



# Creating a Schoolyard Bird Habitat

A Primary Level  
Unit of Instruction



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Fish & Wildlife Management for Educators

Summer 2005

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August 2005

## Creating a Schoolyard Bird Habitat A Primary Level Unit of Instruction

The attached unit of instruction has been written for the kindergarten year of a kindergarten – first grade looping program. Lessons 1-6 are to be completed during the spring of the kindergarten year. Kindergartners will focus on developing an understanding of what a habitat is, the wildlife in our schoolyard, the needs of birds that live in our neighborhood, and how they can create a bird habitat in our school yard. The bird habitat will be constructed at the end of the kindergarten school year and maintained over the summer by the teacher, parent/student volunteers, and summer program volunteers.

In first grade, the students will observe the schoolyard bird habitat over the year, studying the changes that occur each season. Through their daily routines in math, the students will record the weather, temperature, and daylight hours and will use this information in their discussions about the habitat changes and the impact on birds. Through their year-long study they will gain experience with scientific tools such as binoculars, thermometers, a compass, maps, and magnifying glasses. First graders will also study a natural bird habitat at a nearby city park, visiting at least one time each season to observe changes. They will also learn about migration, learn to recognize bird songs, and learn about the life cycle of a bird. They will become familiar many species of birds, and the physical characteristics, habits, and needs of each.

