



# Investigation 1

## Be a Bird Observer

### Before You Start



#### Time and Place

90 minutes

Indoors and outside

### Materials Needed

#### Curriculum Components

#### EXPLORING BIRD BEHAVIOR DVD

- “Be a Bird Observer” video
- Sharp-tailed Grouse videos, fast and slow clips

#### JOURNAL PAGES 1–3

#### You Provide

- “I Wonder” board
- Large paper for “Bird Behaviors” list

### Goal

To encourage students to notice and think about bird behaviors.

### Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to define and describe behavior.
2. Students will be able to define and describe the difference between observation and inference.
3. Students will be able to categorize behavior and begin to collect behavioral data.

### Advance Preparation

- Test the DVD to make sure it works in your player.
- Prepare space and/or materials for the “Bird Behaviors” and “I Wonder” lists, which you will refer to throughout this module.
- Prepare to take students outside to observe bird behaviors.

### Conducting the Activity

#### 1. Reflect on animal observations.

Begin the discussion about animal behavior by asking the students to reflect on their experiences watching animals.

#### Questions to consider

- *Have you ever watched an animal closely? What kind of animal? What did the animal do?*
- *How do your pets behave? Do dogs, cats, rodents, and birds behave differently? How?*
- *If you have more than one dog or cat, how do they behave differently from one another?*
- *Do you think that different bird species behave in different ways? For example, do different kinds of ducks or song birds behave differently? How?*
- *Each of the humans in this room behave differently; do you think individual crows, or robins, or Canada Geese behave differently from each other?*
- *Do you think we could keep track of the things that birds do? If so, how?*

Tell the students that some scientists (called ethologists)



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study animal behavior, and one of the skills they use is observation. It can be fun to watch animals, and scientists, including us, can watch animals with scientific questions in mind.

## 2. Observe bird behaviors in a video and create a “Bird Behaviors” list.

Play the “Be a Bird Observer” video once through for students (running time: 5 minutes).

Play the video again, but this time have students take notes on what they observe the birds doing, using **JOURNAL PAGE 1**, question 1. At the conclusion of the video, begin a discussion about behaviors that the students witnessed, and note any behaviors that the students mention on a large paper or bulletin board entitled “Bird Behaviors.” (See sample list at right.) Be sure to keep this list, as you will refer to it throughout this unit.

### Prompt discussion by asking

- *What were the birds doing?*
- *How did the birds interact with each other?*
- *Did some bird species seem to behave differently than others? How?*


During the discussion, consider and privately note:

- What assumptions do students make?
- Do the students have misconceptions?
- What questions arise? Encourage students to record their questions on **JOURNAL PAGE 1**, question 2.

## JOURNAL PAGE 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Be a Bird Observer**


 While watching a video and going outside, you can observe many interesting bird behaviors!

**What are these birds doing?**

Watch a video of bird behaviors, and write down your observations and questions.

1. How do the birds behave? (What do you observe?)

2. What questions do you have? (What do you wonder?)

Cornell Lab of Ornithology **BirdSleuth**: Exploring Bird Behavior Investigator's Journal 

**Sample List of  
“Bird Behaviors”**

*pulling up a worm  
taking off to fly  
calling  
chasing each other  
flying  
hopping  
sitting on a branch  
spearing a fish  
swimming  
preening*

