



LESSON/ACTIVITY
Winter - Backyard Birds
of BC

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Ages 5 - 13 years

Grades: K - 6

In this lesson, students will learn:

- Identify seasonal patterns/changes.
- Living things sense and respond to their environment.
- Living things have life cycles adapted to their environment
- Plants and animals have observable features

Curricular competencies:

- Demonstrate curiosity and a sense of wonder about the world.
- Observe objects and events
- Make exploratory observations using their senses
- Share observations and ideas orally, or through written language or drawings.
- Compare observations with those of others
- Sort and classify data

What role do birds play in our ecosystem?

Birds play a very important role in our ecosystem. They help maintain the health of forests, help control populations of insects and small mammals and reptiles, help pollinate flowers and spread and carry seeds and they brighten our day with their bird song.

Can you name some of the different species of birds in your neighbourhood?



 Image of Arctic Snow Geese in Richmond, BC courtesy of Canva

What is migration?

Many birds migrate, which means they travel great distances starting in the fall in search of warmer weather, to mate and to source out a larger food supply as winter can be harsh. These birds include species of waterfowl, shore birds, raptors, and other birds. Some birds migrate to our province during the winter from other colder climates like the Arctic Snow Geese.

In British Columbia, we are situated over the [Pacific Flyaway](#), which is a migratory path. Consider this a flying zone for birds kind of like travelling in an airplane for us humans. Birds use their internal compass and knowledge to fly over this pathway which guides them to different geographical locations.

Different birds are attracted to different climates and [habitats in](#) our province such as marine and pelagic environments, coastal rainforests, wetlands, dry grasslands, coasts, tidal shorelines, boreal forests, alpine tundra, and agricultural land.



 Images of of backyard birds courtesy of Canva

Can you name some bird species you have seen in the winter?

Some birds don't migrate and remain throughout the year including the winter. Both the American Robin and the Black-Capped Chickadee are examples. Some other species commonly seen during the winter include woodpeckers, hummingbirds, finches, starlings, wrens, sparrows and mallards.

Some Robins do migrate, while the rest remain in the winter forming large flocks (from a 100 to 1000 birds) and locate themselves where there is plenty of winter berries on trees and shrubs like hawthorn, holly, juniper and crab apple to eat.

When spring emerges, these flocks break up or say goodbye and resume eating insects and their favourite earthworms when the soil warms. Their bird song is also very common in the spring. This is also the season they have new babies and are busy providing food for them.

Source - The Cornell Lab

How can we help birds during the winter?

For the birds that stay all year round like the northern flickers, black-capped chickadees, hummingbirds, dark-eyed juncos, song sparrows, house and purple finches, food can be sometimes scarce. Here are some ways you can make your space or yard bird friendly:

- Avoiding the use or spraying pesticides or herbicides.
- Leave bird seed or hanging home made bird feeders in your backyard or balcony patio (far away from windows) and keep it well supplied. Make sure to clean the feeders and seed to prevent disease.
- Consider planting native plants or shrubs that produce berries and a source of food and shelter for birds during the winter months.

Source - Nature Canada



ACTIVITIES

Participate in a bird count (Feb 12 -15)

Pine cone Bird Feeder (K - 5)

Make sugar nectar for hummingbird feeders (K - 5)

Backyard Birds Identification (Grades 1 - 6)

Go Backyard Birding using an mobile app

Go Bird Watching in your neighbourhood or local park

BOOKS

Nature All Around: Birds by Pamela Hickman

My First Book of Canadian Birds by Andrea Miller

Backyard Birds: An Introduction by Robert Bateman

Pocket Birds of Canada 2nd Edition by DK and David Bird

Pocket Guides Sibley's - Backyard Birds of PNW, Ontario & Quebec, Atlantic Canada
Audubon Birding Adventures for Kids: Activities and Ideas for Watching, Feeding and
Housing our Feathered Friends.

Peterson Field Guides for Young Naturalists - Backyard Birds

RESOURCES

<http://www.vancouverbirdweek.ca/common-garden-birds>

<https://www.audubon.org/how-do-birds-cope-cold-winter>

<https://www.richmond.ca/parks/parks/naturepark/urbanwildlife/snowgoose.htm>

<https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/encyclopedias/fauna/birds/black-capped-chickadee.html>

<https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/blog/winter-chickadees.html>

<https://pacificbirds.org/birds-migration/the-birds>

MOBILE APPS

<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org>

<https://www.audubon.org/app>

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