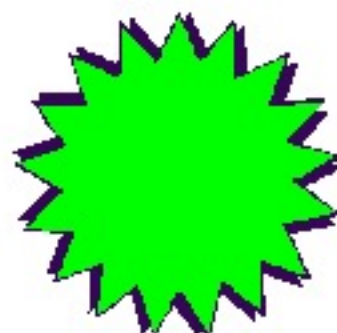
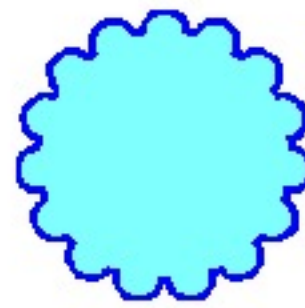
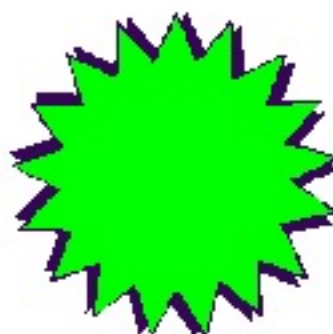
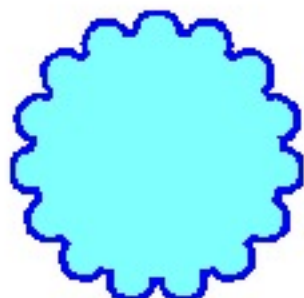
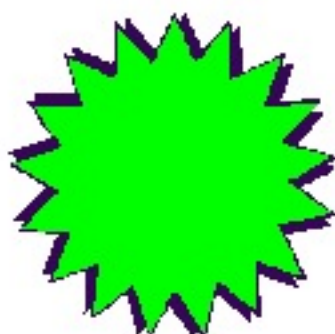
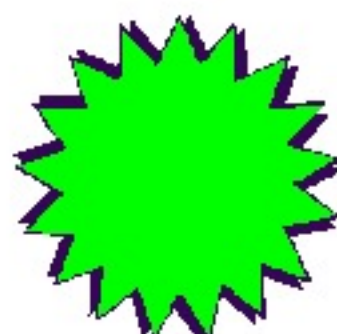
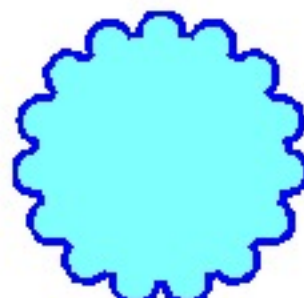
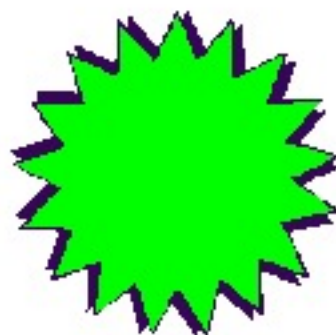
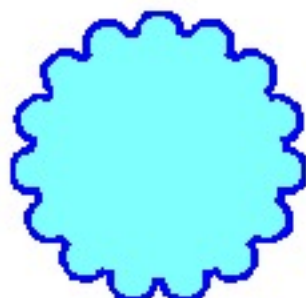
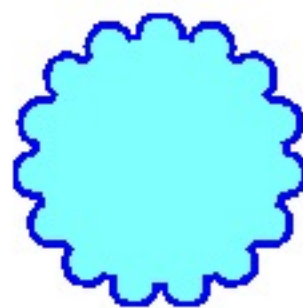
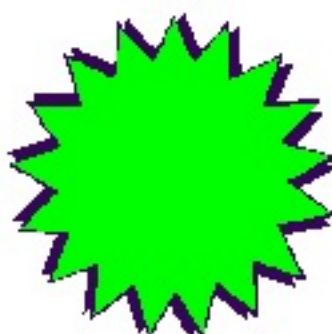
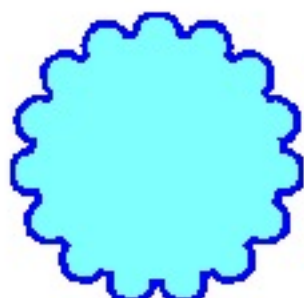
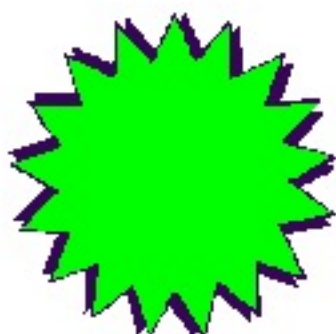
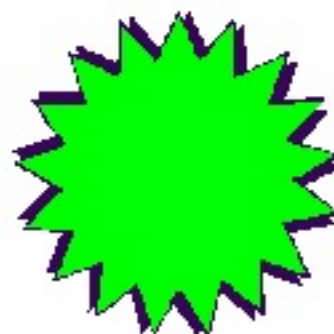
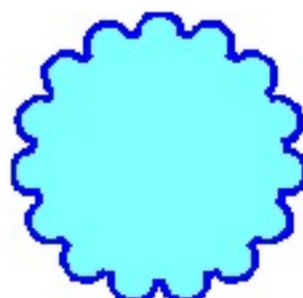
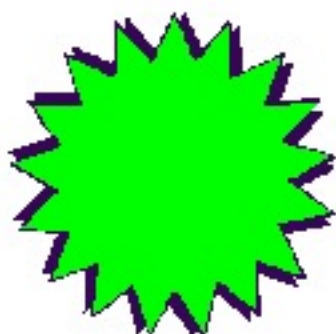
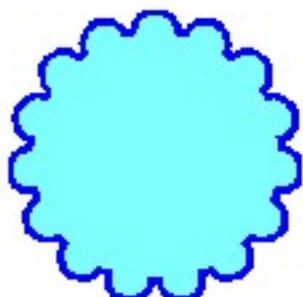
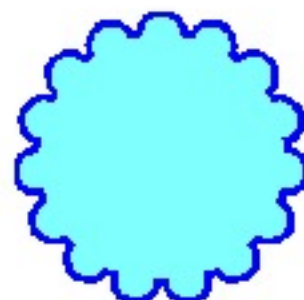
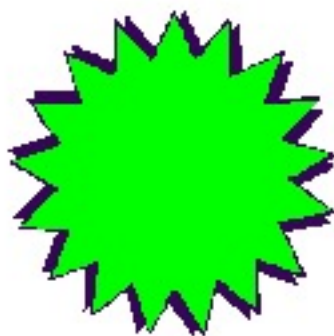
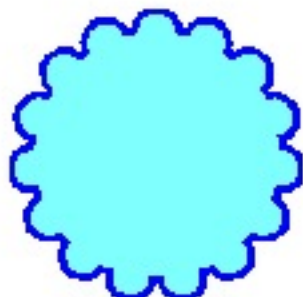
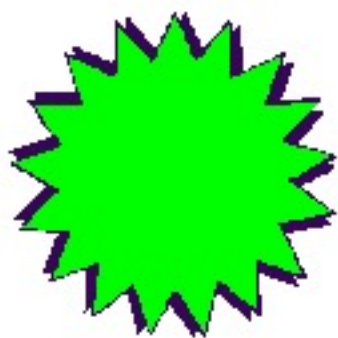
A natural extension of this unit would be lessons and activities related to conservation, as well as recycling, reusing, and reducing trash. This unit of study will also lend itself to further exploration in the format of interdisciplinary mini-lessons or centers, based on student interest. For example, in the winter when the water in our birdbath freezes, students can study the states of water.

