



Aim: To introduce students to common Irish birds

Age: Suitable for 3rd - 6th class and up to 6th year

Duration: One hour

Curriculum Links:

3rd /4th Strand Unit Plant & Animal life

Variety & Characteristics of Living things

- Observe, identify and investigate the animals and plants that live in local environments
- Develop an increasing awareness of plants and animals from wider environments

Strand Unit Environmental Awareness

- Identify positive aspects of natural and built environments
- Identify the interrelationship of the living and non-living elements of local and other environments

Strand Unit Caring for the Environment

- Realise that there is a personal and community responsibility for taking care of the environment.

5th/6th Strand Unit Plant & Animal life

Variety and characteristics of living things

- Observe, identify and examine the animals and plants that live in local habitats and environments
- Develop an increasing awareness of plants and animals from wider environments
- Identify the interrelationships and interdependence between plants and animals in local and other habitats plants and animals depend on, and compete with, each other concept of food chains and food webs
- Become familiar with the characteristics of some major groups of living things

Strand Unit Environmental Awareness

- Identify positive aspects of natural and built environments
- Explore some examples of the interrelationship of living and non-living aspects of local and other environments

Strand Unit Caring for the Environment

- Come to appreciate individual, community and national responsibility for environmental care

Lesson Objective:

To teach students the names, habitats, diets and features of common Irish birds.

To teach students about the techniques and aims of bird ringing.



Step by Step guide

Section 1; Video

1. Watch the video of bird ringing at <https://youtu.be/z-S740uXqP0>
2. Ask the following questions;

Q: How are birds captured for ringing?

A: Mist nets are used to trap the birds flying through the area where the net is set. They are composed of fine nylon mesh supported between two poles. When a bird flies into the net it becomes trapped and falls into one of the loosely hanging pouches. Birds are not harmed during this process.

Q: How is the ring placed on the bird?

A: Birds are carefully extracted from the net by the ringer and placed in a cotton bag. When ready for ringing the bird is removed from the bag and held in the ringer's grip. The ringer chooses a ring of the correct size and places it in the bird's right leg with a ringing pliers.

Q: How does the ringer tell the sex of the bird?

A: It can be difficult to tell the sex of a bird. In some species the sexes are different colours, in other species differences in wing length are the only way of telling the sexes apart.

Q: How does the ringer tell the birds age?

A: Differences in feather colouration help determine if the bird was hatched this year or a previous year, as this shows different stages of the bird's moult.

Q: What information does the ringer collect?

A: The ringer records the bird's sex, wing length and weight.

Q: What are the aims of bird ringing?

A: To monitor the bird's survival rates and to learn more about population movements.

Section 2; Ringing Game

Materials

Strips of card to make wristbands/rings for students, sellotape or sticky tabs to close the rings, scissors, printed species cards for each student, printed data sheet for each student, pens, clipboards

1. Working in pairs, students make a uniquely numbered wristband/ring each and put them on each other's wrist.
2. Give each student a printed species card and a data sheet. There can be more than one of each species in the room.
3. Students go around the room and record the "ring number" and other information for all species present, students can decide on the sex and age based on the information given on each species card.



Additional activities

1. Using a digital scale find items in the room approximately equal in weight to each bird species.
2. Use a measuring tape to measure the "wing length" (from tips of fingers to shoulders) and wingspan (from fingertips to fingertips of out stretched arms) of other students.
3. Using the information on the species card & additional sources such as the web, draw food chains for each bird species e.g.

Caterpillar → Blue Tit → Sparrow Hawk

References:

Dublin bay birds project www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gtGxnYmkq8p

Books; Irelands Garden Birds by Oran O'Sullivan & Jim Wilson

Definitions

Biometrics: measurements relating to living things e.g. the height of a tree, the weight of a bird.

Ringers grip: a safe and secure way of holding a live bird for the purpose of ringing

Moult: when birds lose feathers in order to grow new ones they are moulting; all birds need to moult once every year.

Vertebrates: animals which have a backbone e.g. mammals, birds, fish.

Invertebrates: animals which do not have a backbone e.g. worms, spiders, insects.

Larvae: an immature form of an animal, usually an insect which will metamorphose into a different looking adult e.g. caterpillar.

Habitat: the natural home or environment of an animal or plant.

Diet: the food an animal eats.

Wing length: measurement from wing tip to shoulder.

Wingspan: measurement from wingtip to wingtip of outstretched wing.

Lifespan: the average length of time an animal will survive for.

Mistletoe: a type of plant which grows in the branches of trees (especially apple).

Mealworm: the larvae of a beetle, a favourite food for robin's.

Plumes: feathers.

Migration: seasonal movement of animals from one region to another.

Pliers: a hand tool used to hold objects firmly