



Close the Door for Birds

Grade Level: 5-8

Subject Areas: science, art

Duration:

- Preparation - 45 minutes
- Activity - 50 minutes

Setting:

Classroom

Group Size:

unlimited

Materials:

- cardstock in a variety of colors
- crayons, markers, colored pencils
- scissors
- copies of the "Door Hanger Template" page - each page contains 2 templates.

Skills Used:

creativity, advocacy

Vocabulary:

conservation, predator

Project BEAK Links:

[Birds and People - Conservation](#)

OBJECTIVES

- Students will investigate the threats to bird populations – including domestic cats.
- Students learn ways of educating the public about conservation and bird protection.

Nebraska State Science Standards

- 8.4.5

BACKGROUND

There are approximately 600 million house cats in the world. In the United States alone, there are between 70-90 million cats. House cats are believed to have been domesticated from wild cats in the Middle East region. These domesticated cats were then brought to Europe. In the late 1800's house cats were brought to the United States to help control rodent populations.

Like their wild counterparts, house cats are predators. If allowed outside, house cats will prey upon mice, voles, rabbits, chipmunks, and songbirds.

Domesticated cats are estimated to kill over 100 million songbirds in the United States alone. Cat kills are the second leading cause of bird mortality; second only to habitat destruction.

Additionally, when cats eat mice, voles, rabbits, and other small mammals, they are competing with natural predators such as owls, hawks, and kestrels. House cats are often able to out-compete these natural predators. Because house cats are vaccinated and often have consistent shelter and food, they receive protection from disease, starvation, and predation.

House cats are an integral part of our society and make great house pets. They do however, cause much destruction when allowed outside.

Allowing cats to roam outside is also dangerous for cats. When cats are allowed

outside, THEY become prey to numerous predators including dogs, other cats, wild animals. The cats are also in danger being hit by cars and contracting disease when they are allowed outside.

ACTIVITY

Begin the activity by asking students what are some of the threats and challenges to wild birds. Responses may include:

- disease
- habitat loss and degradation
- pollution, including pesticides
- historically unregulated hunting
- windows
- power lines
- predators

Explain to students that the number one threat to birds is habitat loss. The second largest threat is predators – more specifically, house cats. House cats kill over 100 million songbirds each year in the United States alone.

Brainstorm with students ways in which humans could prevent cats from killing birds. Allow students to be creative; accept their ideas regardless of if they are impractical.

If no one mentions it, tell students that one important way to protect birds and help create a healthy ecosystem is to keep cats indoors.

Tell students that they will help educate cat

owners and encourage them to keep their cat indoors.

Give each student a copy of the “Door Hanger Template” (you can copy the template onto cardstock or have the students trace the template onto a piece of cardstock).

Explain to students that their job is to decorate the door hanger with a message about bird conservation, bird preservation, and protecting wild birds by keeping cats indoors.

Once students are finished with their door hangers, encourage students to take their hanger home and hang it on their door or on the door of a neighbor.

EXTENSIONS

- Have students start a “Keep Birds Alive, Keep Cats Indoors” campaign in their neighborhood.
- Hold a school festival to celebrate birds and educate other students and families of the important role birds play in our lives and ecosystem.

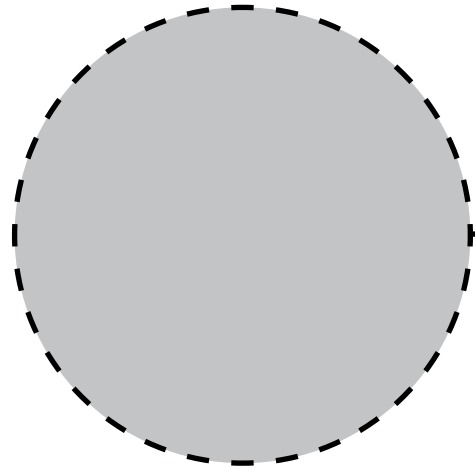
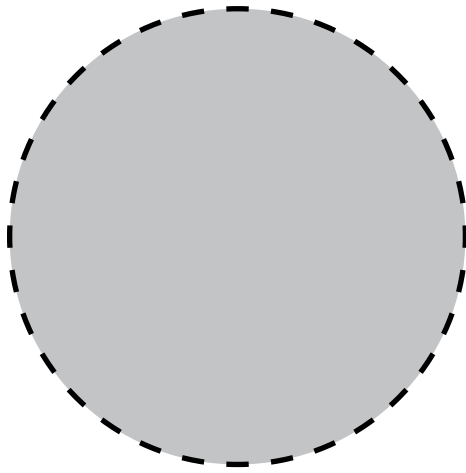
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- American Bird Conservancy: Bird Conservation
www.abcbirds.org/conservationissues
- National Audubon Society: Birds at Home - Keeping Wildlife Safe
www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/SafeCats.html
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology: Attracting Wildlife - Problems
www.allaboutbirds.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1140

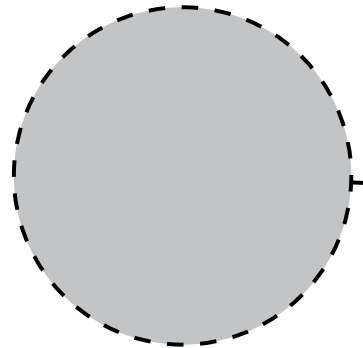
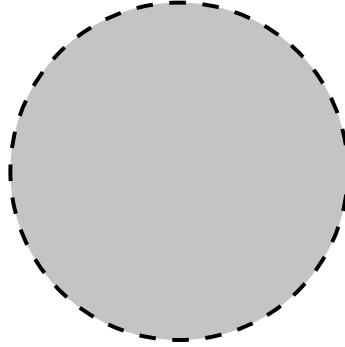
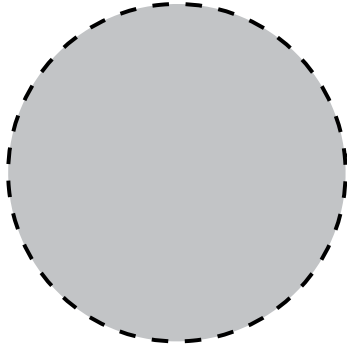
PERMISSIONS & CREDITS

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Example Door Hangers



KEEP
BIRDS ALIVE



KEEP CATS
INSIDE

Birds =
Outside
Cats =
Inside



Don't let
your Cat
OUT!



It will eat birds.