Through the activities in this unit, the students will develop a connection to the environment, a respect for wildlife, and a sense of responsibility for taking care of the natural world. They will gain experience in outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, gardening, and birding, which may become lifetime interests or hobbies.

<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>What is a Habitat?</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will be able to define a habitat as a place where animals and plants live and grow. Students will be able to name and describe at least three different habitats and at least one plant and one animal that live in each.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	7.13 Students understand the characteristics of organisms, see patterns of similarity and differences among living organisms, understand the role of evolution, and recognize the interdependence of all systems that support life. This is evident when students identify characteristics of organisms (e.g., needs, environments that meet them; structures, especially senses; variation and behaviors, inherited and learned). S1-2:5 Students demonstrate their ability to represent data by organizing a collection of data into a table or a graph template and creating a title for a table or graph.
<b>Method(s)</b>	Using the book <u>All Kinds of Habitats</u> by Sally Hewitt and the video <u>Habitats</u> (AIMS Multimedia), students will be introduced to different habitats and the plants and animals that live in them. A class chart will be constructed to organize information about the habitats for comparison.
<b>Material(s)</b>	Book : <u>All Kinds of Habitats</u> by Sally Hewitt Video: <u>Habitats</u> (AIMS Multimedia) Paper, pencils, markers, etc. for a large classroom bulletin board chart. Teacher-made matching game.
<b>Time</b>	Preparation: 5 minutes per session to gather/organize materials Instruction: Eleven 20 or 30-minute sessions
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Day 1 ~ In a large group setting, the teacher will ask the students to tell what they know about habitats and to name different habitats that they know about. The teacher will then read pages 6 &amp; 7 “What is a Habitat?” in the book <u>All Kinds of Habitats</u>. A class discussion will follow that will include describing the habitat that we live in (city) and the plants and animals that we might find there.</li> <li>2. Day 2 ~ Students will watch the 15 minute video <u>Habitat</u> and will be asked to name all of the habitats identified in the video (polar regions, tundra, desert, grasslands, coniferous forest, temperate forest, rain forest, fresh water habitats, and salt water habitats). A class bulletin board chart of habitats will be started, by assigning pairs of students to each habitat. Each pair will be given a piece of paper and asked to make a sign with the name of the habitat for the bulletin board.</li> </ol>

	<p>3. Days 3 - 11 ~ The class will study one habitat each session by reading and discussing a section of the book <u>All Kinds of Habitats</u>. The students assigned to each habitat will be responsible for drawing and writing information about plants and animals in their assigned habitat on pieces of paper that will be placed on the bulletin board in the appropriate places to complete the plant and animal columns in the habitat chart.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b></p>	<p>After studying all of the habitats and completing the class chart, students will play a teacher-made game in which students will match pictures of plants and animals to the correct habitat picture. Through observation and conversation with the students during the games, the teacher will informally assess each student's understanding of the definition of a habitat and the plants and animals that live in different habitats.</p>

Lesson #1 "What is a habitat?" Game Pieces





<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Habitats: Meeting Basic Needs</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will identify their own basic needs of food, water, shelter, and space and will generalize that wildlife have similar basic needs.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	7.13 Students understand the characteristics of organisms, see patterns of similarity and differences among living organisms, understand the role of evolution, and recognize the interdependence of all systems that support life. This is evident when students identify characteristics of organisms (e.g., needs, environments that meet them; structures, especially senses; variation and behaviors, inherited and learned).
<b>Method(s)</b>	“What’s That, Habitat?” lesson from <u>Project WILD K-12 Curriculum and Activity Guide</u>
<b>Material(s)</b>	Paper, pencils, and crayon; dry erase board & markers.
<b>Time</b>	Preparation: 5 minutes to gather/organize materials Instruction: Three 20-minute sessions
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Day 1 ~ Follow the procedure in the Project Wild manual for steps 1 - 4. Students will illustrate and label the habitat in which they live, identifying where they find food, water, shelter, and space. Students will share this work in small groups with peers and an adult. The work will be displayed in the classroom or hallway.</li><li>2. Day 2 ~ Follow steps 8 – 10. Students will work with their partner from the previous lesson and will illustrate and write about the animal(s) identified for their assigned habitat.</li><li>3. Day 3 ~ Students will present their drawing and writing to the class and will explain how their animal’s basic needs are met in the habitat in which they live. Student work will be added to the classroom bulletin board chart under a new column titled “Basic Needs”</li></ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b>	Student work and presentation will be used as the assessment of their understanding of how a habitat provides an animal with the things it needs to survive as well as what is meant by space and shelter.

