

**Informational Books in the Preschool Classroom**  
**Topic of Study: Birds**

***Counting is for the Birds* by Frank Mazzola, Jr.**  
***Birds* by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Laura Dronsek**

**Introduction**

In this guide children are engaged in activities that primarily support two domains in the *Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards: Birth through 60 months: Emergent Literacy and Science and Technology*. The **Learning Goals** (with **Strands**) that precede each activity relate to specific areas of development and learning that are the focus of the activities.

Birds come in all sizes, shapes and colors. Those are the basic concepts that are introduced in the book, *Birds* by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Laura Dronsek. A more in-depth look at birds is found in *Counting is for the Birds* by Frank Marzzola, Jr. In this book, the author uses digital paintings and verse to involve children in counting up to ten species of colorful backyard birds as they gather to crack seeds at the feeder while a cunning cat lurks below.

**Connection to Adventures in Learning**

This curriculum guide can stand alone or be used as a supplement to the following topic of study **in Adventures in Learning**:

- Focus Area: Animals – Birds

It can also be paired with another curriculum guide, Topic of Study: Owls and Birds and Their Nests, in this informational book series.

This curriculum guide can also be used with similar topics of study from any curriculum.

**Materials to Collect and Make**

- Print the book, *Have You Seen This Bird?* on cardstock. Laminate the pages or place them in plastic page protectors for durability. Consider using rings to put the pages together. (See Attachment: [Have You Seen This Bird?](#))
- Print two sets of the Bird Concentration Game on cardstock. Laminate or cover with clear, self-adhesive plastic for durability and cut cards on printed lines. (See Attachment: [Birds Concentration Game](#))
- Realistic purchased feathers
- Art materials as listed in the Learning Environment section under **Art Center**

## Introducing and Concluding the Topic

### Learning Goals:

**CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory** (*short-term and working memory, long-term memory*)

**CD3.2 Engages in symbolic and abstract thinking** (*abstract thinking*)

**EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print** (*print knowledge*)

### Introduction: Finding Out What Children Know about Birds

To introduce the topic of “Birds” you need to find out what children already know about the topic and what they want to know. This allows you to build on children’s experiences and helps create an interest in the topic. Here’s how to begin:

- Gather the children in a group. Say, “For the next few days we’re going to be learning about birds; especially birds we see in our backyard and in our neighborhood.”
- Write on chart paper, chalk board or marker board the word “Birds.”
- Invite children to tell you things they know about birds. You may have to ask prompt questions such as “Do you see birds in your backyard and in your neighborhood?” “What color of birds do you see?” “Do you know the names of the birds you see?” “Have you ever heard birds singing?”
- Make a list of things children know about birds.
- Show children pictures of some of the birds that they might see in their neighborhood and ask them what they would like to know about these birds.
- Make a list of things children would like to know about birds.

**Teacher Note:** *Have three headings on the chart sheet. The first heading will be “What We Know about Birds”, the second heading will be “What We Would Like to Know about Birds and the third heading will be Things We Learned about Birds.”*

What We Know about Birds	What We Would Like to Know about Birds	Things We Learned about Birds

### Conclusion: Finding Out What Children Have Learned about Birds

- Gather the children in a group at the conclusion of the topic of study about birds.
- Review with the children the information in the first two columns.
- Invite children to tell you some new things they have learned about birds. You may have to ask prompt questions such as, “Can you name some of the birds we talked about?”
- Add a list of things children learned about birds in the third column.

**Teacher Note:** *This method of introducing and concluding the topic is known as KWL. What do children know, what do they want to know, and what did they learn.*

## Story Presentations

### Learning Goals:

**LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)** (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

**LD2.1 Uses increasingly complex vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure (in child's home language)** (*expressive vocabulary*)

**EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences** (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

**EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories** (*story comprehension*)

**EL3.1 Responds to features of books and print** (*book knowledge*)

**ST1.1 Engages in the scientific process to collect, analyze, and communicate information** (*observations, questions, and predictions*)

