

It's All About Birds!

Grade 7 Language Arts

I. Introduction to Birds

Standard 1:1 – Words in Context – Verify the meaning of a word in its context, even when its meaning is not directly stated, through the use of definitions, restatement, example, comparison, or contrast.

Birds are warm-blooded, have distinctive beaks, and their young hatch from hard-shelled eggs. A characteristic unique to birds is the presence of feathers. They provide insulation, enable flight, and are used in visual communication. Adaptations that enable flight include fused and lightweight bones, and a keeled sternum (for the support of flight muscles). Variations in birds (e.g., coloration, wing shape, beak type) give clues to their habitat, feeding tendencies, and behavior.

There are many distinct words associated only with birds or their study.

Activity: Which Word Is It?

Objective: Students determine which word fits best into a sentence by looking up definitions in a dictionary, and analyzing sentence context.

Materials: [Which Word Is It?](#) handout and [Answer Key](#)
Dictionaries
Pencils

Procedure:

- 1) Assemble students in small groups.
- 2) Distribute handouts and dictionaries.
- 3) Have students look up the words in the sentences and correctly identify which word fits best depending on the context of the sentence.

II. Birds and Humans

Throughout history, birds have been an integral part of human lives. Birds can be found as subjects in art, symbolic roles in mythology and religion, aspects of superstitions, the focus of literary works and inspirations in music. Birds act as

environmental health indicators, control pest populations, are sources of food, and bird watching is one of the most popular outdoor activities.

Standard 5: Research and Information – The student will conduct research and organize information.

Writing/Grammar Usage and Mechanics: The student will express ideas effectively in written modes for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Standard 2:2 – Write research report that:

- a. includes relevant and focused questions about the topic.
- b. communicates clear and accurate perspectives on the subject.
- c. includes evidence and supporting details compiled through the formal research process, including use of a card catalog, computer catalog, magazines, newspapers, dictionaries, and other reference books.
- d. document sources with reference notes and a bibliography.
Example: Write a research report on the impact that television has had on American society. Take a position on the topic, whether positive or negative, and support this view by citing a variety of reference sources.

Possible bird-related topics:

- ◆ Livestock Fences – Fences are important for keeping livestock in designated areas. However, these same fences are responsible for over half of Prairie Chicken mortalities.
- ◆ Pesticide Use (such as DDT) – Banning DDT in the United States has allowed native birds such as the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Brown Pelican to recover, after having been threatened with extinction. Malaria, a mosquito borne illness continues to be a health concern to people throughout the world. Without the use of insecticides, mosquito populations can breed out of control, causing pandemic malaria outbreaks.
- ◆ Wind farms, oil development, mining, etc. – Oil, electricity, and fossil fuels are all important parts of our everyday life. But we can not ignore the impact that generation or mining of these materials makes on the environment.
- ◆ Parrots as pets (pet trade) – People tend to appreciate things that they understand and love. Having a parrot as a pet inclines a person to care more about wild parrot habitat and conservation. However, the tax on wild parrot populations is having an effect, reducing wild parrot populations and threatening their extinction.
- ◆ Lethal control or scare tactics to prevent crop damage by Blackbirds, to solve Canada goose problems in parks or golf courses, etc.
- ◆ Hunting (Pheasants, Quail, Ducks, etc) – Hunting game birds is not only a popular sport and hobby, but also considered a necessity by some. Due to human encroachment, predator populations are often low or absent, thus allowing prey species to survive and reproduce unchecked. Too high prey populations are less healthy and more likely to cause problems for people.
- ◆ Logging – Paper products are an everyday item that we use, but do we use them irresponsibly, wasting much more than we should? For the costs of paper products

to remain affordable to the average consumer, loggers must keep their production costs down. Logging companies have their eyes on old growth forests, but so do admirers of the Spotted Owl and Ancient Murrelet.

Writing/Grammar Usage and Mechanics: The student will express ideas effectively in written modes for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Standard 2:9 – Write friendly letters and business letters, and continue to produce other writing forms introduced in earlier grades.

The staff of the Sutton Center love to hear what you think of ***It's All About Birds!***. Your feedback helps us to continuously improve and add to the presentation.

Activity: Letter

Objective: Students write a letter to a business thanking them for a presentation and stating what they liked or didn't like about the presentation.

Materials: Paper
Pen/Pencil

Procedure:

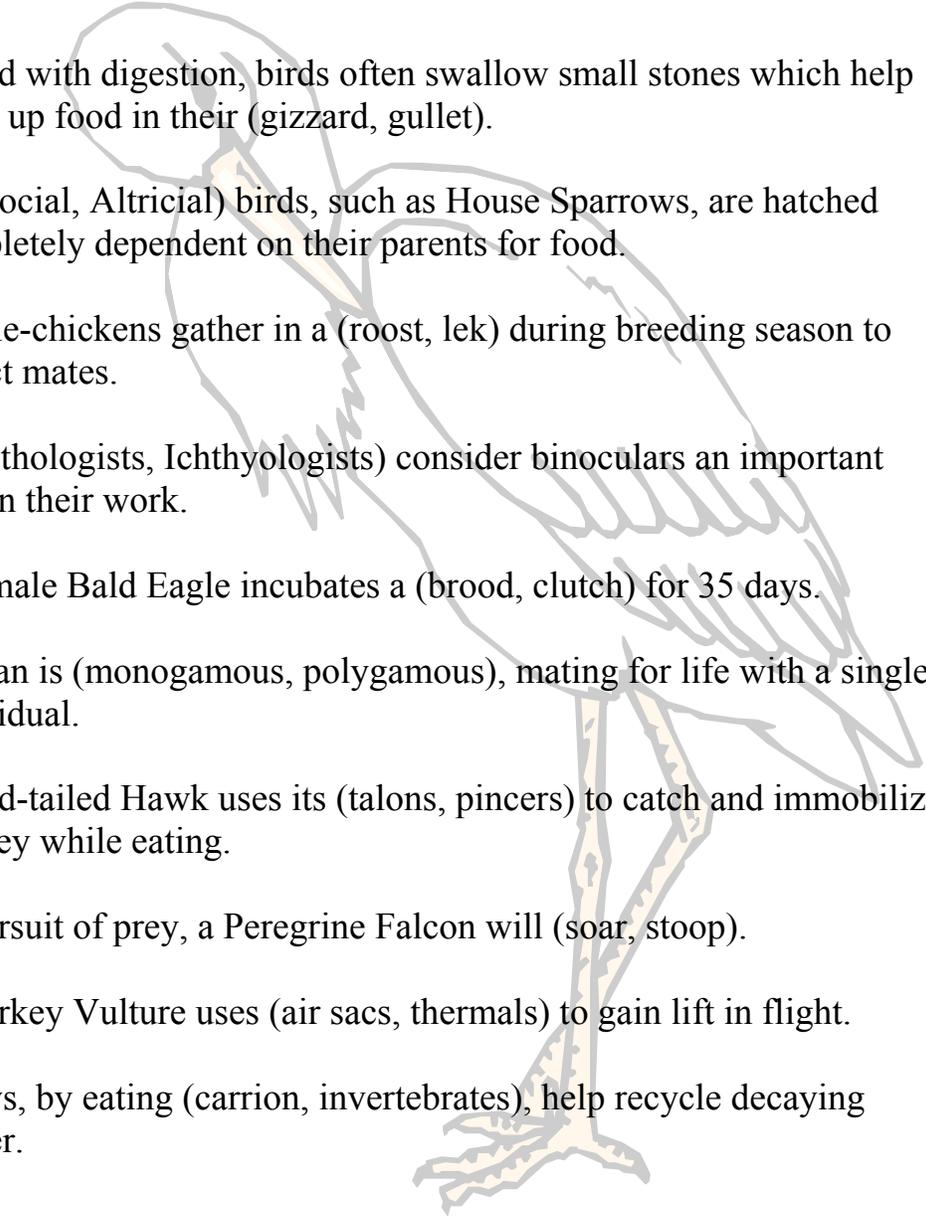
- 1) Ask students to recall what they experienced during the ***It's All About Birds!*** presentation.
- 2) Have students compose a professional business or thank you letter to the Sutton Center or the presenters stating what they experienced and liked or didn't like.
- 3) Mail letters to:
George M. Sutton Avian Research Center
P.O. Box 2007
Bartlesville, OK
74005
Attn: Education

Which Word Is It?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Circle the word which best completes the sentence.

- 1) To aid with digestion, birds often swallow small stones which help grind up food in their (gizzard, gullet).
 - 2) (Precocial, Altricial) birds, such as House Sparrows, are hatched completely dependent on their parents for food.
 - 3) Prairie-chickens gather in a (roost, lek) during breeding season to attract mates.
 - 4) (Ornithologists, Ichthyologists) consider binoculars an important tool in their work.
 - 5) A female Bald Eagle incubates a (brood, clutch) for 35 days.
 - 6) A swan is (monogamous, polygamous), mating for life with a single individual.
 - 7) A Red-tailed Hawk uses its (talons, pincers) to catch and immobilize its prey while eating.
 - 8) In pursuit of prey, a Peregrine Falcon will (soar, stoop).
 - 9) A Turkey Vulture uses (air sacs, thermals) to gain lift in flight.
 - 10) Crows, by eating (carrion, invertebrates), help recycle decaying matter.
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Which Word Is It?

(Answer Key)

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- 9) A Turkey Vulture uses (air sacs, **thermals**) to gain lift in flight.
- 10) Crows, by eating (**carrion**, invertebrates), help recycle decaying matter.

Definitions:

Altricial - birds which hatch helpless, un-feathered, and with eyes closed

Carrion – flesh of a dead animal

Clutch - number of eggs laid by a single female incubated together

Gizzard - muscular portion of the stomach which grinds up food

Lek - communal area where males gather to attract mates

Monogamous - a mating system involving a simple pair bond formed between one male and one female

Ornithologist – person who studies birds

Stoop - the steep, fast dive of a falcon or other raptor often used to catch birds of prey

Talon - long, hooked claws on the feet of birds of prey

Thermals - rising currents of warm air (usually forming over ground rather than water); soaring birds make use of thermals for lift