# Classroom Bulletin Board

Lesson #1 “What is a Habitat?”

Lesson #2 “Habitats: Meeting Basic Needs”

<b>HABITAT</b>	<b>Plants</b>	<b>Animals</b>	<b>Basic Needs</b> Food/Water/Shelter

Students will work in pairs to complete this bulletin board display. Each pair of students will draw or write about the plants and animals in their assigned habitat, in lesson 1. They will add information about how the habitat meets the animal(s) basic needs, in lesson 2.

<b>Lesson 3</b>	<b>Our Backyard</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will identify the animals that live in our school yard. Students will identify how the backyard habitat provides food, water, shelter, and space for the identified animals.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	4.6 Students demonstrate understanding of the relationship between their local environment and community heritage and how each shapes their lives. 7.13 Students understand the characteristics of organisms, see patterns of similarity and differences among living organisms, understand the role of evolution, and recognize the interdependence of all systems that support life. This is evident when students identify characteristics of organisms (e.g., needs, environments that meet them; structures, especially senses; variation and behaviors, inherited and learned), and when students categorize living organisms. 7.15 Students demonstrate understanding of the earth and its environment, the solar system, and the universe in terms of the systems that characterize them, the forces that affect and shape them over time, and the theories that currently explain their evolution. This is evident when students analyze and explain natural resource management (e.g., properties and uses of earth materials: rocks, soils, water, fish, wildlife, plants, trees, and gases). S1-2:6 Students demonstrate their ability to represent data by sorting and classifying objects based upon observations, prior knowledge, or experience, and justifying groupings.
<b>Method(s)</b>	“School Yard Safari” lesson from <u>Project Learning Tree Environmental Education Activity Guide</u> (#46, pp.151-152).
<b>Material(s)</b>	Clipboards, paper, pencils, hand lenses, post-it notes. Books: <u>Project Learning Tree Environmental Education Activity Guide</u> , <u>In a Backyard</u> by Jen Green
<b>Time</b>	Preparation: 15 minutes to check the study site, 5 minutes to gather materials. Instruction: One 30-minute session for instructions, safari, and recording; one 30-minute session for sharing finding and discussion; three 20-minute sessions for categorizing.
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Day 1 ~ Follow the activity instructions for “School Yard Safari”, steps 1-4. Students will explore the school yard, looking for signs of animals living there and will record their findings.</li> <li>2. Day 2 ~ Continue the lesson with step 5. Students will share their experiences and compare their findings. A list of schoolyard animals will be compiled, with each name</li> </ol>

	<p>written on a post-it note. The class will discuss how the schoolyard habitat provides the animals with food, water, shelter, and space.</p> <p>3. Days 3-5 ~ In the book <u>In a Backyard</u>, animals are divided into three categories: creepers and crawlers, flying visitors, and animals big and small. Each day, one section of the book will be read to the class, describing one category. Animals on the schoolyard list will be identified for each category. Post-it notes will be reorganized to create three lists.</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b>	Each student will orally name one animal that lives in the school yard and explain how it gets the food, water, and shelter it needs to survive.