**Book:** *Birds* by Kevin Henkes, illustrated by Laura Dronzek.

- Prepare to read the book, *Birds*.
- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the story and the illustrator is the one who draws the pictures.)
- Invite children to look at the cover and describe what they see.
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Follow up the reading by involving children as follows:  
Read the first two pages of text.  
Point to the first bird on the next page, begin to read the text and allow children to say the color of the bird; for example, read "Birds can be \_\_\_\_\_(yellow), or \_\_\_\_\_ (blue), or \_\_\_\_\_ (brown), or \_\_\_\_\_ (red), or even \_\_\_\_\_(green), I think."  
Continue this by allowing them to complete sentences such as "Birds can be \_\_\_\_ (big), or \_\_\_\_\_(little).
- Continue showing the pages and invite children to tell you what they see.
- Invite them to locate the birds (clouds) in the sky. Ask if they have ever seen clouds that look like birds.
- Ask children where they think birds go when it's stormy and they can't get home to their nest. Accept all answers.
- Thank children for helping you read the story.
- Tell children that the book will be in the library center so that they might read it on their own or with a friend.
- Invite children to visit the art center where they will find some materials they might want to use for making bird clouds, marks in the sky and for creating paintings about birds.

### Teacher Notes:

- *This process of allowing children to complete sentences is called the cloze technique.*
- *Join children in the library area and read and discuss this book with them if they seem interested.*

**Book:** *Counting Is for the Birds* by Frank Mazzolla, Jr.

**First Reading of *Counting Is for the Birds***

- Prepare to read the book, *Counting Is for the Birds*.
- Take the book, *Birds*, to the reading area with you.
- Show the children the cover of the book, *Birds*, and recall with them that in this book, they learned about birds of different colors and sizes. Now they are going to learn the names of some of the birds we see in our yard and neighborhood.
- Show the cover, give title, author and illustrator. (Explain that the author is the person who writes the book and the illustrator is the person who draws the pictures. Frank Mazzolla, Jr. is both the author and the illustrator.)
- Invite children to look at the cover and ask if they have seen any of these birds. Do they know the name of any of the birds?
- Read the story so all children can see the pictures in the book.
- Pause after reading each page, allowing children time to study the pictures and make comments or ask questions about what they see.
- Remind children to be on the lookout for the cat.
- Follow up the reading by showing each page and invite children to describe some things they notice about each of the birds. Help them recall the name of each bird.

**Teacher Note:** *Explain to children that you would like to read the book with small groups of children so they can learn even more about each bird. Let them know where you will be with the book; in the Library or the Discovery Center, for example.*

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**Second Reading of *Counting Is for the Birds***

- Plan to read the book with small groups of from four to six children where the focus will be on the information in small print at the bottom of the page and the guide with information about each bird on the last page.
- Decide if you want to read the entire book with the children again, then focus on the information, or simply focus on the information.
- Explain to and show children that there is more information about each bird at the bottom of the page and on the last page.
- Read the information at the bottom of the page and invite children to discuss it and ask questions. Call attention to features mentioned about each bird; for example the “black-capped chickadees”, the “tufted titmouse”, the “powerful beaks” of and the insects the woodpecker likes to eat.
- Be prepared to explain unfamiliar words to children. For example, the downy woodpecker has soft, fluffy feathers called “down” that are next to the woodpecker’s body; feathers that are covered with the feathers we can see.
- Spend additional time with children who are interested in the guide to the birds which can be found on the last page.

### **Third Reading of *Counting Is for the Birds***

- Plan to read the book with a small group of from four to six children with a focus on counting the birds, and adding them two by two.
- Read the first two pages and ask how many birds the cat sees? Show the 0 on the page and involve children in saying “zero.”
- Read the next page, focusing on the two chickadees. Show the 1 and the 2 and involve children in saying the numerals.
- Read the page about the titmouse and say that two more birds have come to the feeder. They are birds 3 and 4. Show the 3 and 4 and involve children in saying the numerals.
- Continue reading each page, stating that two more birds have come to the feeder. Show the numerals and invite children to say them.
- Read the final pages about the squirrel.
- Show the last page where the birds are in and around the tree. Invite children to see if they can count 20 birds. Do they notice that a second cat is in the picture?
- Tell children that you have a Counting the Birds game in the Discovery Center and that a few children at a time can join you there to play the game.

