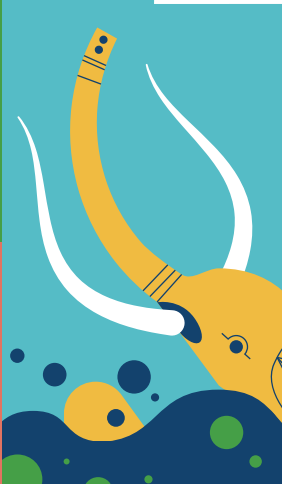
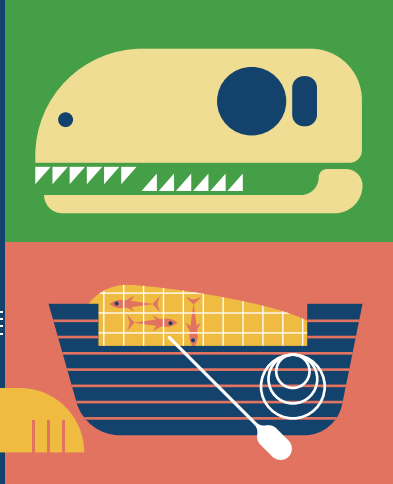
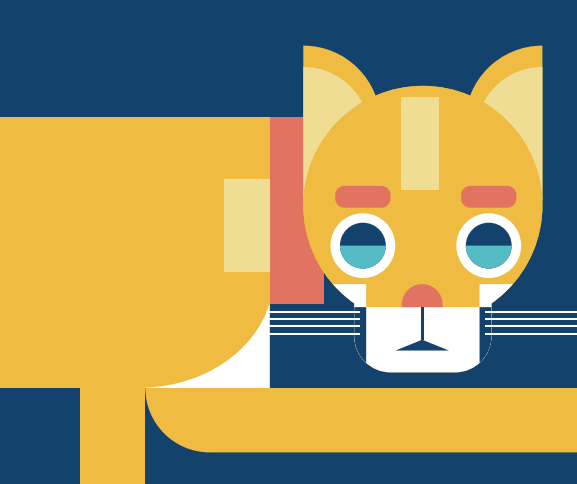
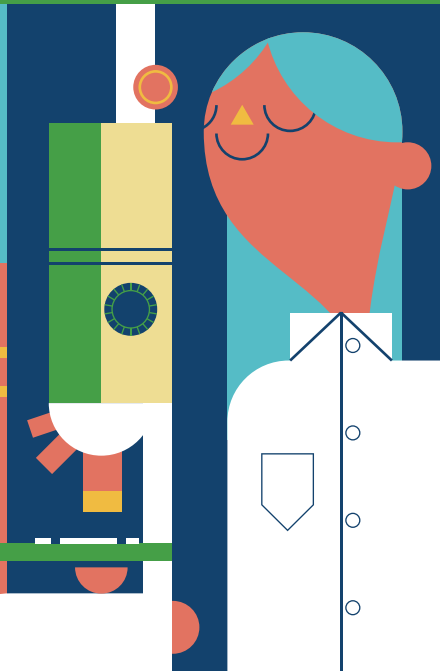




BIRDS OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Field Guide for Beginner Birders