<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>Exploring the Needs of Birds</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	Students will study several birds known (through the “School Yard Safari” activity, prior knowledge & experience, and field guides & other resources) to live in our schoolyard and neighborhood. Students will investigate the needs of several different birds and their sources of for food, water, and shelter.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	<p>7.13 Students understand the characteristics of organisms, see patterns of similarity and differences among living organisms, understand the role of evolution, and recognize the interdependence of all systems that support life. This is evident when students identify characteristics of organisms (e.g., needs, environments that meet them; structures, especially senses; variation and behaviors, inherited and learned), and when students categorize living organisms.</p> <p>7.15 Students demonstrate understanding of the earth and its environment, the solar system, and the universe in terms of the systems that characterize them, the forces that affect and shape them over time, and the theories that currently explain their evolution. This is evident when students analyze and explain natural resource management (e.g., properties and uses of earth materials: rocks, soils, water, fish, wildlife, plants, trees, and gases).</p> <p>H&amp;SS1-2:4 Students conduct research by following directions to complete an inquiry, asking questions and observing during the investigation process, and recording observations with words, numbers, symbols, and/or pictures.</p>
<b>Method(s)</b>	Students will work in small groups with an adult to study specific birds. Students will use a variety of resources (books, people, internet sources, etc.) to find out the habitat needs of different types of birds. Each group will present the information to the class in writing, pictures, a skit, a poem, song, or another method of their choice.
<b>Material(s)</b>	<p>Student Bird Books (see reference list).</p> <p>Teacher Science &amp; Bird Books (see reference list).</p> <p>Various materials depending on the presentation method selected.</p> <p>Class Chart to compile information.</p>
<b>Time</b>	<p>Preparation: 30minutes to meet with adult helpers for planning and to gather/organize materials.</p> <p>Instruction: Two 30-minute sessions for small group work, four 15-minute sessions for group presentations, one 20-minute session to compile the information.</p>
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Days 1-2 ~ Four groups of four or five students will work together to research the habitat needs of at least one or two</li> </ol>

	<p>birds. Each group will have an adult to assist in finding information in books and on the internet. An adult bird expert will be invited to our classroom as a resource, if possible. The type of food, food source, water source, and shelter preferences and needs will be researched for each bird and recorded in some manner (pictures, lists, sentences, etc.).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Days 3-6 ~ Each group will present the information that they learned about their assigned birds.</li> <li>3. Day 7 ~ The information about all of the birds researched will be compiled into a class chart or lists to be used for future planning of a bird habitat in our schoolyard.</li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b>	Each student will draw a bird habitat that includes a food source, a water source, and shelter. Each habitat component will be labeled (verbally or in writing).

## Class Chart

### Lesson #4 “Exploring the Needs of Birds”

<b>BIRD</b>	<b>Food Source(s)</b>	<b>Water Source(s)</b>	<b>Shelter Sources</b>

Students will work in a small group with an adult to research the needs of at least one or two birds. Each group will present their findings to the class. Information will be compiled on the above chart format and will be used in planning the schoolyard bird habitat.

<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>Planning a Schoolyard Bird Habitat</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	With teacher facilitation, students will develop a plan to build a bird habitat in the school yard. Students will use information about birds' needs from the lesson "Exploring the Needs of Birds" and will design a plan that includes food, water, and shelter for a variety of birds.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	3.9 Students make decisions that demonstrate understanding of human and natural communities, the ecological, economic, political, or social systems within them, and awareness of how their personal and collective actions affect the sustainability of these interrelated systems. 4.6 Students demonstrate understanding of the relationship between their local environment and community heritage and how each shapes their lives. 7.16 Students demonstrate understanding of natural resources and why and how they are managed.
<b>Method(s)</b>	Talents Unlimited Planning Lesson
<b>Material(s)</b>	Chart paper and markers. Class chart or lists from previous lesson "Exploring the Needs of Birds".
<b>Time</b>	Preparation: 5 minutes to gather/organize materials. Instruction: Three 20-minute sessions
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Day 1 ~ Students will describe what the project includes, and the materials and equipment necessary to complete the project.</li> <li>2. Day 2 ~ Students will list the steps needed to complete the project and put the steps in order.</li> <li>3. Day 3 ~ Students will think of any problems that could keep them from completing the project and will think of ways to improve the plan.</li> </ol>
<b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b>	The students will evaluate the plan on Day 3 to insure that it includes plans for food, water, and shelter for a variety of birds.

