



Life List

Grade Level: 5-8

Subject Areas: science,
language arts

Duration:
Preparation - 20
minutes
Activity - 50 minutes.

Setting:
Classroom and Outdoors

Group Size:
unlimited

Materials:

- copies of "Life List Journal Page" - 10 double sided copies per student
- string and paper punch or stapler to put journal together
- card stock for journal cover
- pencils, markers, colored pencils
- Bird Field Guides

Skills Used:
observation, recording,
data collection,
interpreting.

Vocabulary:
Life List

Project BEAK Links:
• [Birding Basics](#)

OBJECTIVES

- Students create a "Life List" journal to keep track of the birds they observe in the wild.
- Students observe birds in their neighborhood and school grounds to learn about both bird behaviors and habitats each bird utilizes.
- Students will discover types of bird behaviors and habitats birds utilize.

Nebraska State Science Standards

- 5.2.1, 8.2.1, 8.4.3, 8.4.4, 8.4.5

Nebraska State Language Arts Standards

- 5.2.1

BACKGROUND

A beginner birder or an advanced one, the idea of a Life List is exciting and fun! A "Life List" is a journal to keep a complete list of every bird species a person has seen. Often times, the list includes not only the bird's common name, but also the date, time, and location of when the bird was seen. Often times, additional notes are made to help the birder remember the sighting.

Starting a "Life List" can be daunting. But, a short walk around the neighborhood or school grounds will often lead to numerous listings – American Robin, Blue Jay, Dove, Cardinal, and Pigeon – in urban areas or Meadowlarks, Sparrows, Doves, Red-winged Blackbirds, and hawks – in more rural areas.

And, it is not hard to add to your "Life List". A drive in the car can lead to new hawk sighting, a walk in the woods can lead to a new woodland species, or a stroll through a grassland can generate a new prairie species.

Creating and adding to a "Life List" can help students work on their observation, recording, and interpreting skills.

Additionally, it give students a reason to get outside and enjoy nature. Finally, a "Life

List" is a great way for students to obtain a sense of ownership and completion.

ACTIVITY

Before the Activity:

Copy the "Life List Journal Page." Make at least ten double-sided copies for each student (for a total of twenty entries for each student).

Doing the Activity:

1. Give each student at least ten double-sided copies of the "Life List Journal Page" and a piece of card stock. Instruct students to fold the journal page and card stock in half to create a book. Ask students to use a hold punch and string or a stapler to "bind" their journal.

2. Have students decorate the cover of their Life List Journal. Be sure each students puts their name on the cover.

3. Once student's Life List Journals are completed, take students on a walk around the school grounds. Encourage students to use their observation skills to look for birds. If they do not know what kind of bird they see, encourage them to work together to use a bird field guide to figure it out.

4. Encourage students to take their Life List

Journal outside with them at recess or on their walk to or from school. Additionally, students can be encouraged to take their journals home to record any birds in their backyards or neighborhoods.

EXTENSIONS

- Take students on a field trip to a local nature center or nature preserve to look for and observe more birds.
- Encourage a wildlife biologist to come into the classroom to talk about how they complete and use field observations in their work.
- Have students keep their journals all year, at the end of the year, have a party to celebrate all their birds they have observed.
- Encourage students to “invite” more birds into their backyard or the school grounds by creating a better bird habitat including bird feeders, bird baths, etc. For ideas on creating bird feeders, see Project BEAK activity “Food For All.” For ideas on providing birds with nesting material, see Project BEAK activity “Home Helpers.”
- Encourage students to start separate lists – one for birds they see around school, one for birds around their home, one for city birds, etc. Have students compare the lists and analyses any differences.
- Rather than simply recording sighting in their journals, encourage students to take pictures of each bird they see and put the picture in their journals as well as recording the information.

ASSESSMENT

- Require students to add two or more birds to their journal each week. Periodically pick-up and look at student’s journals.
- Have a classroom discussion on the importance of birds in our ecosystem and how our habitat would be different if there were no birds.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: FIELD GUIDES

- National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America, by Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer

Publisher: National Geographic (2006)

ISBN-10: 0792253140

ISBN-13: 978-0792253143

- The Sibley Guide to Birds by David Allen Sibley

Publisher: Knopf (2000)

ISBN-10: 0679451226

ISBN-13: 978-0679451228

- Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America by Ted Floyd

Publisher: Harper Paperbacks (2008)

ISBN-10: 0061120405

ISBN-13: 978-0061120404

- National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Birds of North America by Edward S. Brinkley

Publisher: Sterling (2007)

ISBN-10: 1402738749

ISBN-13: 978-1402738746

- Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America by Roger Tory Peterson

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Co (2008)

ISBN-10: 0618966145

ISBN-13: 978-0618966141

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: LIFE LIST JOURNALS

- National Geographic Birder’s Journal, 2nd Edition by National Geographic

Publisher: National Geographic; Revised edition (2006)

ISBN-10: 1426200056

ISBN-13: 978-1426200052

- Audubon Life-List Journal by National Audubon Society

Publisher: Artisan (1999)

ISBN-10: 157965133X

ISBN-13: 978-1579651336

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