GRADES 2 - 12

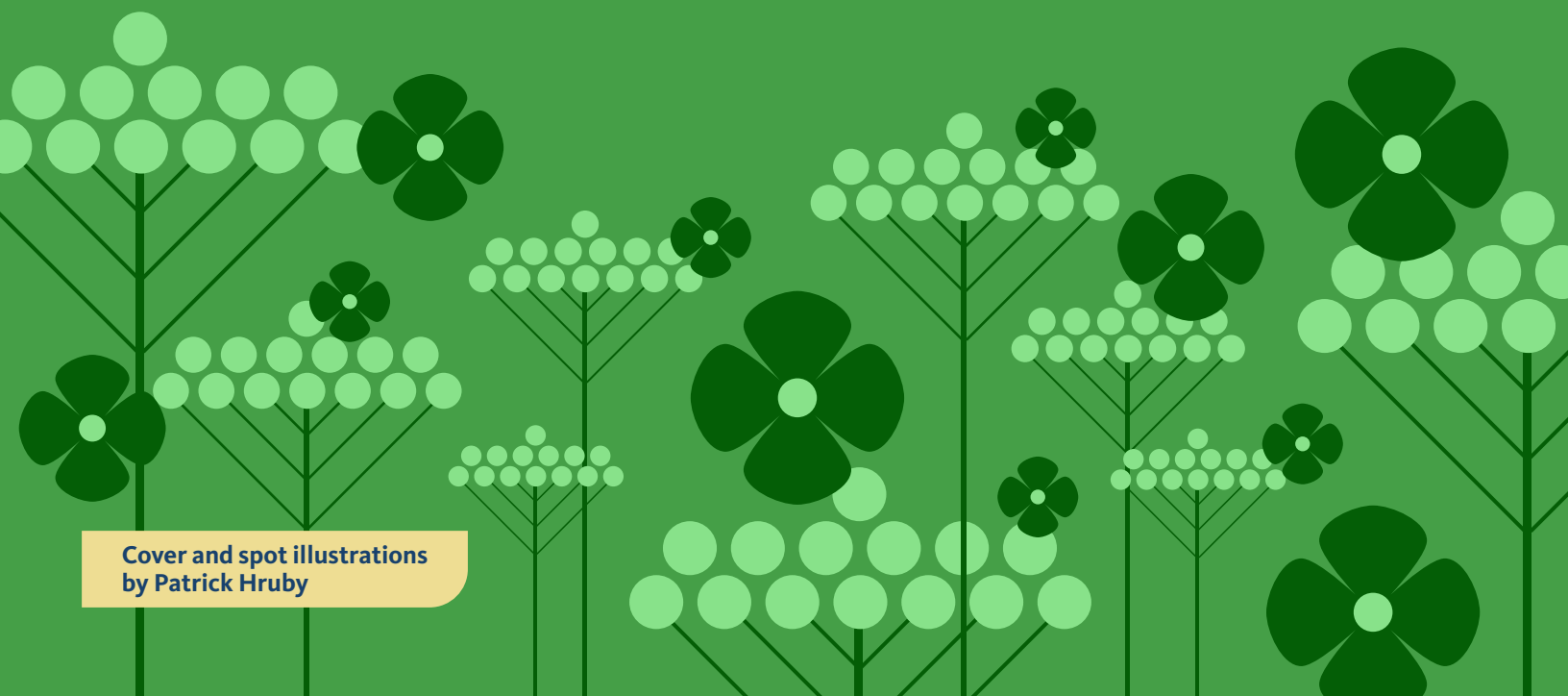


NAME: -----

DATE: ----- **TEMPERATURE:** -----

TIME STARTED: ----- **TIME ENDED:** -----

WEATHER: Sunny Rainy Cloudy Foggy Windy



Cover and spot illustrations
by Patrick Hruby

BIRDS OF THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Field Guide for Beginner Birders



GRADES
2-12

INTRODUCTION

Look up, look down – birds are all around! The Nature Gardens at the Natural History Museum feature over 600 plants, including California native plants, that attract birds and other wildlife. The gardens provide food and habitat for birds who are an important part of our ecosystem. How many birds will you spot today?

A field guide is a book that assists people in identifying things in nature, such as animals and plants. This field guide was designed to introduce you to the wonderful world of birds! This guide will teach you how to observe birds, introduce you to words associated with birds, and share some interesting facts about our feathered friends. To help beginners, some of the pages have been organized by where you might find birds. For example, our first section focuses on birds that are often seen on the ground or in the water.

This guide provides spaces for you to record your observations and illustrations. Use this field guide to keep notes and document what you see as you observe birds in the Nature Gardens (or in your schoolyard or neighborhood). Please keep in mind that birds come and go. Weather and seasonal migration may affect the number and variety of our feathery visitors - you may see many (or only a few!) birds that are featured in this guide depending on the time of year. Looking to see birds year-round? You can view bird specimens up close in the Nature Lab or the Hall of Birds.