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## **PLANNING**

- 1. Think of WHAT you are going to plan so someone will know what your project is.**
- 2. Think of all the MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT you will need for your project.**
- 3. Think of all the STEPS NEEDED to complete the project and put the steps in order.**
- 4. Think of any PROBLEMS that could keep you from completing the project.**
- 5. Think of ways to IMPROVE your plan**

### **Lesson #5 "Planning a School Yard Bird Habitat**

**In the primary grades, the plan would be developed as a group with teacher facilitation, and recording on charts.**

<u><b>WHAT</b></u>	<u><b>THINGS</b></u>	<u><b>HOW</b></u>	<u><b>PROBLEMS</b></u>

<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Building the School Yard Bird Habitat</b>
<b>Objective(s)</b>	The students will work cooperatively with each other, school staff, parents, older student volunteers, community volunteers, and wildlife agency personnel to build a schoolyard bird habitat. Students will maintain the habitat during the school year, providing water, seed, etc, as needed. Students will observe the habitat, record observations, participate in the class decision making process when changes are needed, and assist with making changes to improve the habitat.
<b>VT Standard/ Grade Expectation</b>	3.9 Students make decisions that demonstrate understanding of human and natural communities, the ecological, economic, political, or social systems within them, and awareness of how their personal and collective actions affect the sustainability of these interrelated systems. 4.6 Students demonstrate understanding of the relationship between their local environment and community heritage and how each shapes their lives. 7.16 Students demonstrate understanding of natural resources and why and how they are managed.
<b>Method(s)</b>	Students will work under adult supervision to plant a bird garden, build bird nesting boxes, nesting shelves, and bird feeders, and to construct a bird bath. Students will work under adult supervision to observe and maintain the bird habitat. The Talents Unlimited Decision-Making and Planning processes will be used when appropriate.
<b>Material(s)</b>	Plants, seeds, bulbs and gardening tools, wood and woodworking tools, various materials for student-made bird feeders and birdbath.
<b>Time</b>	Preparation: 30 minutes to meet with principal to discuss plans; 2-3 hours to contact local plant and hardware stores and wildlife agency personnel to arrange for school visits and donations; 2-3 hours to pick up and/or purchase supplies. Project: Several hours over several days.
<b>Procedure(s)</b>	<i>* The bird habitat will be planned and designed by the students with adult assistance. The following plans are proposed for the purpose of this assignment.</i>
<b>Space</b>	Our school is located in the city of Rutland. Across the street there is a large wooded area. The front yard of our school is primarily parking lot. The yard behind our school is a large fenced area consisting of lawn and playground equipment. Outside of the fence there is a small wooded area to the east, a grassy field to the south, and a private yard to the north. Within the fence there are a few trees and a small fenced flower garden

	<p>on the north end of the yard. (In the fenced garden there are red tulips in the spring and red annuals in the summer, planted in the shape of a ribbon to represent the red ribbon for “Say no to drugs.”) This area of the yard would be a good place for the bird habitat for a number of reasons. First of all, it is the quietest part of the school yard, furthest away from the playground equipment. Also, in the past, we have had trouble with bird feeders being stolen from the school yard. In this location, our habitat would be less visible to people passing by. The habitat could be fenced as an added discouragement to trespassers. Using this area of the yard would also give us the benefit of the trees, allowing for shaded and sunny areas within the habitat, as well as sources of food and shelter. Unfortunately, this area would not be easily viewed from our classroom windows.</p>
<b>Food</b>	<p>Plants for our habitat will be selected with the help of experts from local garden shops. They will include primarily native plants that will provide the following food for birds: fruits and berries, nuts, grains &amp; seeds, and nectar. Hopefully, we can get plant donations from local shops and gardeners. We will also plant some seeds and bulbs. We will supplement these food sources with student-made bird feeders. There will be different types of seeds (sunflower, millet, thistle) and different types of feeders (tube, bag, platform). We may also include a suet feeder and a hummingbird feeder.</p>
<b>Water</b>	<p>Our habitat will include a birdbath. Students will be responsible for cleaning and filling the bath. In the winter we will not be able to have a heated feeder, but will provide water when possible and will investigate other water sources in the area (i.e. a nearby stream that may not freeze).</p>
<b>Shelter</b>	<p>With the assistance of a local hardware store, students will build nesting boxes and nesting shelves. We will also put out bags of nesting materials for birds. We will consider shelter needs when selecting trees, shrubs and vines for our garden. A brush pile may be formed nearby.</p>
<b>Evaluation/ Assessment</b>	<p>Kindergarten students will observe the bird habitat, looking for a variety of birds. If there is a lack of variety, the class will revisit our bird list from lesson #4 and reevaluate the habitat to ensure that we are providing the necessary sources for food, water, and shelter.</p> <p>*In first grade, these students will continue to observe and maintain the habitat and will participate in a more in-depth study of birds and ecology.</p>

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## **DECISION MAKING**

- 1. Think of many, varied things you could do. ALTERNATIVES**
- 2. Think of the varied questions you need to ask about these things you could do. CRITERIA**
- 3. Use your answers to help you make a decision. WEIGHING**
- 4. State you final decision. DECISION**
- 5. Give many, varied reasons for your decision. REASONS**

### **Lesson #6 Building the Schoolyard Bird Habitat**

Students will used the attached form, when appropriate, to make decisions about changing or improving the bird habitat.

