

Activity 2

Learning to Identify Birds






Identifying Birds From Study Skins Activity 2

Objective:

Students will

- Learn to identify birds using bird study skins or mounts, or bird photographs
- Learn about adaptations that help identify bird groups, species, and their relationship to other birds.
- Learn about adaptations and how they help birds do well in their environment.

Materials:

-  bird study skins, color photos, and/or mounts
-  study skin worksheet
-  bird field guides

Note: You can contact PRBO to arrange for education staff to conduct this activity in your classroom. Bird skins or mounts can also be borrowed from local nature centers, wildlife museums and Audubon chapters. Color photographs from the internet, calendars, or magazines can be used as well.

Background

Learning bird characteristics is crucial to identifying birds. This knowledge also allows you to communicate with other bird watchers and biologists. Each bird species has unique field marks or characteristics that are key to identifying it. The provided worksheet gives a diagram or “map” of a bird labeled with the correct vocabulary to introduce to students

Procedure

Activity Option # 1

1. Using the provided worksheets, and any available bird study skins, mounts, or photos, place students into groups of 2 to 4, depending on the number of bird specimens and students.
2. Give each group a stuffed bird specimen and worksheets 1 and 2. Review the parts of the bird with students (worksheet #1). Instruct students to draw their bird on worksheet #2, labeling all parts, markings or features that enable them to determine what kind of bird it is.



Activity 2

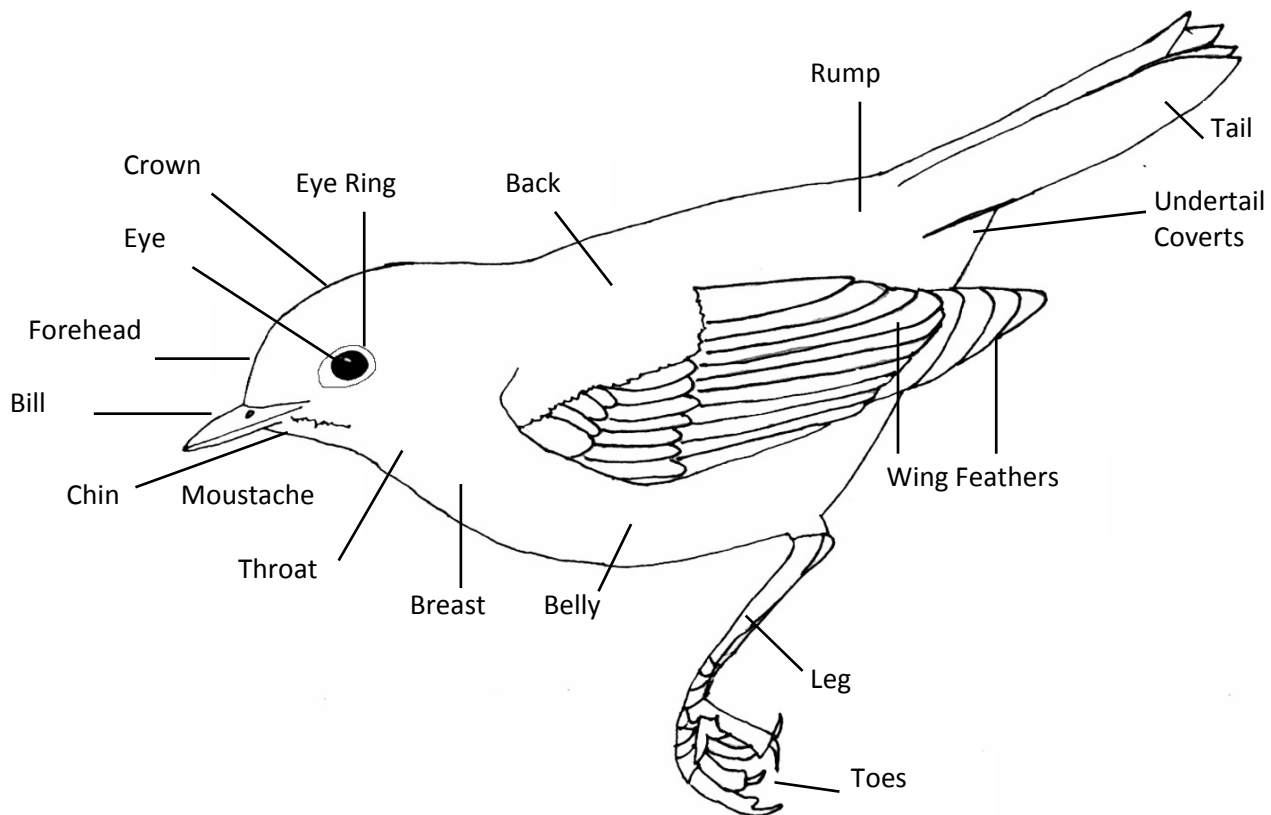
3. Once each person in the group has finished drawing their bird, give them a field guide to identify their bird and answer the questions on the back of the worksheet.
4. Once the students have identified their bird specimen, have them display their birds at their desks with their drawings. Allow them to walk around each students' desk to look at the birds. This will give all students a chance to look closely at all the study skins. Alternatively, groups could present their bird to the class, one at a time, pointing out key characteristics that helped them identify it.

Activity Option #2

1. Place mounts, study skins, or photos around the classroom at different heights and locations. Cover them with a sheet or towel, or piece of cardboard.
2. Have students write in their field notebooks or piece of paper for this activity. Uncover birds one at a time for two minutes, instruct students to pick one bird and look closely at each bird.
3. Cover birds and have students describe on paper the bird from memory, noting colors, markings, etc. Pass out worksheet 1 and go over what field marks are important to look for when identifying birds.
4. Now cover the birds again and go through the activity a second time. This time, when the students describe the bird, they will have an easier time remembering and describing the bird more accurately.

Worksheet #1

Parts of the Bird Diagram



Scientists use **plumage** (feather) characteristics to identify birds they see outdoors, especially when they may only see them for a few seconds!

Key markings to look for are

- Bill shape or size
- Body color
- Face markings- eye ring, eye stripe
- Wing markings
- Head markings



Name of Observer: _____

Common Name of Bird: _____

Scientific Name of Bird: _____



Adaptations

Look at your birds' beak. What do you think your bird eats? List what it eats and describe how the beak might be used.

Habitat

In what habitats can your bird be found?

Review

List 3 adaptations of your bird (part of a bird that helps it survive) and how you think they help your bird live in its habitat?

1.

2.

3.

Range & Migration

What time of year (season) can your bird be found in California? **HINT:** Find out what the colors on the map mean by looking at the **KEY** in the front section of your field guide.

Then, check whether your bird is a...

Migrant = only found in California for part of the year

OR

Resident = found in California year-round