

Community Survey for Birds



Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Learn to collect survey data on available, or missing, habitat for local birds.
- Learn about habitat elements birds need to survive.
- Raise the awareness of respondents to birds' needs.



Method

Students conduct a survey to determine what habitat elements for birds are available or missing in their community. Results will be distributed to survey participants to help spread awareness about habitat conditions for local birds.



Materials

- Paper

Background

Like you, birds need a spot to call home to survive. They need four basics to make a happy habitat: food, water, shelter, and space—arranged just right for them. Habitats and ecosystems are not the same, but you can't have one without the other.

- A **habitat** (or home) fills the living requirements (food, water, shelter, and space) of a specific wildlife species.
- An **ecosystem** is a living community of interacting elements—some living and some non-living—that depend on each other for the smooth running of the ecosystem.

An ecosystem can contain several habitats. Many ecosystems and habitats are hard hit by human activities such as logging, dredging, urban sprawl, and pollution. When ecosystems and habitats disappear, so do the resident birds, plants, and other living things.

We believe the best way to support birds is to provide habitat, and that begins with action in our backyards. Birds flitting about your yard are a sign that these basics are nearby. If birds fly over your neighbourhood without stopping, something important may be missing.

Think about it from the bird's view.

- If you were a bird, would you visit your yard or neighbourhood?
- Are trees close-by for nesting, perching, shelter, and viewing?
- Is there enough space without feeling crowded?
- Is there food and water nearby?

For additional resources visit:

CanadianWildlifeFederation.ca/Education

Activity

1. Have students create a survey to collect data about what local homeowners are doing to help birds. The survey should be simple, so busy homeowners have time to complete it. Here are some tips on how to create the survey:
 - At the top of the survey, explain who is conducting the survey, its goals, why it is being conducted, and how the results will be used.
 - Leave space for respondents to write answers.
 - Allow two weeks for respondents to answer.
2. Ask students to brainstorm questions for the survey. Some sample questions could include:
 - Do you attract birds to your backyard (e.g., by providing seed, nut, and berry producing trees and shrubs; water sources; nest boxes; cavity trees; flowering plants that attract insect communities; and shelter in the form of coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs)? How long have you been engaged in this kind of activity?
 - If you are not actively attracting birds to your backyard, are you interested in doing so? If so, what would you be willing to do?
 - Do you spray your lawn or garden with pesticides?
 - Can you name five of the bird species that you see in your backyard?
 - Do you have a pet cat? Do you let it roam?
3. Have students distribute their survey to respondents who are known to them, such as parents, neighbours, relatives who live in their community, and teachers, students, and school administrators. Ask students to collect completed forms within two weeks.
4. Once the surveys have been collected, divide your class into groups of five. Each group should:
 - Analyze their data.
 - Report their findings to the class.
5. Have the class identify patterns of responses based on group findings, and ask them to:
 - Make recommendations to improve conditions for resident birds based on their overall findings.
 - Prepare a summary of their findings and recommendations to share with survey participants.

Extensions

- Have students select a recommendation as the basis for an action project to help local birds.

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