

Birds! Birds! Birds!

Active Learning Through Literature

Activities based on the Third Thursday Adelson Library Book Reading Series

Topic: Conservation in Action

Book: *She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head!* by Kathryn Lasky

Description: The story of two spunky women who fought fashion and helped start the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Target Birds: Purple Gallinule, Arctic Tern, American Bittern, Snowy Egret

Activities:

- Look at web sites about hats decorated with bird parts from the 1800s
- Create a "Bird Feeding Hat" (A hat that you can wear outdoors with branches and seed attached to attract birds!)
- Make the connection to current problems with Illegal bird trade (for ex. Painted Buntings)

Questions for discussion:

1. *Harriet Hemenway saw something while looking out her window—what was it?*
2. *This sight spurred her to action—she wanted to stop the killing of birds for fashion. How did Harriet and her cousin Minna bring about this change? What is the name of the club they started?*
3. *They asked men to join their club since men held more political power at that time. Who else did they invite to join?*
4. *Eventually, they realized that stronger action was needed to stop the killing and use of birds for fashion. What did they do next?*

Additional Resources:

- web sites for feathered hats: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/feather/index.htm>, <http://audubonmagazine.org/features0412/hats.html>

Topic: Endangered Species

Book: *When Agnes Caws!* by Candace Fleming.

Description: Follow the adventures of Agnes and her mother, Professor Octavia Peregrine, as they race to find the Pink-headed Duck—before Colonel Pittsnap does!

Target Birds: Pink-headed Duck, Blue-footed Booby, Peregrine Falcon

Activities:

- Discuss other endangered species, such as the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Whooping Crane, and Peregrine Falcon—see web site below.
- Create a portable mural on a large sheet of poster board that gives tips on things you can do to help birds in cities. For ideas, visit the Celebrate Urban Birds website: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/resources-for-celebrating/tips/helping-birds-in-cities>

Questions about the book:

1. *Which bird call "pierced the jungle air of Borneo"?*
2. *Who made this sound (a bird)? "Chaca-cha-ca! Wick, wick, wick!"*

Additional Resources:

Cornell Lab of Ornithology web sites:

- Conservation success stories <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/conservation/success/>
- Modern extinctions <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/conservation/extinctions/>

Topic: Flight, especially in birds**Book:** *Animals in Flight* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page**Description:** Find out how, when, and why birds and beasts fly.**Activities:**

- Look at diagrams of 4 typical wing shapes and discuss how each is adapted for a different type of flight.
- Make flying “birds” (paper airplanes colored to look like birds). Encourage children to try making different wing types.
- Launch your flock outside or in a large room. Observe variations in flight: how far, flight pattern, how long they stay up, etc.

Additional Resources:

- Website: Celebrate Urban Birds Questions about Feathers and Flight:
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/your-questions/questions-about-feathers-and-flight>

Topic: Bird Anatomy and the Uniqueness of Birds**Book:** *What Makes a Bird a Bird* by May Garelick**Description:** What is the one thing that makes a bird a bird? Read this book to find out! Then explore the question more after the book reading.**Activities:**

- **What makes birds similar? What makes them different?** Using color pictures of a Northern Cardinal and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, lead a discussion about how they are alike and different. Add a third bird (e.g., Blue Jay) and compare it to the first two
- **Make a bookmark.** Make copies on cardstock paper using the feather bookmark template. Have children color in the feather on one side, and write the question (What makes a bird a bird?) on the other side.

Additional Resources:

- Website: Celebrate Urban Birds Questions about Feathers and Flight:
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/your-questions/questions-about-feathers-and-flight>

Topic: Nesting**Book:** *Birds Build Nests* by Yvonne Winer, illustrated by Tony Oliver**Description:** An introduction to the materials that birds use and the places where they build their nests, presented in a beautiful blend of science, illustration, and poetry. *Birds Build Nests* explores nests found all over the world.**Activities:**

- Have children build their own “nest” from natural materials: sticks, tiny twigs, leaves, mud, pine needles. They can test their nest’s ability to hold eggs by placing 2-3 small rocks in the nest and then picking it up.
- Write a poem about nesting birds or a nest they have seen.

