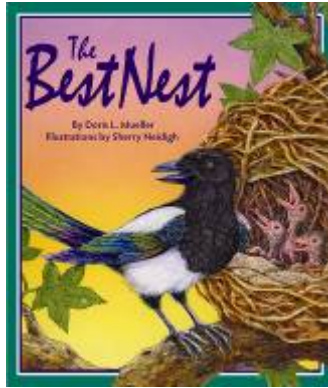


# Teaching Activities

for



<b><u>Questions to Ask Before &amp; after reading the book</u></b>	<b>2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Questions to ask before reading the book</li><li>• What do children already know? With charts</li><li>• After reading the book - thinking it through</li><li>• Re-read the book looking for more information</li><li>• Comprehension questions</li><li>• Fun things to look for</li><li>• What do children already know activity conclusion</li></ul>	
<b><u>Language Arts</u></b>	<b>7</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing a word wall</li><li>• Vocabulary game</li><li>• Putting it all together</li><li>• Suggested vocabulary list</li><li>• Silly sentence structure activity</li><li>• Sequencing sentence strips</li><li>• Word search</li><li>• Write about it!</li></ul>	
<b><u>Science</u></b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Edible sorting &amp; classifying activity</li><li>• Classifying animals: Birds a class of their own</li><li>• Sorting cards</li><li>• Science journal</li><li>• Label the bird</li><li>• Nature observation notebook</li><li>• Venn diagram</li></ul>	
<b><u>Math</u></b>	<b>24</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading data from the Great Backyard Bird Count</li></ul>	
<b><u>Research &amp; Geography</u></b>	<b>25</b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Label the bird</li></ul>	

Teaching Activities are intended for use at home, in the classroom, and during story-times.

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## Questions to ask children before reading the book

- What do you think the book is about by looking at the cover? (or one or two of the inside illustrations) *Sometimes it is easy to tell from the cover, other times it is not.*
- What does the cover illustration show?
- Does the title tell you what the book is about?

## What do children already know?

- Young children are naturally inquisitive and are sponges for information. The whole purpose of this activity is to help children verify the information they know (or think they know) and to get them thinking “beyond the box” about a particular subject.
- The children should write down their “concepts” (or adults for them if the children are not yet writing) on the provided chart found on the next page.
- Use the questions to get children thinking about what they already know. Feel free to add more questions or thoughts according to the child(ren) involved.

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## What do children already know—activity chart

Ask children to write down what they think they know before reading the book. If the information is verified while reading the book, check “yes.” If the information is wrong, mark “no” and cross it off. Write the correct information in another section, below. Make a note of how you verify the information.

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
What do bird nests look like?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Are all birds' nests the same or are they different?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
Is it always the female that builds the nest?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
What materials do birds use to build their nests?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
List the types of birds that you know about:			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
How many eggs does a female bird lay in a year?			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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**Use this chart for any other thoughts the children might have.**

<u>What do I think I know?</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Verified</u>
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other
			Text Illustration Info in FCM Other

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## After reading the book – writing prompts & thinking it through

- Did the cover “tell” you what the book was about?
- If not, how does the illustration on the front relate to the story?
- Draw your own cover
- Write a song
- Can you think of another title for the book?
- What other animals did the illustrator include in the illustrations?
- Do you think everything in the story could be true? *Do animals really talk to each other or have human traits?*
- If the author used talking animal or gave the animals human traits, could the story have been told differently? How?
- Write a different ending to the story.

## Re-read the book looking for more information

Go back and re-read the book studying each page carefully.

- What can be seen or inferred from the illustrations that is not or are not mentioned in the text?
- What, if anything, can be inferred from the text?
- Pause during second readings and ask the child(ren) if they remember what happens next. Do they remember how each bird builds its nest?
- What do you think bird nests would be like if all the birds followed the magpie’s directions?

## Comprehension Questions

- When did this story take place?
- Why did some of the birds ask the magpie to teach them how to build nests?
- What did the other birds do while the magpie was showing them how she builds her nest?
- What is one way that another bird’s nest is different than the magpie’s nest?
- Which bird stayed and listened to all the directions?
- Do you think birds really have class and talk to each other like this?

