Site Bird Study

guidelines for free exploration

Provide students with some experience identifying birds using photos, field guides or popular identification apps. Discuss what features are used to identify birds. Discuss the birds that the students believe they can recognize and discuss the birds that they think might be present at the *Mighty Acorns* site.

Have the following materials available if possible: Bird identification books or photocopied guide of common birds, binoculars, student notebooks if there is a convenient place to store them for future use (after the free exploration), pencils

Have a hiking area planned that includes various habitats of birds (woods, swamps, lake or river, meadow if possible). Discuss beforehand or as the group is hiking the various signs of birds, the clues to the name of the bird, etc. **Allow ample time for free exploration.**

Following are suggestions of activities and discussions:

1. Suggest a type of scavenger hunt as the students look for birds. They could get points for the following:
   - a bird singing
   - a bird with a wing bar
   - a bird feeding
   - a bird with a crest
   - a bird soaring
   - a bird walking on the ground
   - a bird climbing a trunk or a branch
   - a bird bigger than a crow
   - a bird perched on a limb
   - a bird with webbed feet

2. Identify the birds by using the bird identification book.

3. Draw a bird when time allows, either after the exploration, or back at school.

Bird Observation Tips:
Dress in dull clothing so you can blend in with nature. Wear shoes that will allow you to walk silently. The earlier you search for birds, the better. When you spot a bird, try to take a mental picture of it immediately...remember as many of the features about birds as you can...size, shape, coloring, habitat. Especially remember the key markings to help you find the bird in the book. Most important, never disturb or harm a bird or its habitat or nest.

Some birds to look for:

- **Robin**: Look for the orange-breasted bird. In spring, the young robin has a speckled black and white breast.
- **Blue jay**: The bird is blue colored and has a crested tuft of head feathers and a gray belly. Its call is “jay-jay” and is usually

found in the woods. It is a bird that thinks it is “boss.”

- **Song Sparrow**: This bird is rusty-colored and has a heavily streaked breast. It is a bird that “flits” from bush to bush, especially in the woods. It is so named because it loves to sing.
- **Cardinal**: The bright red bird is the male. The female is pinkish tan or brownish. They usually travel in pairs.
- **Mourning Dove**: This bird is gray and flies high. It has a long tail and arched wings and a slender body. This is the bird that has a moaning coo, and it can be heard quite often in the spring and the summer mornings and nights. They enjoy being near rivers and wooded areas but can be found on telephone poles in the city.
- **Mallard**: The male bird has a green head, white neck band and rusty breast. The female is mottled brown. This bird is a loud quacking duck and lives on rivers, lakes, and ponds, and even in mud puddles.