

Birds & Birdwatching unit study

A homeschool curriculum built around birds — identification, migration, ecology and citizen science you can do from the window, for K-12.

GRADE BANDS K-2 • 3-5 • 6-8 • 9-12

FULL GUIDE <https://handsdowneducation.com/homeschool/birds>

How to use this planner

The six weeks below are sequenced from the guide's sample week: five weeks that each take one core subject through the topic, then a showcase week that turns the portfolio into a final product. Run each activity at the level your child is at (the grade band notes tell you how), keep the output, and by week six you have a portfolio that shows the unit end to end.

Pace is yours. A week here is three to five working sessions; a topic that is going well can take two calendar weeks, and one that has run dry can be closed early. Tick the box when a week's output is in the portfolio.

Six-week scope and sequence

Wk	Focus	Key activity	Portfolio output	Done
1	Reading & Writing through birds & birdwatching	Read about the passenger pigeon's extinction, then write a field report on a local species — abundance, habitat, and what would threaten it.	Portfolio entry: the week's reading & writing piece, dated, with one line from your child on what they found out.	☐
2	Math through birds & birdwatching	Run a daily 15-minute bird count for a week, tally by species, and calculate frequencies — then submit the data to a citizen-science project.	Portfolio entry: the week's math piece, dated, with one line from your child on what they found out.	☐
3	Science through birds & birdwatching	Compare beak shapes across five species and predict each one's diet, then verify — natural selection made visible in a single afternoon.	Portfolio entry: the week's science piece, dated, with one line from your child on what they found out.	☐
4	Social Studies through birds & birdwatching	Follow one migratory species' full route and list every country and habitat it depends on — conservation as an international coordination problem.	Portfolio entry: the week's social studies piece, dated, with one line from your child on what they found out.	☐
5	Art through birds & birdwatching	Study Audubon's plates, then draw one bird from life or photo with accurate proportions and field marks.	Portfolio entry: the week's art piece, dated, with one line from your child on what they found out.	☐
6	Showcase and review	Choose one final product that pulls the unit together — a presentation, an exhibit, a field guide or a short documentary — and give the week to making it. Finish with a portfolio review: lay every week's output on the table and let your child narrate what changed in what they know about birds & birdwatching.	The final product plus a one-page unit summary in your child's words, filed with the portfolio.	☐

Running it at your child's level

K-2 learners identify 5-10 common local birds by sight and sound, keep a simple tally, and learn to sit still and watch — an underrated skill.

Older students can master real identification (including confusing juveniles and females), analyze population trend data, and study migration physiology and navigation.

A sample week, subject by subject

Reading & Writing

Read about the passenger pigeon's extinction, then write a field report on a local species — abundance, habitat, and what would threaten it.

Math

Run a daily 15-minute bird count for a week, tally by species, and calculate frequencies — then submit the data to a citizen-science project.

Science

Compare beak shapes across five species and predict each one's diet, then verify — natural selection made visible in a single afternoon.

Social Studies

Follow one migratory species' full route and list every country and habitat it depends on — conservation as an international coordination problem.

Art

Study Audubon's plates, then draw one bird from life or photo with accurate proportions and field marks.

Common questions

Do we need binoculars?

A feeder near a window works without any. Inexpensive binoculars help a lot once interest is established — worth waiting to see if it sticks first.

Is this genuinely rigorous?

Ornithology is a real field, and citizen-science contributions from careful amateurs appear in published research. Done attentively, this is data collection, not just nature appreciation.

What about winter?

Winter is the best season to start — fewer species, less foliage, hungrier birds at feeders. Easier identification while skills are forming.

Turn this into a full, standards-aligned curriculum

Generate a complete plan around birds & birdwatching for your child's grade and pace — free to try, no account required.
<https://handsdowneducation.com/curriculum/generate>