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## What do children already know—activity conclusion

- Do the children have any more questions about birds' nests? If so, write them down on the chart.
- Identify whether the information was verified and how.
- If the concept is correct, make a note of how the information was confirmed (illustration, in text, in fun fact notes)
- If the concept was not correct, what IS the correct information – with above confirmation notes as above.
- If the concept was neither confirmed nor denied, look the information up in a reliable source and note where it was confirmed.
- Wrap it all up by adding notes with new information that they learned either through the reading or the research while looking up something else.

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## Language Arts

### Developing a vocabulary “word wall”

If using the book as a way to introduce a topic or subject, this is also a great way to introduce subject-related vocabulary words. If you don't have the time (or the inclination) to develop the word wall by playing the Vocabulary Game (below), we have provided a vocabulary list for you.

Vocabulary words for the “word wall” may be written on index cards, on a poster board, or on a chalk board. If writing on poster board or chalk board, you might want to sort into noun, verbs, etc. right away to save a step later. Leaving the words posted (even on a refrigerator at home) allows the children to see and think about them frequently.

### Vocabulary game

This activity is designed to get children thinking of vocabulary words which will then be used as the beginning vocabulary list for a science lesson.

Select an illustration and give children a specific length of time (five minutes?) to write down all the words the children can think of about the particular subject. *If you do not have classroom sets of the book, it is helpful to project an illustration on a white board. Check Web site ([www.ArbordalePublishing.com](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com)) for book “previews” that may be used for this purpose.*

Their word list should include anything and everything that comes to mind, including nouns, verbs and adjectives. At the end of the time period, have each child take turns reading a word from his/her list. If anyone else has the word, they do nothing. If however, they are the only one with the word, they should circle it. While reading the list, one person should write the word on a flashcard or large index card and post it on a bulletin board or wall.

At the end, the child with the most words circled “wins.” And you have a start to your science vocabulary list. *Note if children use an incorrect word, this is a good time to explain the proper word or the proper usage.*

### Putting it all together

The following activities may be done all together or over a period of several days.

- Continue to add words to the vocabulary list as children think of them.
- Sort vocabulary words into nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. and write what it is on the back of the card. When the cards are turned over, all you will see is “noun,” etc. *(These can then be used to create silly sentences, below)*
- Now sort the vocabulary words into more specific categories. For example, nouns can be divided into plants, animals, rocks, minerals, etc. They can be divided into living/non-living, or into habitat-related words.
- Have children create sentences using their vocabulary words. Each sentence could be written on a separate slip of paper.
- Have children (individually or in small groups) sort and put sentences into informative paragraphs or a story.
- Edit and re-write paragraphs into one informative paper or a story.

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# The Best Nest

## Suggested vocabulary list

<u>bird type</u>	<u>nouns</u>	<u>verbs</u>	<u>adjectives</u>
Baltimore oriole	Aves	build	bright
blackbird	beak	camouflage	brown
Common grackle	broods	climb	colorful
Killdeer	coloring	fly	dull
Magpie	eggs	glide	flexible
Meadowlark	feathers	hatch	hard-shelled
Mourning dove	fledgling	lay	red
Robin	hollow bones	preen	warm-blooded
Screech-owl	incubate	soar	
Starling	instinct		
Whip-poor-will	molt		
	nest		
	nestling		
	plumage		
	predators		
	tail		
	wing		

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# The Best Nest

## Silly sentence structure activity

This is a fun activity that develops both an understanding of sentence structure and the science subject. Use words from the “word wall” to fill in the blanks. After completing silly sentences for fun, have children try to fill in the proper words by looking for the information in the book.

Birds are the only animals that have \_\_\_\_\_s.  
noun

Birds \_\_\_\_\_ hard-shelled \_\_\_\_\_s, breathe  
verb noun  
air, and are warm blooded.

A \_\_\_\_\_ may be made out of grass, weeds, twigs,  
noun  
sticks, or even dog hair or ribbon.