Additional Resources and Supplies:

- Nestwatch web site <http://watch.birds.cornell.edu/nest/>
- *Peterson Field Guides Eastern Birds’ Nests* by Hal H. Harrison

Topic: Migration**Book:** *Flute’s Journey: The life of a Wood Thrush* by Lynne Cherry**Description:** Follow the journey of Flute, a Wood Thrush, as he migrates from the summer home where he was born in the Belt Woods of Maryland, to his winter home in Costa Rica--and back again.**Activities:**

- Review the challenges Flute faced on his breeding ground, wintering ground, and during migration.

Additional Resources:

- Celebrate Urban Birds web site (How to help birds in cities)

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/resources-for-celebrating/tips/helping-birds-in-cities>

Topic: Adaptations

Book: *Beaks!* by Sneed B. Collard III

Description: A beautifully illustrated book introducing the amazing variety of bird bills and how they relate to what birds eat.

Activities:

- Draw birds with different beak types. Use field guides and pictures in magazines or better yet—go outside to watch birds firsthand.
- Make a poster of beaks
- Create a snack table with different foods for birds (that people can eat – nuts, berries, fruit, seeds, worms (gummy)). Imagine what beak you might have to eat the different types of food.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/your-questions/questions-about-food>

Topic: Survival and adaptation to cities

Book: *Urban Roosts: Where Birds Nest in the City* by Barbara Bash

Description:

Activities:

- Read *Urban Roosts*; In Groups (one slide per student/group) research each of the CUBS focal species (or only 8 included in UR). Go outside try to find habitat where you could find your species and photograph -- just the habitat; Create a power point presentation about habitat -- include facts about how you can improve life for birds in cities.
- Read *Urban Roosts*; Pick one of the 16 CUBS birds and research how they nest and survive in cities; draw the bird (carefully noticing size; posture; field marks; etc.); enlarge and trace onto cardboard; paint as accurately as possible; go outside and pose bird in it's real habitat --- be creative. Photograph cardboard bird in correct habitat.
- Read *Urban Roosts*; Pick one of 16 species focal species; write a story about that species -- a day in the life of that species (inspired by *Urban Roosts*); For illustrating the book -- go outside to draw habitat.
- Read *Urban Roosts*; With cameras have participants go out and try to find "beautiful birds in strange places"
- Read *Urban Roosts*; Use the book as a jumping board for a creating a Calendar. Pair kids up so they are divided into twelve groups. Pick one of the 16 focal species; research; and with photography or artwork create your own *Urban Roosts* calendar; You might want to reproduce and sell using money earned to donate to charity.

Additional Resources:

- Beautiful Birds in Urban Places contest:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/temporary/youtube-bird-girl>

Topic: Extinction

Book: *Grandmother's Pigeon* by Louise Erdrich

Description: This is a wonderful children's book about an eccentric grandmother leaves behind three old eggs that hatch into Passenger Pigeons. Blends fantasy and science.

Activities:

- Read *My Grandmother's Pigeon*; Inspired by the book create a story from the viewpoint of the recently hatched Passenger Pigeons. Participants write the story and illustrate. Send stories to CUBS for showcasing on the web.
- Read *My Grandmother's Pigeon*; Go out and observe an area of approximately the size of half a basketball court. Take Journals and write or draw what you see and hear in exactly ten minutes;
- Go outside for a walk in your neighborhood. Imagine all the places that Passenger Pigeons might have used in your neighborhood more than a century ago. Take a journal.
- Read *Urban Roosts*; Pick one of the 16 CUBS birds and research how they survive in cities; draw the bird (carefully noticing size; posture; field marks; etc.); trace onto cardboard; paint as accurately as possible; cut a slit thorough the mid section and add wings; create a mobile;
- After reading the book -- Be an investigative reporter -- Where can you find birds in your neighborhood? What struggles do the birds in your neighborhood have? Draw, journal, or photograph.

Other Recommended Books:

- *The Best Beak in Boonaroo Bay* by Narelle Oliver
- *How Birds Find Their Way* by Roma Gans
- *Cardinals, Robins, and Other Birds* by George S. Fichter, illustrated by Patricia Topper
- *The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Audubon* by Jacqueline Davies, illustrated by Melissa Sweet
- *Birds: Nature's Magnificent Flying Machines* by Caroline Arnold, illustrated by Patricia J. Wynne
- *Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of New York City* by Janet Schulman, illustrated by Meilo So
- *Antarctica* by Helen Cowcher
- *Egg to Bird: Cycles of Life* by Carolyn Scrace
- *A Youth's Look at Black & Brown Faces in America's Wild Places* Black and Brown Faces by Dudley Edmonson