

# For Creative Minds

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## Beginning Birders

If you are interested in looking for wildlife, birds are the perfect place to start! Looking for birds outside is a great way to learn that nature isn't just in parks or special, protected places. You can find birds anywhere and everywhere.

**Tips for finding birds:** Use all your senses to find birds in your neighborhood. Scan anywhere that might make a good home for a bird with your eyes. Maybe there's one napping up in the trees, or in a shady place behind your house. Use your ears too. Birds sing all the time! Quite often, you will hear a bird before you ever see it. Once you hear a bird, close your eyes and see if you can figure out where the song is coming from.



**Follow the signs:** Birds leave signs that they have been hanging around. Check branches for pieces of nests. In the spring, you may get lucky enough to find a whole bird nest or egg pieces! Check tree trunks, especially dead trees, for woodpecker holes. And keep an eye out for tracks, feathers, or poop.



tracks in sand, mud, or snow



feather



bird poop



**Bring them to you:** You can make many easy, homemade bird feeders. Coating a pinecone with peanut butter or honey, and then rolling it in sunflower seeds is a great way to bring everything from goldfinches to cardinals right to your window!

**Observe your new friends:** Build your science skills by watching your new bird friends and writing or drawing what you see. It can be fun to watch what different kinds of birds live in what habitats, or are seen more often in what weather. Use all these tips to become a birding expert!

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## Not Just for the Birds!

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Life as a bird is very different from ours in a lot of ways, but in some ways it is very similar! Think about each thing that a bird can do below. Describe what tools you use to do some of the things birds do.



To move from one place to another, most birds spread their wings and fly. *How can you fly from place to place?*

When it gets cold, birds tuck in their legs and fluff up their feathers to keep warm. *What can you use when it gets too cold?*

Hummingbirds use a long, thin, hollow beak to slurp liquid nectar out of flowers. *What can you use to drink liquid out of a container?*

Many meat-eating birds use their sharp beaks to slice meat into smaller pieces that fit into their mouth. *What do you use to cut food into smaller pieces?*

Pelicans use their huge beak to scoop up a mouthful of water and fish, and then drain out the water to keep just the fish! *Is there a tool you can use to scoop solid objects, like fish, out of a liquid?*

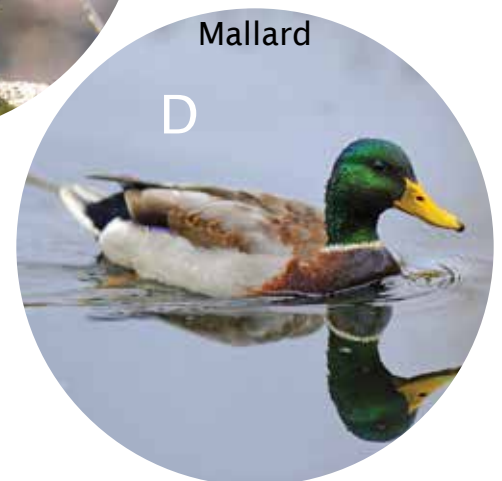
Woodpeckers use a strong, sharp beak to peck holes in trees to find bugs. *What tool would we use to make holes in wood?*

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## Whose Foot?

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With so many birds in so many different places, many of them have lots of different adaptations to help them survive in their habitat. Take a close look at each foot and match it to the bird in its habitat! Think about what each foot might be helpful for.



Answers: 1D-Mallards use webbed feet to paddle and swim through the water. 2A-Ospreys use strong, sharp talons to catch fish. 3B-Stellar's Jays use their feet to grip onto small branches in the trees. 4C-Northern Bobwhites have strong, flat feet as they spend most of their days walking through tall grass searching for seeds.



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## Conservation Connections

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Some of the most creative conservation solutions have come from the conservation of North American birds. Conservationists, or people who work to protect species from extinction, work every day to protect endangered species across North America. Conservation work requires dedication, hard work, and a lot of creativity.

California Condors nest on cliffs or mountaintops along the Pacific coast. Threatened by habitat loss, hunting and egg collecting, there were only 22 birds left in the wild by 1987. The birds were captured and taken to zoos for breeding. Caretakers raised the chicks using puppets and costumes to teach them all the skills they would need to survive when released back in the wild. There are now over 400 condors in the wild and the zoo-breeding program is still being used.



By the 1940s, the number of Whooping Cranes had dropped from thousands to one flock of less than 30. Female cranes usually lay two eggs a season, but normally only one survives. Scientists gathered the second eggs and raised the chicks using costumes. To protect the cranes from a flood or other disaster, they wanted a second flock of cranes. Conservationists taught the birds a new migration route using an ultralight aircraft by a person in a crane costume. Today, there are hundreds of cranes living back in the wild.



One of the biggest threats to the Bald Eagle was pesticides like DDT. When it was discovered that the chemicals caused eagle eggshells to become too thin to protect the unborn chicks, there were less than 500 breeding pairs of bald eagles in the U.S. After years of research and pushing for more careful use of pesticides, DDT was banned and Bald Eagles began to recover. In 2007, the Bald Eagle was taken off the endangered species list, and today is once again a common sight across North America.

