Bird Is the Word

WATCHING BIRDS

Birds are fascinating animals to watch and it's easy to learn how to identify them. Casual observers can use the same techniques to identify birds that scientists use. You can help scientists monitor bird populations and look for patterns in bird movement by counting your local birds and submitting the data.

SMART START:

⭐ Choose a bird watching location (school playground, local park or garden). If it's winter and you are in a cold climate, you can observe bird feeders from indoors.

⭐ Visit the location ahead of time and make a list of birds that the group is most likely to see. (Remember that the birds can change with the season.) If you're unable to visit your location in advance, the eBird database is a good resource for finding the birds in your area. Visit ebird.org and click on "Explore Data."

⭐ If your girls don't have much experience with birds you will want to take them on a field trip to observe and draw birds first, then use the drawings for the comparing/contrasting conversation.

Here's how:

1. Identify birds. Ask girls to share names of birds they know. Make a list. Compare and contrast the birds on the list. How do they know how to identify those birds? (For example: size, shape, colors, location, habitat, behavior, sound). Where have they seen the birds? [2]

You'll Need:

- journals, sketch pads, or drawing paper
- pencils
- markers or colored pencils
- bird field guides
- optional: SciGirls *Nature Nurture* journal
- optional: binoculars, bird feeders, Merlin bird ID app (free)

1+ hours

Celebrate Urban Birds

The Celebrate Urban Birds citizen science project connects participants to birds through the arts, greening activities, and neighborhood events. Watch birds for 10 minutes and share your observations by mail or online with Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientists. Watch birds anywhere—home, school, or a park. It's easy! celebrateurbanbirds.org

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Celebrate Urban Birds

2. Choose a bird. Introduce the **SciGirls Challenge:** Choose a bird that lives in your area and learn how to identify it. Each girl will become a bird expert[6] and teach the rest of the group about her bird. The girls can use photos, videos, and websites to learn about the species. Have the girls consider the following characteristics:

- overall size and shape
- field marks (breast color, rump color, tail color and length, wing shape and color, eye stripe, eye ring color, head color)
- behaviors (tail movements, eating on the ground, flight pattern, sounds the bird makes)

To see what the SciGirls learned about identifying birds, watch the *SciGirls Participate DVD*. (Select **Feathered Friends**: Research.)

3. Observe. Go on a field trip to watch birds. Place girls in small groups so that each group has a variety of bird expertise.[1] Encourage the girls to draw the birds they see, paying attention to the characteristics listed above. The girls in each group should work together to identify the birds.

4. Explore more. Have your girls teach a younger group of girls how to identify birds.[3] Plan a community birding afternoon and practice drawing birds of different types.

Learn about Viviana's interests and best science moment on the *SciGirls Participate DVD*. (Select **Feathered Friends**: Mentor Moment.)[7]

Mentor Moment

Dr. Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez is a senior scientist at Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory. Her research focuses on studying resident and migratory bird populations in Latin America and their responses to environmental changes. A native of Costa Rica, she is the third Costa Rican ornithologist with a Ph.D., and the first female. Viviana likes to smile and laugh often and says her older sister still holds secret powers over her. She loves mammals as well as birds and will soon be adopting two rabbits.

SciGirls

PBS KIDS