

MODULE 1: LEARNING ABOUT BIRDS

Bird watching with your class

These notes include advice on how to get your class involved in bird watching and how to attract birds to the school grounds.

Use the bird identification information included in this module and possibly supplement this with a recommended bird identification guide from the Useful Websites and Books list.

The children could try bird watching around the school grounds and record the number of species they find. These data could then be used to create bar and pie charts back in the classroom. This information could also be useful as an indication of which birds are not found in the school grounds. You might want to research ways of attracting the less common species to the school (e.g. is the right kind of food available? Are there suitable habitats for them?), and provide what is lacking.

Provide the children with pencils, clipboards and paper and ask them to sketch the birds that they see. The children could practise sketching birds by using pictures in field guides or photographs of common birds they might encounter. There are worksheets provided for recording and sketching birds.

A habitat is more than just a home for an organism. Explain to the children that a habitat must supply all the things an animal requires to survive. Some examples include water, food, air and space. If your school grounds do not provide the correct conditions for birds to survive, they will not be found there. Discuss the results from the exercise in activity 1 of this section and ask the class to suggest reasons why these results were obtained (e.g. either that there is adequate food, shelter, space and water or conversely, that there is not).

Explain that food and water availability are important factors for attracting birds to a habitat. **Module 3 “What do I eat?”** provides more information on bird diet and providing feeders with information on how to make this a class activity.

Explain that nesting sites are important factors for attracting birds to a habitat according to the kind of nest they make. **Module 2 “What is my home?”** provides information on different nests and how we can provide artificial nesting sites such as bird boxes. It shows how to make nests and bird boxes and how to make this a class activity.

Activity 1 – Bird watching

Equipment you might need for bird watching:

- Pens and coloured pencils
- A notepad
- Binoculars
- Illustrated checklists to suit the habitat and season which the children can tick
- A good field guide (see the list of websites and books)

General tips for bird watching:

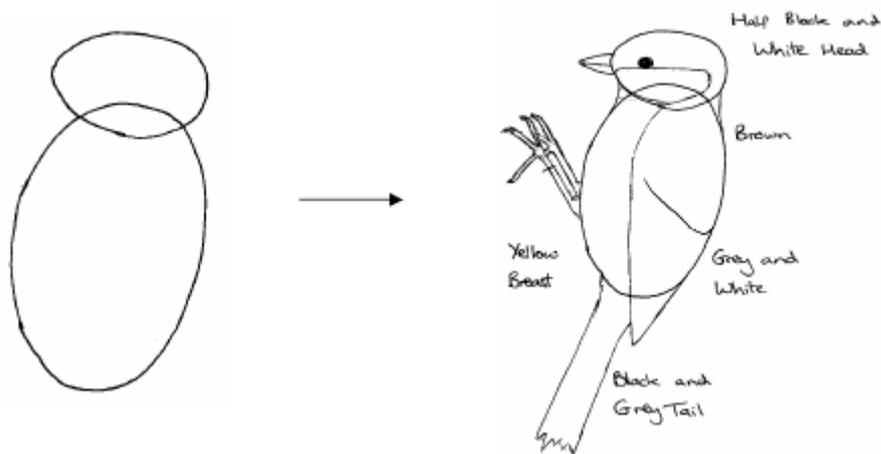
- * You will see more birds if you do not draw attention to yourself –do not make loud noises or wear bright colours.
- * Find a comfortable place to sit and watch where you will not disturb the birds.
- * Although some identification information is provided in Birds in Nidderdale pages, it is not comprehensive. It is recommended that, in addition, you use a field guide
- * Try to note down colour, size and shape and any other distinguishing features. Sketching the bird may also help.
- * Note down any distinctive behaviour (e.g. repetitive pecking at a tree or a characteristic way of flying).

- * When using binoculars, find the bird with your eye first and then raise the binoculars. Do not look down at the binoculars as you do this, but keep your vision on the bird in question.
- * If you wish to bird watch in the school grounds, you might need a means of attracting the birds (see below for ideas on how to do this.)

An illustrated list of birds for children to use as spotting sheets as check lists is included in this module. The species have been chosen as they are regularly seen in Nidderdale and many are ones that will come to feeding stations.

Sketching birds

You do not need to be an artist to sketch birds. Start with a small oval for the head and a larger oval for the body. The outlines of the markings and colourings are then drawn in along with an accompanying label indicating the colour. The beak and legs can be added to the drawing, or drawn separately if preferred. An example sketch of a great tit using this method is shown below, and a worksheet for sketching birds is included.



Activity 2 – Attracting birds to the school grounds

If you want to watch birds in the school grounds it is good to have a means of attracting them. Below are some ideas on how to achieve this:

- * Putting up bird-tables or feeders. (see the module “What do I eat” for how to do this)
- * Providing nesting sites for the birds by putting up bird boxes (See the module “What is my home?” for how to do this)
- * Creating bird-friendly grounds with plenty of shelter and food can also help, if you have the space. Some advice is given below.

Creating bird-friendly grounds

- Provide a variety of different shrubs and trees which produce fruits and seeds and attract insects.
- Examples of some trees and shrubs which may be suitable include rowan, hawthorn, elder, honeysuckle, ivy and yew.
- Having plenty of leaf litter will attract lots of insects which provide food for foraging birds.
- If you leave a “wild” garden patch where there are nettles and brambles this will attract lots of invertebrates which in turn will attract the birds which feed on them. Dead wood and log piles serve the same purpose and thistles and teasels provide seeds.
- Thick hedgerows and old trees can provide nesting sites.

Bird Spotter Sheet



Blackbird



Robin



Starling



Chaffinch



Goldfinch



Magpie



Blue tit



House sparrow



Jackdaw



Dunnock



Great tit



Wood pigeon



Collared dove



Rook



Coal tit

Name.....Date.....

Sketching Birds Work Sheet

Drawing birds helps us to identify them properly

Start by drawing a small oval for the head and a larger oval for the body

Draw an outline for the different colours on the bird and write what the colours are

Draw any clear marks you can see on the birds

Draw the beak and the feet in the separate boxes

My bird is called a

Draw your bird here

Draw the beak

Draw the feet