

Lesson 2: Cheep Imitations

An Introduction to the 20 most common Birds in your area and the calls they make

Overview: Students over the course of several weeks will be introduced and will be expected to memorize the appearance and calls of the most common birds in their area and then display their prowess in the field

Objectives (1-3): Students over the course of several weeks will be able to identify by sight and sound various common birds in their surroundings and through that develop the beginnings of a realization of the complexity and diversity inherent in successful ecosystems.

Key Concepts: Biodiversity, bird calls, coloration, survey techniques
Subjects: Biology, Ecology
Duration: 1 class period (40 minutes), followed by numerous short periods over the course of 4 weeks to familiarize/test students with appearances and calls
Setting: In the classroom, then eventually in the field, outdoor natural landscape
Season: late spring to mid-fall
Interdisciplinary Connections
Frameworks:

Environmental Education @ the Cove River Site, and other coastal Connecticut settings.



Produced by the Graduate Students in Environmental Education EVE 546 Spring 2009



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Introduction (background): Bird vocalization includes both bird calls and bird songs. In non-technical use, bird songs are the bird sounds that are melodious to the human ear. In ornithology, bird 'songs' are often distinguished from shorter sounds, which may be termed 'calls'. Bird calls serve various purposes, these include mate attraction/selection, predator warnings, and territory notifications. In general each song and call is unique to the species (with the exception of mimics). The calls and the coloration of birds combine often to show the overall fitness of the bird and are essential in most mating rituals.

Materials: A list of necessary etc...

- The Urban Bird Sounds “Getting Started Packet” available at http://www.urbanbirdsounds.org/Site/Teaching_Materials.html
- A copy of the Urban Bird Sounds bird Call CD or podcast or mp3’s also available at http://www.urbanbirdsounds.org/Site/Teaching_Materials.html
- A copy of the Urban Bird Sounds “More Teaching Materials” packet available at http://www.urbanbirdsounds.org/Site/Podcasts/Entries/2008/2/2_Free_CD_and_Booklet.html
- A boom box (battery operated)

Preparation / Set Up (if necessary): When starting this lesson, it is important to make sure that you at least have at least a basic grasp of the calls and coloration of the various birds. Each student should have their own id sheet and it would be ideal to have large photos (laminated) so that the entire class can view the birds at the same time.

Engagement (Opening or Essential

Question: What are the various birds in my area, how can I recognize them, and why are they important?

- In a class ask your students what they know about birds
- Have them list the names of all the local birds they can think of
- Take your students on a “Listening Walk” around the school have them fill out the Listening Walk Handout

- Play the Final Quiz and ask them to write down any birds that they think they can name

Exploration:

- Each week work with your class to master not only the visual characteristics of the subject bird, but the calls of each bird as well
 - Each week should contain no more than four individual birds and their respective calls
 - At the end of each week give the students a quiz on the birds that they studied
- As the weeks progress, be sure to introduce individuals from previous weeks to keep up their familiarity
- Starting from the very beginning ask your student to spend a few minutes outside everyday listening to and observing the birds around them. Have them keep a journal where they list the birds they see and hear including the ones that they don't know, with those cases have them write descriptors for those calls and birds. Each week their journals should become more complete as their knowledge grows.

Explain:

Ask your students why they think that birds (both male and female) have different songs and colorations. Explain to your students what a Point Count is and why it is an important aspect of identifying the health of an environment (Birds are an Indicator Species)

Elaborate:

Introduce or bring students to the Cove River site, there spread them out individually and have them keep a point count of the birds that they see and hear. Be sure to take advantage of the various types of habitat that are afforded throughout the site. Bring the boom box with recorded songs, experiment with playing a bird call and listening for replies. Once several point counts have been taken gather your class together and discuss the species that were noticed.

Evaluate:

- At the end of the weeks when all of the calls have been studied and the quizzes have been given, present your class with the final test
- Ask them to hand in their song journals and point counts for participation points

Supplementary Materials:

More Bird Calls:

<http://www.enature.com/birding/audio.asp>

Information on Point Counts:

<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/point/help/index.cfm?pageName=What%20Is%20A%20Point%20Count?&formTitle=What%20Is%20A%20Point%20Count?&getFormName=Y>