Male birds often have \_\_\_\_\_ colors to attract mates.  
adjective

The female bird will sit on the \_\_\_\_\_s to keep them warm.  
noun

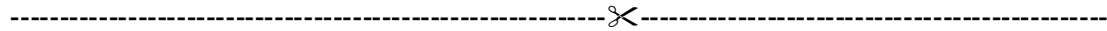
Most birds build nests that are hidden (camouflaged) or are  
hard for \_\_\_\_\_s to reach.  
noun

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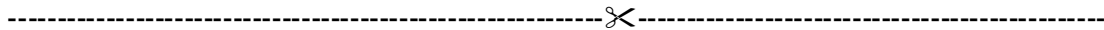
# **Bird Life Cycle**

Sequence Sentence Strips for:  
**Christmas Eve Blizzard** (2005)  
**Loon Chase** (2006)  
**The Best Nest** (2008)  
**Whistling Wings** (2008)

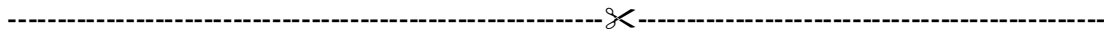
Preparation: Cut into sentence strips, laminate if desired, and place in a “center.” Have children put the events in order. Children may work alone or in small groups. Cards are in order but should be mixed up when cut apart.



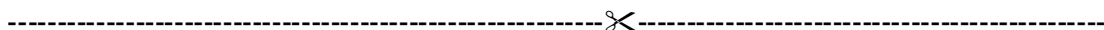
The female lays her eggs in the nest. Depending on the type of bird, she will lay between two to six eggs.



She then sits on the nest to keep the eggs warm (**incubate**) until they hatch—about two weeks.



While the female is incubating the eggs, the male will guard them. If a predator gets too close, the male will make a lot of noise and fly around to try to distract the predator from the nest. He will also deliver food to the female as she sits on the nest.



----- ✂ -----

The baby birds **hatch** out of the eggs.

----- ✂ -----

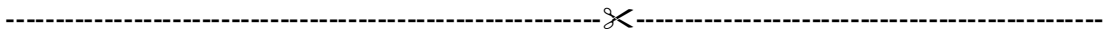
The babies are called **nestlings** while they live in the nest. It takes a few weeks for their feathers to develop and for them to be big enough to fly.

----- ✂ -----

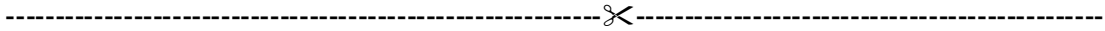
Usually both the male and female care for the nestlings by keeping them warm and feeding them.

----- ✂ -----

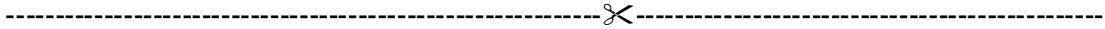
Once they start to fly, they are called **fledglings**. They will fly to and from the nest for another week or two, still being feed by their parents.



The parents provide less and less food to teach the fledglings how to find food. After a short amount of time the parent birds chase the fledglings out of the nest.



Many birds will lay several groups of eggs (**broods**) a year. Sometimes the female lays more eggs within days of one brood leaving the nest.



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# The Best Nest

## Word search

Find the hidden words. Even non-reading children can try to match letters to letters to find the words! Easy – words go up to down or left to right.

For older children, identify the coordinates of the first letter in each word (number, letter).

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	S	O	M	A	G	P	I	N	T	O
2	T	Y	B	I	R	M	U	D	O	B
3	B	F	I	R	A	A	N	O	W	L
4	B	E	D	S	C	G	D	V	E	A
5	E	A	R	A	K	P	E	E	E	C
6	S	T	A	R	L	I	N	G	D	K
7	T	H	T	O	E	E	G	G	S	B
8	H	E	R	B	U	I	L	D	R	I
9	A	R	K	I	L	L	D	E	E	R
10	T	S	O	N	E	S	T	M	Y	D

\_\_\_, \_\_\_ MAGPIE  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ KILLDEER  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ GRACKLE  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ BUILD  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ FEATHERS

\_\_\_, \_\_\_ NEST  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ BLACKBIRD  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ OWL  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ EGGS  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ WEEDS

\_\_\_, \_\_\_ ROBIN  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ STARLING  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ DOVE  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ BEST  
 \_\_\_, \_\_\_ MUD

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# The Best Nest

## Write about it! Writing Prompts

----- ✂ -----  
Using the information in the book, explain how a magpie builds its nest. Make sure to put the events in the proper order by using words like: then, next, after, etc.

----- ✂ -----  
Use an illustration of one of the birds to describe what it looks like. Have other children guess which bird you described.

----- ✂ -----  
Use an illustration of one of the nests to describe what it looks like. Have other children guess which bird built the nest.

