



Purpose: To introduce bird watching and using binoculars.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Age: Cloverbud (5-8 yrs old)

Equipment: Binoculars for each student, large pictures of birds (What's a bird?) and smaller pictures of birds (Who/Where's that bird?)

What's a bird?

Introduce the group to several pictures of birds. Ask them to identify what each type of bird has in common. Explain that all birds have similar characteristics and identify them using the song "Head, Feathers, Beaks and Toes"

Head, feathers, beaks and toes, beaks and toes
Head, feathers, beaks and toes, beaks and toes
Two eyes, two legs, two wings and a tail
Head, feathers, beaks and toes, beaks and toes

Who's that bird?

Today we're going to go bird watching and try and identify some different types of birds. We're going to identify the type of bird by describing the parts of the bird we identified in the song. Since birds can be small and are usually observed from far away, we're going to use a set of binoculars to observe the birds. We can also identify birds based on their calls.

Bird Calls

From the Cornell University Amazing Birds Curriculum: Background: Birds have special body parts similar to a person's vocal cords that allow them to sing. Birds use songs (which are longer) and calls (which are shorter) to communicate about territory (space), danger, food, to attract mates, and to locate family members or other birds of the same species. Each species of bird has its own song. Some birds are born knowing how to sing (inherited) and some learn their songs from their parent. Birds that live in different habitats have different kinds of songs and places to sing their songs.

Bird calls are an easy way to identify birds. Pass out the bird sounds activity sheet and use a computer to play the birdcalls that are on the sheet. Have the students match each bird with its call and then have them practice the calls.

Optional Activity

Pass out pairs of words or phrases to the students. Have the students try and find their paired person by saying and listening for the word on their sheet.

Binocular 101

Safety First: Keep binocular strap around your neck. Do not walk while looking through binoculars. Do not swing binoculars around by their strap.

(Taken from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

Before you hand the binoculars out to the class, demonstrate the proper way to adjust them. Start by holding the binoculars up to your eyes and “bending” them up and down until the eye cups are both comfortably positioned over your eyes. This will allow the eyes to work together so you see one image rather than two. Next, adjust the diopter (if you have one) so that the binoculars are focused for your particular eyes. Everyone has different vision, and vision often even varies from one eye to the other! Here’s how to customize the focus for your eyes:

1. Locate the diopter. It will be on either the left or the right eye cup, if you have one. It usually looks like a ring and is marked with a + and a – sign.
2. Look at a stationary object through your binoculars while covering the lens that has the diopter with your hand.
3. Use your other hand to adjust the center focus knob until the object is as clear and sharp-looking as possible.
4. **Cover the other lens (on the side without the diopter) with your hand and adjust the diopter knob until the object looks as clear as possible.** Now you should be able to see objects clearly when looking through both lenses.

Where’s that bird?

Take the students on a short bird watching hike. Explain that they will need to be quiet and move slowly if they want to find birds. Remind them of the binocular safety. If you find a bird have yourself or another adult volunteer record the observations that the students make about the bird. Then after the hike use those observations to identify the species of bird you saw. If you’re worried about not finding any birds during your hike, post some pictures of birds prior to your hike for the students to find.