### **Additional Learning Goals:**

**MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity** (*number names and count sequence, connection of number, numeral and quantity*)

**MT1.2 Explores combining and separating groups (numerical operations)** (*changes in quantity, addition and subtraction*)

## **Additional Language and Literacy Activities**

### **Learning Goals:**

**CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory** (*short-term and working memory*)

**LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child’s home language)** (*vocabulary and language comprehension, follows directions*)

### **Activity: Bird Concentration**

- Prepare the Bird Concentration Game as described in Materials to Collect and Make section.
- Gather a small group of children to play the game.
- Place the cards face up, show to children, read with the children the name of the bird. Explain that these are birds that we might see in our yard or neighborhood.
- Turn the cards over and mix them up.
- Explain to children that they will each have a turn turning over a card, naming the bird, and trying to find the matching card by turning over one other card.
- Give each child a turn.
- Create a stack of cards as matches are found.
- Continue playing the game as long as children remain interested.

### **Teacher Notes:**

- *Remember that the object of the game is for children to develop short-term and working memory skills and that there are to be no winners or losers.*
- *Allow children to play the game independently.*

**Learning Goals:**

**LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)** (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

**EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences** (*engagement in literacy experiences, variety of interests*)

**Activity: *Have You Seen This Bird?***

- Prepare the book, *Have You Seen This Bird?* as described in the Materials to Collect and Make section.
- Gather a small group of children and present the book to them, stating the title and show the pictures to them. Give the name of each bird as you show the pictures.
- Explain to children that the book will be the library center for them to look at on their own or with a friend.

**Learning Goals:**

**CD2.4 Holds and manipulates information in memory** (*short-term and working memory*)

**LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)** (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

**EL2.1 Notices and manipulates the sounds of language** (*rhyme*)

**ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials** (*living things*)

**Activity: *Who Am I?***

- Say the following riddles one at a time and ask children to guess which bird is being described:

I am bright, I am red, I have a crest upon my head. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Cardinal)

I am big, I am blue, I love oaks and acorns too. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Blue Jay)

My head is tufted, you can see. I grab a seed and fly to a tree. If you can guess me hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Tufted Titmouse)

I like to travel with a flock of my friends. We fly south when fall begins. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (American Tree Sparrow)

I eat bugs, I eat bees. I live in holes and peck on trees. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Woodpecker)

I am brown, with a red breast. I come first in spring to make a nest. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Robin)

I am yellow, I color the sky. Watch for me as I fly by. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Goldfinch)

I am shy, I'm indigo blue. I eat seeds and insects too. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Indigo Bunting)

I walk headfirst down a tree. An upside-down bird they call me. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Nuthatch)

My cap is black, I grab on with my feet. When I fly, my tiny wings beat. If you can guess me, hurry up and try, before I fly into the sky. (Chickadee)

**Teacher Notes:**

- *These riddles can be sung to the tune "This Old Man."*
- *You may show children a picture of each bird if they seem to need this visual cue. Or you can give each child a picture of a bird to hold up when he/she hears the riddle about his/her bird.*
- *Consider having children answer each riddle in a complete sentence. For example, "I am a chickadee."*

## Learning Environment

### Library Center

- Add the following books:
  - *Birds*
  - *Counting Is for the Birds*
  - *The Bird Alphabet Book*
  - *Owl Babies*
  - *I Heard Said the Bird*

### Discovery Center

- Basket of different kinds of feathers and a magnifying glass.  
Encourage children to look at the feathers and discuss how they are alike, how they are different and how they feel.

### **Learning Goals:**

**MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understand of quantity** (*number name and count sequence*)

**MT1.2 Explores combining and separating groups (numerical operations)** (*addition and subtraction*)

### **Counting the Birds (Small Group)**

- Use a set of the Bird Concentration game cards for this activity.
- Explain to children who have joined you in the discovery center that they can help you count the birds on the cards.
- Place on the table the first card with two chickadees on it and invite children to tell you how many birds they see.
- Place the second card on the table and say, "We started with two birds, now we are adding two more. How many birds do we now have?"
- Count the birds with the children if they need this assistance.
- Continue adding cards with two more birds and invite children to tell how many birds they now see, counting as needed, until all 10 cards are on the table for a total of 20 birds.
- Say to the children, "We started with two birds and we added more birds, two at a time, until you now see twenty birds."
- Explain to the children that the bird cards will be in the center for them to use independently.

