## Lesson Plans: Birds in the City

**Standards:** 5th Grade Essential Standards Science (ST), A, R 8.1.6 & 5th Grade Language Arts (ST) 5.2.2.1

**Objectives:** Students will learn:

* to observe wildlife around them
* the ecology of city birds
* how to identify three species of city birds: rock pigeons, house sparrows and European starlings How to record their observations and what type of habitat these birds prefer

**Materials:** Bread crumbs and/or birdseed,Field Journal, computer with online access

**Anticipatory Set:** Play the bird call from the three birds below and have the students guess what bird made the sound. Ask students what kind of birds they see every day. <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1059>

**Procedure:**

1. Review the bird behavior vocabulary words writing on the board, defining them as a class discussion.
2. Have students explore the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website and research the three bird species: Rock Pigeon, European Starling and House Sparrow.
3. Have students explore the characteristics and the sound of the bird calls. In addition, have students discuss what should be included in scientific observation field journals.
4. After students have researched the three common bird types and are comfortable in identifying them. Plan an outdoor excursion, to watch and observe birds. Bring bread crumbs and or bird seed to feed the birds. Have the students remain quiet and observe bird behavior making notes in their scientific field journal (attached).Have them sketch a picture of the bird and its habitat next to their notes.

**Assessment:**

After the class has finished their observation and field notes, assign a writing assignment regarding the bird characteristics and habitat ensuring that students use vocabulary words in their paper and that the paper has a clear beginning, middle and end and sources cited.

**Enrichment:** Take the students on a field trip to the Werner Wildlife museum to view their many bird specimens. Or plan a bird watching activity in the Werner Wildlife’s backyard where birds eat at birdfeeders.

**Common Bird Behaviors Vocabulary Words:**

**Foraging:** Another word for feeding

**Preening:** cleaning their feathers with their bill

**Flocking:** more than 3 birds together in a group

**Calling:** One or two short notes

**Singing:** only male birds sing a song, many notes together making a long musical song

**Teacher background**

**House Sparrows:**

“You can find House Sparrows most places where there are houses (or other buildings), and few places where there aren’t. Along with two other introduced species, the European Starling and the Rock Pigeon, these are some of our most common birds. Their constant presence outside our doors makes them easy to overlook, and their tendency to displace native birds from nest boxes causes some people to resent them. But House Sparrows, with their capacity to live so intimately with us, are just beneficiaries of our own success”.

“The best way to find a House Sparrow is to visit an urban area and watch for a conspicuous, tame sparrow hopping on the ground (it might help to bring a sandwich or some birdseed). You can easily attract them with food and they may feed out of your hand. In the countryside, look out for bright, clean versions of the city House Sparrow around barns, stables, and storehouses.” (<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/id>).

Check out this link to learn about color, size and shape, hear a sparrow and learn about its habitats. <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Sparrow/id>

**European Starlings:**

“Starlings are common around cities and towns. Look in lawns, city parks and squares, and fields. They’ll be working their way across the grass, often moving in a slight zig-zag line and seeming to hurry as they stab their bills into the ground every step or two. In the countryside you’re more likely to see starlings perched in groups at the tops of trees or flying over fields or roads in tight flocks”.

Check out this link to learn about color, size and shape, hear a European Starlings and learn about its habitats. <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/European_Starling/id>

**Rock Pigeons:**

“Pigeons are attracted to open areas where they can find food on the ground. However, seed on the ground can attract rodents, so it’s best to provide only as much food as the pigeons can eat during their visit, or offer grain such as dried corn, peas, or sorghum on a platform feeder. In areas where pigeons are considered pests, some cities have ordinances against feeding pigeons”.

Check out this link to learn about color, size and shape, hear a rock pigeon and learn about its habitats. <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/rock_pigeon/id>

**Field Notes include:**

* Date and locality of the day's observations
* Species of the animal being observed
* Weather
* Recent events (fires, storms, or droughts, for example) that may have affected the site
* Brief description of the topography (floodplain, hilltop, etc.)
* Vegetation (oak-pine forest or tidal marsh, for example) of the area
* Record questions and tentative answers
* Feelings, intuitions, and sense impressions, thoughts
* Quick sketch of the animal and the environment