



Nature Nuggets: Bird Beak Buffet

Audience: 4-7 year olds and parents/guardians. Each station can accommodate 10-15 kids at a time. Younger and older siblings are welcome but content is geared towards 4-7 year olds.

Theme: Not all birds are the same and a bird's beak can help determine what it eats.

Materials:

Blankets for sitting

Books

Stuffed animals

Binoculars

Pictures of Hummingbird, Pelican, Wood duck, American Goldfinch

Cup with water (flower and nectar)

Tub with water and sponge fish

Bowl with water and confetti

Sunflower seeds

Slotted spoon

Siphon

Strainer

Pliers

Bird feeder pictures

Bird feeder supplies

Bird seed

1: STORY CRITTER CORNER

1 MNA

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please. It will be a self-lead station on blankets with books and stuffed animals for parents to engage with their children.

Books:

How Do Birds Find Their Way?

The Mystery of the Missing Hummingbirds

Duck, Duck, Goose

Birds, Nests and Eggs

Beaks!

Feathers: Not just for flying

2: NATURE WALK

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction: Let's go on a bird walk! Along the walk look for birds and signs of birds (feathers, nests, poop, bird sounds etc.). You can use the interpretive signs along this walk – they are great!

Theme: Not all birds are the same and a bird's beak can help determine what it eats.

Stewardship message: Birds need food, water and shelter to survive. We can help provide these by being quiet and respectful, creating places for birds to nest in your backyard, and making a bird feeder for your backyard.

Optional talking points:

- Migration – some birds migrate and others do not. Why do birds migrate? (weather, food, shelter)
- See how many nests you can spot in the trees.
- Look for feathers – birds have different types of feathers that are used for different things (flight, warmth, protection)
- What do birds eat? How can a bird's beak help determine what it eats? What type of birds might live at Fossil Creek Reservoir based on the food that is available? (water birds)
- Bird colors – why do male and female birds often look different? (sexual dimorphism). (Males use bright colors to attract a mate.)

Conclusion: Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of up-coming programs with the Natural Areas.

3: ACTIVITY

1 MN, 1 MNA

Introduction

Introduce yourself and thank the kids and parents for being there.

Ask the children:

- *What makes birds special? (feathers, flight, light bones, breaks!)*
- *Do all birds look the same? (No – all different colors, shapes and sizes)*
- *What do birds eat? (Insects, fish, seeds, all sorts of things!)*
- *Do all birds eat the same thing? (No)*
- *How do you think you could tell what a bird might eat? (Look at its beak shape!)*

Explain that today they will learn about birds at all of the stations. If some have already visited other stations, you may start by asking what they have learned or seen so far?

Explain that at this station, they are going to be learning about what different birds eat and how the shape of a bird's beak can help you determine what that bird eats.

Body

Nectar

- Show kids a cup of water and ask them to pretend this is a flower with nectar in it. Some birds eat nectar.
- Now hold up the slotted spoon and ask them if it would be easy to get the nectar with a beak like that? (It would be quite difficult).

- Now show them the siphon and ask if it would be easy to get the nectar with the siphon (yes). Can you think of any birds with long thin beaks like a straw that eat nectar? That's right, the hummingbird (show hummingbird picture).
- Hummingbirds are adapted to eat nectar.

Fish

- Now ask what they think the slotted spoon might be good for. (It may help to ask what their parents use this type of spoon for.) That's right, scooping items out of the water such as vegetables or pasta! Birds use their beaks just like this to scoop up fish out of the water.
- Ask if they can think of a bird that might use its beak to scoop up fish. That's right, a pelican (show pelican picture).
- Pelicans scoop up fish as they swim, often cooperating with each other by herding fish into the shallows.

Vegetation

- Hold up the strainer. Ask what strainers are good for. What might they use this for in their house? How are they different from the slotted spoon? (Smaller holes so they can catch tiny particles).
- Show the bowl of water and confetti. The strainer works great to get the confetti.
- Ask if they can think of any birds that like to eat small bits of plants and small insects floating in the water that might need a mouth like a strainer. That's right, ducks! (Show Wood Duck picture.)
- Ducks have beaks like strainers (similar to baleen whales) so they can filter out small particles of plants and insects as water passes through their beak.

Seeds

- Hold up the pliers. Would these be useful for picking up the confetti? (No!)
- What would pliers be useful for? That's right, cracking open nuts and seeds.
- Demonstrate cracking open a sunflower seed with the pliers.
- What type of bird has a beak like pliers and eats seeds? Finches! (Show picture of the American Goldfinch).

****Allow time for kids to try each of the different ways of eating after conclusion.**

Conclusion

As we learned, birds eat many different things and a bird's beak can help determine what it eats.

Ask the kids:

- *If you were a bird, what type of beak would you want?*
- *If you are a hummingbird and can only eat nectar, would that be good or bad? (Good because you don't have to fight with other birds, but bad if there is a nectar shortage.)*

- *Why might it be good to have a non-specialized beak? (You could eat many different things – like crows and pigeons, they can eat many different things and are opportunistic eaters.)*

Next time you see a bird, look closely at its beak and try to guess what it might eat!

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

4: STEWARDSHIP CRAFT – Bird Feeders

2 MNAs

This is a free-flow activity so kids can come and go as they please.

Birds need shelter, water and food to survive. Let's create a safe place for birds to visit your backyard.

Steps:

1. Welcome kids and ask if they would like to build a bird feeder.
2. Show some pictures or examples from other kids.
3. Ask if they have any bird feeders at their house. What types of birds visit?
4. The type of bird feeder/food will determine which birds visit. (Hummingbirds and finches like different types of food.)
5. Encourage them to get creative!
6. Remind them that whatever they build, they will bring home to their backyard because we do not put bird feeders in natural areas.
7. Also remind them that we do not want to feed birds human food. The bird seed we have picked out is safe, but feeding birds your lunch is a bad idea!
8. Once they are finished, thank them for coming and offer to keep their bird feeder safe (with their name on it) if they would like to visit other stations before leaving.

Thank everyone for coming to the program and remind them of the other stations available. Encourage kids and parents to come to other events and activities and remind the parents of upcoming programs with the Natural Areas.

*This lesson was adapted from **Fill the Bill** in Ranger Rick's Naturescope, Birds, Birds, Birds, National Wildlife Federation, 1997, by Zoe Shark, Dolores Daniels and Sue Kenney of the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program.*

Revised by Alex McHenry, Community Educator, May 2018