----- ✂ -----  
Write your own story about why male birds are often bright colored but females are not.

----- ✂ -----  
Write a poem about a bird building a nest.

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# Science

## Edible sorting and classifying activity

Gather together a cup of edible “sorting items.” For example:

- As many different kinds of M&Ms as you can find
- Chocolate & peanut butter chips
- Hershey kisses
- Peanuts or other type of nuts

Ask the child to sort the items into groups. There is no right and wrong, only what makes sense to the child. When finished, ask the child:

What criteria or attribute (color, size, ingredient, etc.) did you use to sort the items?

- Are there some items that fit more than one group or don't fit any group?
- Is it easy to sort or were there some items that were a little confusing?

If more than one person did this, did everyone sort by the same criteria? To really extend the learning, graph the attributes used to sort the items. *(blank graph below)*

### Sorting by attribute graph

Graph the attributes that children used to sort their items.

What was the most common attribute (size, shape, color, etc.) used?

10					
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					
Attribute:					

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## Classifying animals

Animals can be sorted too. What are some attributes you might use to sort animals?

- By habitat
- Do they have backbones?
- Do they have arms or legs?
- How many legs do they have?
- Do they have stripes or patterns on their bodies?
- Do they walk, swim, jump, or fly?

Some things are very easy for scientists to sort or classify, other things are not so easy. The first question they will ask is whether the item is (or was) alive or not. Both plants and animals are living things.

If the item in question is an animal, like the animals in the story, scientists will then ask other questions:

- Does it have hair or fur, feathers, or dry skin or scales?
- Does it breathe oxygen from air (lungs) or water (gills)?
- Are the babies born alive or from eggs?
- Does the baby eat milk from its mother?
- Is it warm or cold-blooded?
- How many body parts does the animal have?

By answering these (and other) questions, scientists can sort or classify the animals into “classes” such as mammal, bird, reptile, fish, amphibian, or insect.

### **Birds! A class of their own**

- Birds are the only animals that have feathers.
- Not all birds can fly (penguins do not).
- Birds lay hard-shelled eggs.
- Birds breathe air.
- Birds are warm blooded, just like us.
- Most bird bones are hollow to help them fly.

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## Animal card games

Make two copies of each of the sorting card page that follows and cut out the birds. Have children sort cards by a variety of factors including:

- alphabetical by bird name
- are the birds shown flying or not?
- colors shown
- birds the children have seen or not

**Who Am I?** Copy or download the “cards.” Poke a hole through the card and tie onto a piece of yarn. Each child should put on a “card necklace” so that the card is on their back. Each child should ask “yes/no” questions to guess what animal they are.

## A day in the life of . . .

- Pick an animal from the book and pretend that you are that animal.
- Explain where you live (habitat).
- What do you eat?
- What animals might eat you?
- How do you protect yourself from those animals?
- Where do you sleep or rest?
- Write a paragraph about what do you do during the day (or night if nocturnal).