***Terms and concepts that the students will learn in this unit:***

**Adapt** – to adjust to new environments or situations.

**Adaptations** – special things about animals that allow them to live in their habitat.

**Carnivore** – an animal that eats the meat of other animals to survive.

**Cavity** – a hole.

**Climate** – the total, average and extremes of weather in a given area over a longer period of time (months, seasons, or years).

**Clutch** – two or more eggs in a nest.

**Colonies** – places where groups of birds of the same kind nest close to each other.

**Conifer** – any one of several kinds of trees with needle-like leaves, such as pines and spruce.

**Desert** – a very dry habitat where hardly any rain falls.

**Ecology** – the study of nature; the dependence of all living things on all other living things and their surroundings.

**Endangered Species** – a species that is in danger of becoming extinct.

**Ethics** – unwritten rules, guidelines, or standards that direct the behavior of individuals or groups; the principles or values that an individual or group believes to be morally correct.

**Extinct** – gone forever, as in the disappearance of an entire species of animal or plant.

**Feeding Station** – a place where people put food for birds, such as a birdfeeder.

**Food** – material taken into an animal's body that provides energy to carry out necessary functions.

**Habitat** – where one or more species can live within a given environment. A habitat provides food, water, shelter and space.

**Herbivore** – an animal that eats plants in order to survive.

**Hover** – the type of flight in which a bird can remain in one place.

**Impact** – to affect strongly.

**Incubation** – keeping eggs warm before they hatch.

**Interdependent** – depending on or needing one another.

**Migration** – a move of a great distance between summer and winter homes.

**Mobbing** – the bothering of a bird or animal by a flock of birds of another kind.

**Native North American plants** – all those that were on the continent before it began to be colonized by Europeans.

**Nature** – the ever-changing characteristics and conditions of our surroundings.

**Nectar** – a sugary liquid made by some flowers; an important food source for some birds and insects.

**Nestling** – a young bird still in the nest and needing its parents to provide food.

**Observation** – careful notice or examination of something.

**Omnivore** – an animal that eats both plant and animal matter.

**Perching** – any of the smaller birds, such as orioles, whose feet allow them to land on branches or other perches.

**Polar Regions** – very cold habitats at the North and South Poles where winters are very long and summers are short.

**Predator** – an animal that hunts and eats other animals.

**Prey** – animals that are hunted by other animals for food.

**Rain Forest** – a hot, wet habitat that is home to millions of different plants and animals.

**Range** – the entire area over which a plant or animal might be found in its natural environment.

**Resident** – an animal that remains within one home area throughout the year.

**Roost** – a place where flying animals such as birds and bats rest at night.

**Sap** – a sticky, syrup-like liquid in trees.

**Shelter** - provides a living space; a place to play, feed, raise and care for young, sleep, and protection from the weather and predators.

**Space** – an area that provides an ample amount of food, water, and shelter for the populations in the habitat.

**Species** – within a group of closely related animals, one certain kind, such as a purple finch.

**Stewardship** – involves taking responsible care of the land (soils, waters, plants, and animals) for future generations.

**Suet** – hardened animal fat.

**Symbiosis** – two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship.

**Symbiotic relationship** – the native plant species supports the native bird species by providing the perfect combination of foods to deliver the perfect nutrition in the perfect size and form. The birds help pollinate the plants when they eat the seeds, fruits, buds, and nectar.

**Territory** – a breeding or feeding area that an animal defends against other animals.

**Threatened Species** – a species likely to become extinct due to a decrease in population.

**Water** – necessary for keeping body tissue alive; used for cleansing, food production and shelter.

**Weather** – short-term (hourly, daily, or weekly) atmospheric conditions of a given area.

**Wetland** – any place where water is near, at, or just above the surface of the ground.