MATERIALS

- **Field Guide**
- **Pencil**
- **Binoculars (optional)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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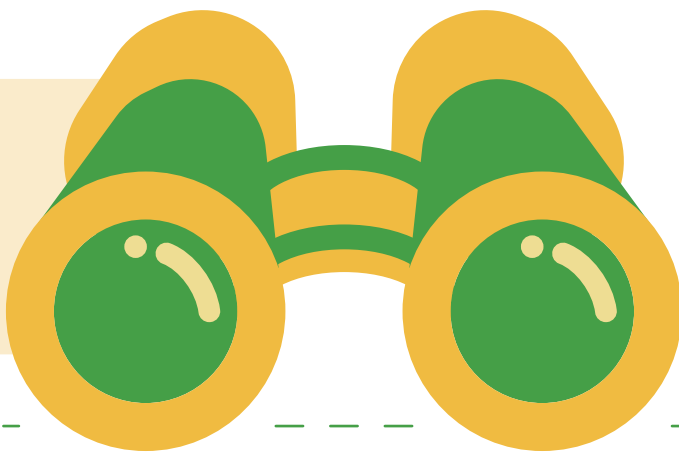


TIPS TO OBSERVE BIRDS

- Birds can be found on four levels: ground or water, bushes, trees, and sky. Remember to look up, down, and all around for birds foraging on the ground, perching in trees or bushes, or passing by in flight.
- Put on your nature eyes! Do you see plants shaking? Shadows flying by? Watch for movement to help you find birds that may be hard to see.
- Listen! Where is that sound coming from? Nearly all birds can be identified by their call or song.
- Sometimes, it can be hard to tell different kinds of birds apart! Take note of the bird's size, shape, color, movement, behavior, and call to accurately identify which type of bird you saw.
- Walk slowly, stay still, and speak quietly to get as close as possible to birds you see. Use the “quiet coyote” sign (use your fingers to make a coyote face with ears up) to point out birds to others.
- Are you using binoculars? Safety first! Don't use them to look at the sun and never use them while walking.

DID YOU KNOW?

Scientists who study birds are called “ornithologists.” People who enjoy observing birds as a hobby are “bird-watchers” or “birders.”



ACTIVITY

1

BIRD TERMS

Learn more about some words that describe bird behaviors! These verbs are grouped according to types of behaviors that you might see while bird watching:

MOVING

- Circling Flying around in circles looking for food; soaring birds may circle to gain altitude, “riding” thermals which are rising columns of warm air
- Flying Moving from one place to another
- Perching Resting, checking for danger or anything interesting that might happen by
- Sallying Rushing out (usually to catch insects) and returning to the same place
- Soaring Gliding, wings open to float on the wind or rising columns of warm air
- Swimming Paddling and floating on the surface of the water

EATING

- Catching Birds catch insects or prey while flying (also called “hawking”)
- Dipping Ducking their heads underwater (sometimes even swimming underwater) to look for food in the water
- Foraging Searching for (and finding) food such as berries, bugs, etc.
- Gleaning Eating insects from leaves

CLEANING

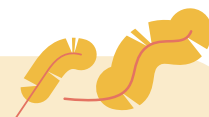
- Bathing Splashing water onto themselves and ruffling their feathers to remove dust, any loose feathers, and parasites
- Dust bathing Cleaning feathers with dust to absorb oil and to loosen and shake off particles
- Preening Cleaning feathers with their beak

COMMUNICATING

- Calling Making short sounds
- Singing Making longer sounds (like a song); songs often proclaim territories or to attract a mate

DID YOU KNOW?

Different birds have different ways of flying. For instance, scrub jays will “dip” while flying, as if they’re on a roller coaster; some doves make squeaking or whistling sounds while flying, so you can hear as well as see them.



Add your own bird words here:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

ACTIVITY
2

BIRDS COMMONLY FOUND ON THE GROUND/IN THE WATER

These birds are mostly found down by your feet on the ground or in the water. Mark any of these birds that you have observed today.

MOURNING DOVE



Brown-gray, spotted wings. May be seen in bushes and on light posts. Call: "Coo"
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user michaelawidener)

HOUSE SPARROW



Gray-brown with tan/brown stripes. Hops on ground; likes seeds and insects. Non-native species.
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user njturner)

DARK-EYED JUNCO



Dark "hood" with pink bill & outer white tail feathers. Can be found in open areas near trees/bushes. Hops on ground to look for seeds.
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user zizolin)

MALLARD



Males: Green head with white neck ring and reddish chest. Females: Brown. Found in lakes or ponds and grazes on land
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user sara_medina)

Write or draw some of your observations of a bird you saw on the ground or in the water:

EXAMPLE: I saw a mallard swimming in the pond.

DID YOU KNOW?

Birds are most active in the early morning and early evening when they are looking for food.



ACTIVITY
3

BIRDS COMMONLY FOUND IN BUSHES

These birds are mostly found at eye level. Mark any of these birds that you have observed today.



