

Third Grade Spring Habitat Walk

Purpose

Third grade walks complement the children's curriculum on ecosystems, focusing on birds. Recently, Third Graders have been learning about raptors and their environments. The purpose of the habitat walk is to enhance their knowledge and understanding of birds and their activities in the spring. This walk will look at bird habitats that exist around Conant and at the edge of Acton's Arboretum's forest. The children will have the opportunity to see the different environments in detail on the grounds of the school and draw them and then share these drawings and descriptions with their classroom.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencil for each child plus several extra
- Clipboard for each child
- If you have a pair of binoculars that you can share with the children during the walk, please bring them. This will enhance the walk experience. Encourage sharing.
- Tray for nest building (supplied by teacher)
- Beak guide
- Bird nests
 - The Nature Walk program has a large variety of bird nests found in the Conant field and supplied by Conant families. Many are labeled with the name of the bird type that created it.
 - If the day is not too windy, bring the collection (keep in the boxes) outside on picnic tables.
 - Be sure to bring the nests back in after the walk. You can leave them in the pod for the next class.

Activity 1: Observe Bird Nests

- Spend five minutes looking at the nests with the children. Make careful note of the materials from which each nest is built (grass, straw or dried grass, branches, mud, leaves, manmade materials like string, dryer dust, hair, etc.).
- Try to spread out groups. While some are at nests, others can discuss goals of the walk or listen for birds.
- Ask the children to think about where the birds found the materials (woods, open field, ground, trees, etc.).
- Do they think they travelled far from the nest or got them close by?
- Do males, females or both genders build nests?
- Where do they think these nests were found?
- Where would they build them (tree crux, bush, ground, branches)?

Activity 2: Draw Bird Habitats

Take your group to one of four areas to observe and draw bird habitats:

- stream
- marsh area,
- upper meadow
- wooded area (where 6th graders observe marked areas monthly) Please make sure the children do not disturb any of the marked areas as these are very important to the sixth grade program.

Here they should focus on an area they believe a bird could nest and draw that area for about 10 minutes. The drawings should be sketches with as much detail as would allow within the 10-minute timeframe. Briefly have the children use the binoculars to help focus on an area or tree up high.

Here is a list of questions to ask the students to encourage thought and input into the drawings and discussion:

- What is this habitat? (describe elements they see)
- What birds do you expect to find in this habitat? (robins vs. hawks vs. chickadees and red-wing blackbirds)
- What shelter does this habitat offer?
- Where will birds build nests in this habitat? (tree hollow, branches, ground) With what materials?
- What food is in this habitat?
- How does this match to the beaks of birds in this habitat? (take beak guide with you)

Activity 3: Build a Nest

For the next 10-15 minutes, have the students build a nest from materials found in the habitat where they are drawing. They can break out in groups of 2-3 children or build one all together. Use a tray (cafeteria tray or metal baking tray) to collect materials and build the nest. While it is a difficult task, this should give them an appreciation for the perseverance that birds have and the time it takes to build their homes. Be sure to have the children bring back the nests into the classroom to share.

Beak Guide

small insect eater



small seedeater
(Chickadee)



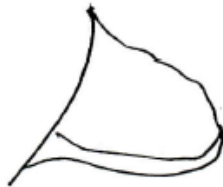
large seedeater
(Cardinal)



Probing
(Robin)



filtering
(Duck)



meat eater - shredding
(Hawk)

