



Lesson 3: How Can I Help Birds?

Theme

All wildlife benefit from quality habitat and connectivity. The conversion of urban green spaces and suburban yards into more welcoming habitat can make a big difference for birds. Small actions add up!

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will learn about ways to create bird habitat in their own yards and communities, the proper way to feed birds, a citizen science opportunity with wild turkeys, and how the Division of Fish and Wildlife is managing habitat with birds in mind.

Corresponding Activities for this Lesson

- Migration Madness

Materials

- Lesson 3 PowerPoint

Lesson

- 1. Review from the last lesson that Rhode Island's birds fill lots of different niches and live in a variety of habitats.**
 - Ask students to think of some different habitats in which birds might live.
 - Show students the collage of habitat photos (all taken in Rhode Island).
 - Explain that a bird's adaptations determine the habitat in which it lives, and the niche that it fills. Some species have only adapted to live in one type of habitat, while others are less picky about where they live.
 - Can students think of an example of a bird that only lives in a certain type of habitat? How about a bird that can live in lots of different habitats?
- 2. Show students the map of Rhode Island, explaining that one of the big goals in our state is to protect as much diverse habitat as possible.** The more habitat we conserve/ manage, and the more diverse habitats we protect (forest, coastline, wetlands, etc), the better for our birds.
 - In Rhode Island, we have approximately 60,000 acres of land conserved in our State Management Areas (green shapes on the map).
 - Rhode Island's birds have most definitely benefited from State conservation land, as well as from State Parks and other conservation land throughout RI (Audubon, Nature Conservancy, town land trusts).
- 3. Explain that one of the habitats RI DFW is focusing on for birds is young forest.**
 - How old do students think the trees might be in a young forest? Are they big or small? Why might a bird like young forest habitat?
 - *Details about young forest habitat and the bird species that benefit from this habitat*

type are in the notes section of the PowerPoint. If you would like to go more in depth learning about young forest habitat, activities and resources focused on this habitat type are available in the "Home Sweet Habitat" kit.

4. Explain to students that you don't have to have a big piece of land like a Wildlife Management Area to create bird habitat.

- Ask students what they think are some ways that we can create bird habitat in our own yards, neighborhoods, and cities. Are there things that we could do right at home? How about at school? In our town or city?
- After brainstorming some ideas, review the components of habitat (food, water, shelter, space). Explain to students that we can help provide all of these things right at home with nest boxes, gardens with native plants, birdbaths, and bird feeders.

5. Ask students what they think are appropriate foods for birds. *There is extensive information about how to properly feed birds in the Lesson 3 PowerPoint.*

- Explain to students that bread and food scraps are not healthy for birds. These foods are not naturally part of birds' diets and can cause health issues.
- Imagine if you only ate potato chips for your entire life. Would you be healthy? Probably not! It's the same with birds and bread. The bread, crackers, and other processed human foods people often leave out for birds taste good, but are not healthy for them. They can actually make birds very sick!

6. Ask students why they think bird feeders should be taken down in the spring and summer.

- Explain that birds know how to feed themselves year-round, but appreciate the extra help in the winter when food is scarce. During the spring and summer, food is abundant, and we want birds to live a natural life foraging for their own food.
- We also have black bears in Rhode Island. Bears love to eat pretty much anything, so leaving out seeds, suet, or fruit for birds is an open invitation for a bear to stop by for breakfast or a late night snack. To avoid habituating bears to bird feeders, and also to keep your bird feeder from being squashed by a bear, it's best to take bird feeders down from March through November.

7. Ask students what they think they should do if they find a baby bird out of the nest.

- Show students pictures of baby birds at different stages. *Instructions on how to handle baby birds and how to tell if they need your help are included in the notes section of the PowerPoint.*

8. Ask students if they have ever heard of a citizen scientist.

- Explain that there are lots of opportunities for people who may not have a science background to still participate in scientific studies. One opportunity is the annual wild turkey observation project with the RI Division of Fish and Wildlife! *Details about this project are in the notes section of the PowerPoint.*