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**Robin**



**Mourning Dove**



**Meadowlark**



**Blackbird**



**Killdeer**



**Baltimore Oriole**



**Starling**



**Magpie**



**Screech Owl**



**Grackle**

*The Best Nest*  
SylvanDellPublishing.com  
art by Sherry Neidigh



**Whip-poor-will**

## Science journal

Have children draw a picture to define the vocabulary word or concept

**feathers**

**nest**

**bird eggs**

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**instinct**

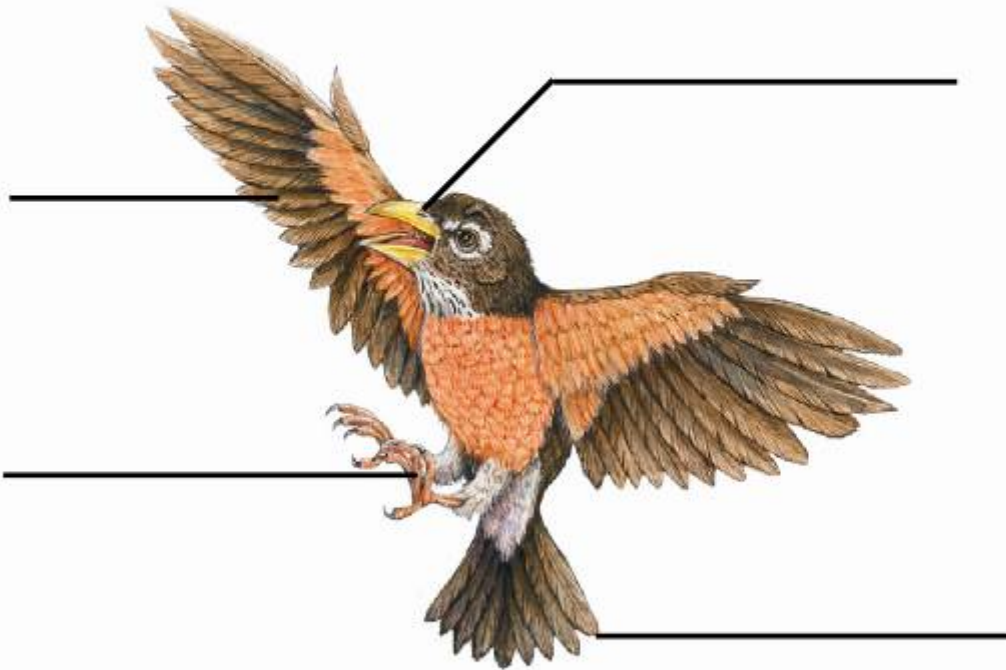
**hatchling**

**beak/bill**

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# The Best Nest

*Label the Bird Body Parts*



**Word Bank**

beak  
wing & feathers  
tail & feathers

Birds are the only animals that have feathers. But not all birds can fly.

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## Nature observation notebook

Animals are busy around you at different times of the day or year.

Do different animals show up in your backyard at different times of day? Go in your backyard (or school playground) at different times of the day (morning, noon, evening and night) and write down the animals you see. Are they the same or different? What changes there during the day that might cause different animals to come out at different times (such as light or temperature)?

Keep a journal with the following information

- Where are you?
- What time of day is it?
- What is the weather? (clear/rainy/cloudy or hot/cold)
- What animals do you see?
- What are they doing?

Those are the animals that you can see. Are there animals that you can hear but can't see?

- What type of sounds do you hear?
- What type of animal do you think makes the sound?
- Is it one animal or many animals?

Do you think you would see the same animal at the same place and time tomorrow?

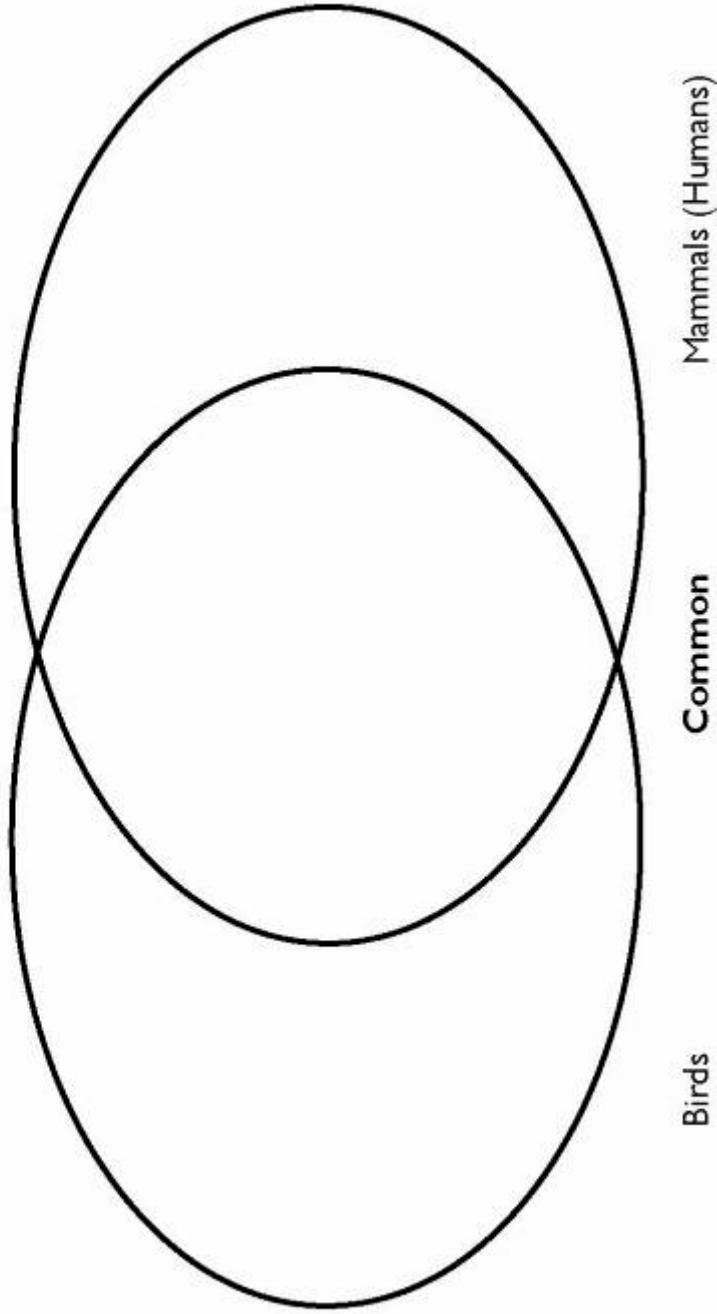
Do you see any "signs" that animals have been there?

