



Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Understand that Canada is made up of many areas that have different characteristics.
- Become familiar with some bird species that live in these areas and why.



Method

Students will research different areas of Canada and become familiar with some species of birds that these areas support.



Materials

- Research materials
- A map of Canada's 15 terrestrial ecozones

Background

Different birds are attracted to different habitats to fill their survival needs. Some species have huge ranges because they are adaptable and can find food, water, nesting spots, and spaces that suit them in many Canadian habitats.

- The American crow, for example, eats just about anything and makes itself at home in deep forests, city garbage dumps, and everywhere in between. As a result, its range is huge.

Meanwhile, some species have very specific requirements. Because their habitat choices are limited, their ranges are much smaller.

- Bluebirds are one example. They prefer open grasslands with few trees but need tree cavities to nest. During the early 1900s trees were cleared from thousands of hectares of bluebird habitat for farms. Introduced species, such as European starlings and house sparrows, then pushed bluebirds out of the few remaining nest sites. The number of bluebirds declined until they were close to vanishing. During the 1920s, bird lovers across North America began building nest boxes designed specifically for bluebirds—resulting in an upswing for the species.

In this activity, students will learn about some of the birds that live in six different areas of Canada that include the 15 terrestrial ecozones of Canada. An **ecozone** is a distinctive area where organisms and their physical environment endure as a system.

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The six areas of Canada highlighted in this activity include the:

- **Arctic** (Arctic and Taiga cordilleras, and the southern and northern Arctic ecozones), which draws thousands of migrant birds to breed, nest, and raise young.
- **Pacific maritime and mountain area** (Pacific maritime and montane cordillera ecozones) that provides critical habitat for countless waterfowl and migrating shorebirds.
- **Prairie ecozone**, where more than half of all North American ducks are born and major nesting grounds for migratory waterfowl are found.
- **Boreal forest region** (Taiga plains and shield; the Boreal cordillera, plains, and shield; and the Hudson plains ecozones) where about 60 percent of all Canadian land birds breed.
- **Mixedwood plains ecozone** (Carolinian zone) where wildlife species that are common in the Carolinas and the Mississippi Basin are found and where roughly 20 percent of all Canadians live.
- **Atlantic maritime ecozone**, where tens of thousands of shore and migrating birds feed on Bay of Fundy tidal flats.

Activity

1. Explain that there is a diversity of ecozones in Canada—15 major ones.
 - For this activity, we have divided Canada into six different areas, as identified in the background section above.
2. Tell students they will become familiar with these areas, as well as some of their avian residents.
3. Explain that each area offers a different selection and arrangement of food, water, shelter, nesting spots, and space that appeal to a variety of bird and other wildlife species.
4. Divide the class into six groups and assign an area to each group.
5. Provide each group with a list of six bird species that are typically found within their area. Point out that some species of birds may be found in more than one area.
6. Each group should now research their birds and area, exploring the following questions:
 - Which of their bird species migrate, and which ones do not?
 - Are any of their bird species in peril? If so, why are they in trouble?
 - Are their ranges large or small? Which of their bird species live in other areas of Canada?
7. Have each group list features of its area that are attractive to resident birds.
8. Ask each group to make a presentation to the class about the birds of their area.

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