Lesson Plan: **Practicing Bird Identification with 'Flat Birds'**

How can I use different characteristics of birds for identification?

Alignment with STEM Framework

Designer ✏ **Investigator** 🔍

Overview

In this lesson, the facilitator provides several kinds of field guides and youth have downloaded at least one free bird identification app, starting with Merlin. The facilitator shares several different flat birds and youth practice their identification skills. Before youth can offer an opinion about a bird identification they must be able to list at least three characteristics that make them think that they have correctly identified the bird. For example, if youth think they have a northern cardinal before they can say the name of the bird, they have to say something like: "I have a fairly large bird. It is almost all red. It has a blackish face around its bill. Its bill is reddish too. It has a crest on its head.", naming at least 3 characteristics of a northern cardinal.
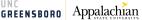
Practice Goals

- ☐ Identifying birds
- ☐ Creating methods for data collection
- ☐ Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating evidence information about backyard birds

Content Goals

- ☐ How do I use a field guide to identify birds?
- ☐ How do I use the Merlin app to identify birds?

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explore backyard birds with youth. Facilitators have a packet of 10 common backyard birds, in color, laminated with hints on their common habitat preferences so that birds can be placed appropriately in the out-of-doors. Facilitators place the 10 birds around the school yard and then youth move from station to station, as a small group, individually identifying the birds as they go. Youth record their identification on the Flat Birds Data Sheet.

Teacher Background Information

The facilitator should practice identifying common backyard birds with both field guides and the Merlin app so that they are prepared to help students use these identification tools.

Affinity Goals

I can act like a **Designer** by drawing a model of two birds in my nature journal and noticing and recording the bird in detail.

I can act like an **Investigator** by looking for birds in my yard and neighborhood and my school grounds and noticing their colors, size, beak size and shape, flight patterns, and calls. I can use my observations paired with a field guide or the Merlin app to identify the birds I see or hear.

Materials

- ☐ Flat Birds (a note: search by bird photos of 10-12 birds *local to your area*. Print photos in approximately the same size as the real bird. Laminate the bird photos and cut the bird out).
- ☐ Materials like nails, hammer, string, masking tape to attach birds to branches, etc.
- ☐ Nature journal
- ☐ Colored pencils
- ☐ Data collection sheet
- ☐ Binoculars

Time Needed

45 Minutes

Instructional Sequence

Facilitator will:

- ☐ Place Flat Birds in appropriate habitats and lead youth on a bird hike to identify these birds.

Youth will:

- ☐ Complete their data sheet for that numbered bird.
- ☐ They will move to the next station and do the same.
- ☐ Once they complete the hike, the whole group will discuss bird characteristics of each numbered flat bird (1 – 10)
- ☐ Use field guides and/or the merlin app to check their identification.

Facilitator will:

- ☐ Ask questions which help youth clarify identifications.

Youth will:

- ☐ Select two birds identified.
- ☐ Draw each bird in their nature journal.
- ☐ Make note of what the two birds have in common and what is different.

Flat Bird Data Sheet

Your Name:_____

Bird #1

3 Characteristics:
1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____
Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #2

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____
Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #3

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____
Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #4

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #5

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #6

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #7

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #8

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #9

3 Characteristics:

1.

2.

3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App

Bird #10

3 Characteristics:

1.
2.
3.

Name of Bird: _____

Circle either Field Guide or App