- Feathers or bones?
- Tracks or footprints?
- Scat (poop?)
- Scratches or claw marks on trees?
- Partially eaten plants (leaves, nuts, pinecones) or other animals?
- Signs of nests or homes?

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# Venn diagram

**The Best Nest**  
by Doris Mueller  
Illustrated by Sherry Neidigh



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## Math

Go to The Great Backyard Bird Count state (and Canadian Province) tallies at:  
<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/statelinks>

Click on the state or province where you live and answer the following questions based on the data given for the three-day bird count (usually in February):

What bird had the most observations? \_\_\_\_\_

What bird had the least observations? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of the birds seen in the book were observed in your state during the four-day count (if the bird is not listed, it was not observed):

Magpie	_____
Killdeer	_____
Whip-poor-will	_____
Screech-owl	_____
Brewer's blackbird	_____
Starling	_____
Common grackle	_____
Meadowlark	_____
Robin	_____
Mourning dove	_____
Baltimore oriole	_____

- If there were some birds not observed, why do you think that is?
- From the list of birds in the book, which one had the most observations?
- What city or town (reporting site) had the most observations of that bird?
- Are there any geographic reasons that the particular reporting site might have so many?
- Which had the least of those that were observed?
- What city or town (reporting site) had the most observations of that bird?
- Are there any geographic reasons that the particular reporting site might have so few?
- What are some factors that would affect what birds you would see where you live?

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## Research and geography

On the following two pages are several range and distribution maps for the birds listed in the book. These maps come from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, All About Birds

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/>

Find the state where you live on the maps and determine whether the bird would ever be in your state. Determine if it lives there on a year-round basis, passes through on a migration route, or if it breeds or winters there. Fill in the chart, below:

I live in that state/province of \_\_\_\_\_

<b>bird type</b>	<b>all year</b>	<b>winter</b>	<b>breeds</b>	<b>passes</b>
Baltimore oriole				
Brewer's blackbird				
Common grackle				
Killdeer				
Magpie				
Meadowlark				
Mourning dove				
Robin				
Screech-owl				
Starling				
Whip-poor-will				

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Black Billed Magpie



Killdeer



Whip-poor-will



Brewer's Blackbird



Western & Eastern Screech Owls

Bird Range & Distribution Maps from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, All About Birds  
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/>

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Starling



Common Grackle



Meadowlark



Robin



Mourning Dove



Baltimore Oriole

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## Character—the importance of listening

In the story, most of the birds either didn't pay attention or left before Magie Magpie was finished teaching them how to build nests. Because they didn't hear all the instructions, their nests are all different than the magpie's nest.

Why do you think it's important to listen to your teacher or parents?

What might happen if you don't listen and follow directions on how to do something?

Do you think it's important for people to listen to you?

Do you listen to other people?

How would it make you feel if you were trying to tell a story and the other children started talking about something else or walked away? Would that make you happy or sad? Why?

What could happen if your teacher told you to write your answers in complete sentences but you didn't pay attention and wrote one-word answers?

What could happen if you didn't listen to your parents when they asked you to not touch the hot stove and you did?

Do you want people to listen to you? Do you want to listen to other people?

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Other—Coloring Pages



Sketches by Sherry Neidigh for  
The Best Nest  
Sylvan Dell Publishing

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