**Teacher Note:** *Children need to understand that all of the species are birds. Therefore, when you add cards, refer to the species on that card as birds such as chickadee rather than by species name.*

### Art Center

Have available in the Art Center the following:

- Unscented shaving cream, white paint, and school glue mixed together
- Washable tempera paint in blue, red, green, yellow, white, black, and brown
- Paint brushes of different widths
- Feathers
- Blue and white paper
- Lettuce spinner
- Marbles
- Paper cut to fit the bottom of the lettuce spinner
- Gift box with cover
- Paper cut to fit the bottom of the gift box
- Easel
- Large pieces of white paper for easel
- Paint shirts or smocks

**Learning Goals:**

**CA2.1 Explores, manipulates, creates, and responds to a variety of art media** (*exploration of art, art concepts*)

**Cloud Paint**

- Show the children the two pages in the book, *Birds*, where the illustrations show clouds that look like birds. Read the text on the pages, and encourage children to look carefully at the illustrations. Can they see the birds?
- Suggest to children that they might want to paint their own bird clouds using the shaving cream, white paint and school glue mixture.
- Remember that this is a choice by children, not a project for each child to complete.

**Teacher Notes:**

- *Show children the two pages in the book, Birds, where the illustration show marks in the sky made by the bird's tail feathers.*
- *Read the text on the pages and encourage children to look carefully at the illustrations.*
- *Explain to them the following three art experiences may result in marks in the sky.*
- *Remember that each of the activities is a choice by children, not a project for each child to complete.*

**Feather Painting**

- Provide paper, feathers and different colors of paint.
- Allow children to use the feathers as they choose.

**Marble Painting**

- Explain to children that marble painting is another way to make marks in the sky.
- Place a large sheet of paper, cut to fit, in the bottom of a gift box.
- Invite children to drop dots of paint on the paper. Different colors of paint can be used.
- Ask children to place a marble in the box, cover the box and roll the marble back and forth to paint a design.

**Teacher Note:** *A clear box or a clear lid can be used so that children can observe the painting as they roll the marble around.*

**Spinner and Marble Painting**

- Place a sheet of paper, cut to fit, in the bottom of a lettuce spinner.
- Invite children to drop dots of paint on the paper. Different colors of paint can be used.
- Ask children to place the marble in the spinner, cover the spinner, and use the handle on the spinner to move the marble around.

**Teacher Note:** *Observe children carefully as they use marbles for painting. Make sure they don't put them in their mouths. Put marbles away when they are no longer needed.*

**Easel Painting**

- Have the easel set up with a clean piece of paper on it.
- Have available a variety of colors of washable tempera paint.
- Remind children to put on paint shirts before painting at the easel.

## Outdoor Environment

### **Learning Goal:**

**ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials** (*living things, nature and the environment*)

### **Feed the Birds**

- Discuss with children that birds need food to help them grow.
- Involve children in putting bird seed in a bird feeder and keeping it filled.
- Hang the feeder from a tree on the playground or a tree close enough to the playground for children to see.
- Take a bird chart and pencils outdoors and encourage children to make a check mark when they see a bird listed on the chart.

### **Water for the Birds**

- Attract birds to the playground in the summer by offering them water.
- Purchase a birdbath and involve children in adding water to it, or putting water in a large, flat pan.
- Place the container in an out-of-the way corner of the playground, preferably under a tree so the water does not evaporate so quickly.

## **Transition Activities**

### **Learning Goal:**

**CD2.2 Shows flexibility in adjusting thinking and behavior to different contexts** (*adjusting behavior to match context*)

### **Which Bird Are You?**

- Use the cards for Bird Concentration and the rhymes from the Who Am I? activity.
- Keep one set of the cards and distribute the matching cards, one to each child.
- Show a card, say the rhyme and invite the child with the matching card to say, "I am a (name of bird on his or her card)," give the card to you and transition to the next activity.
- Continue this activity until all children have transitioned.

**Teacher Note:** *Consider having the children tell you one thing about the bird on their card.*

## **Family Connection and Engagement**

- Send home a note to families explaining that children have been learning about birds in their backyard and neighborhood. Include the names of the birds children have been learning about.
- Suggest that families take a walk in their backyard, neighborhood or a near-by park and look for birds. Talk about the colors of the birds, what birds eat, how many birds they saw, and the names of the birds they know.
- Add to the note the list of books about birds, especially those that were presented to the children. Suggest that they check the books out of their local library and read them with their children.

## **Additional Books**

*I Heard Said the Bird* by Polly Berrien Berends, illustrated by Brad Sneed

*The Bird Alphabet Book* by Jerry Pallotta, illustrated by Edgar Stewart, is full of facts about birds from A to Z; birds from the familiar to the exotic.

*Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell