

It's All About Birds!

Grade 8 Social Studies

I. Introduction to Birds

Birds are warm-blooded, have distinctive beaks, and their young hatch from hard-shelled eggs. Feathers provide insulation, enable flight, are used in visual communication and are a unique characteristic of birds. Adaptations that enable flight include fused and lightweight hollow bones, and a keeled sternum (for the support of flight muscles).

II. Humans and Birds

Throughout history, birds have been an integral part of human lives. There are many significant events and historical figures that have involved or impacted birds.

Grade 8

Standard 1:3 – Construct various timelines of United States, highlighting landmark dates, technological changes, major political, economic and military events, and major historical figures.

Activity: Time Line

Objective: Students will research important events and people that have involved or impacted birds and construct a timeline of these events.

Materials: Large Sheet of Paper (possibly 4' x 6')
[List of Events](#)
Markers
[Timeline Sample](#)

Procedure:

1. Assign students an event to research (possible research topics are on the List of Events).
2. Check and confirm students' facts.
3. Post the Large Sheet of Paper in the classroom. Draw out a skeleton timeline using permanent marker.
4. Have students write in their events on the timeline.

Additional Activity: Throughout the school year, add other significant dates involving nature, the environment, or Oklahoma history.

List of Events

Date	Event
1690	Extinction of the Mauritius Dodo occurs due to human hunting, as well as lack of defense against and ability to compete with introduced species such as the pig, rat, dog, and cat.
1782	The Bald Eagle is chosen as part of the National Emblem of the United States.
1784	Benjamin Franklin writes a letter to his daughter regarding the Bald Eagle being chosen as representative of the United States. He thought the eagle to be a coward and of bad moral character that does not get his living honestly. He would have preferred the Turkey over the Bald Eagle to represent our country.
Late 1800s	Many bird populations are suffering. This is most likely due to the increased demand for birds as food in elegant restaurants, and the fashion trend of using feathers on hats and for boas.
1900	The Lacey Act is passed. This Act prohibited hunters from illegally taking game in one state and shipping it across state borders. In the beginning, this act was mostly ineffectual due to lack of enforcement officials and because of the large profits made by hunters.
1900	The first Audubon Christmas Bird Count takes place. This is a data gathering and recording event that is used to track bird trends and populations.
1903	President Theodore Roosevelt creates the first National Bird Preserve on Pelican Island, Florida.
1913	The Weeks-McLean Law becomes effective. This law attempted to stop commercial market hunting and illegal shipment of migratory birds, but rested on weak constitutional ground from being passed as a rider to an appropriation bill for the Department of Agriculture.
1914	The last known Passenger Pigeon, "Martha", at the Cincinnati Zoo, dies. The extinction of the Passenger Pigeon, which was probably the most common bird in the world at one time, is mainly attributed to over-hunting. A bill was passed in 1897 closing the hunting season on Passenger Pigeons. However, this effort came too late, because by this time there were too few numbers of Passenger Pigeons to re-establish the species.
1916	The Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada is passed. This treaty was designed to preserve migratory birds, regardless of their usefulness to humans. It set dates for closed seasons on migratory birds and prohibited the hunting of insectivorous birds. This law did allow the killing of birds, under permit, when they were injurious to agriculture.
1918	The Migratory Bird Treaty Act goes into effect. This act stated that all migratory birds and their parts (nests, feathers, eggs, etc.) are fully protected.
1940	The Bald Eagle Protection Act is approved. This protects Bald and Golden Eagles by prohibiting their taking, possession, or commerce. Also, rewards are given for information leading to the arrest and conviction for violation of this law.
1945	Widespread use of DDT, as a home and agricultural pesticide, is occurring across the nation.
1951	Oklahoma chooses the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher as its state bird.
1962	The book "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson is published. This book alleged that DDT causes cancer and harms bird reproduction by thinning egg shells.
1970	DDT is banned.
1973	Endangered Species Act is passed. This act protects threatened and endangered species by conserving their habitat.
1989	Tragically, the largest oil spill in US history occurs. The Exxon Valdez is estimated to have killed 250,000 sea birds and 250 Bald Eagles as well as many other animals.
1991	Partners In Flight is formed. This is a group of non-profit organizations, government, industries, and researchers. It is an international conservation group including representatives from North, Central, and South America.

Timeline of Bird-related Events