Red-orange (male) or white throat (female), green and brown back. Aggressive behavior around bird feeders. Vocal; noisy wings in flight. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user ki6h)*



Tiny, round birds with long tails; gray. Hides in bushes. Gleans small insects from leaves. Their nests are long, soft pouches that hang from foliage. Makes loud call when a predator is nearby. Travels in flocks with many individuals! *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user michaelawidener)*



Tiny, green-yellow body with black on head. Vocalizes loud calls. Likes buds and dandelion weed seeds. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user leobalestri)*



Large, gray. Long tail. Sings loudly with a variety of songs, from tops of bushes. Likes insects and berries. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user save_the_vaquita)*

Write or draw some of your observations of a bird you saw in the bushes or at eye level:

EXAMPLE: I saw a hummingbird drinking nectar at a bird feeder.



DID YOU KNOW?

Some birds are native to California, while others were brought here from other parts of the world.

ACTIVITY
4

BIRDS COMMONLY FOUND ON TREES, LIGHT POSTS, ELECTRICAL WIRES

These birds are mostly found above your head. Mark any of these birds that you have observed today.

BLACK PHOEBE



Black “hoodie” (crested) head with white belly. They often “sally”. Look for their mud nests near the Rotunda entrance at NHM! Call: “Phee bee”
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user ki6h)

COOPER'S HAWK



Adult: Dark cap on head, gray/reddish body with white underparts. Juvenile: brown body with white and brown streaked belly. Preys on other birds near feeders. Perches on posts or telephone poles.
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user jimjohnson)

HOUSE FINCH



Male: Red/orange head and chest.
Female: Gray-brown with white streaks.
Very common native bird. Sings cheerful notes.
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user andreacala)

NUTTALL'S WOODPECKER



Black and white striped back. Male has a red “cap”. Often seen foraging on tree trunks. Year-round resident.
(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user christina517)

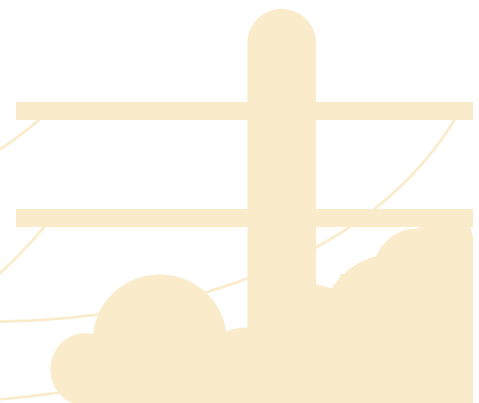
Write or draw some of your observations of a bird you saw in a tree or on an electrical post or telephone wire:

EXAMPLE: I saw a Nuttall's Woodpecker pecking a hole in a palm tree.



DID YOU KNOW?

Some birds are independent while others gather in pairs and groups. A “lift” is when a group of birds all take off at the same time.



ACTIVITY
5

BIRDS COMMONLY FOUND IN THE SKY

These birds are mostly found above your head. Mark any of these birds that you have observed today.

AMERICAN CROW



All black with rounded tail. Forages for food in many places, including trash bins and parking lots. Call: “Caw!” (Image courtesy of iNaturalist user stalkingalex)

RED-TAILED HAWK



Reddish-brown tail. Commonly observed in urban areas, circling in the sky, or perched on electrical poles and treetops. (Image courtesy of iNaturalist user gregslak)

WESTERN GULL



White with gray wings. Found along the coast, but also seen flying across the city and over parking lots where trash may be found. Call: “Aah-aah-ahh” (Image courtesy of iNaturalist user kangarat)

YELLOW-CHEVRONED PARAKEET



Green with yellow mark on wing. Travels in flocks and perches in neighborhood trees. Noisy call. May be spotted in the Silk Floss trees in the NHM parking lot, west of the Nature Gardens. Non-native species. (Image courtesy of iNaturalist user eslone)

Write or draw some of your observations of a bird you saw in the sky or above your head:

EXAMPLE: I saw a Western Gull flying across the parking lot at 10:00 a.m.



DID YOU KNOW?

Some birds remain in the area year-round, some are passing through, and some spend one season here and migrate (fly as far as thousands of miles) north or south for the rest of the year.

ACTIVITY
6

OTHER COMMONLY OBSERVED SEASONAL BIRDS

Here are some more birds you might see around you! Some of these birds only live in Southern California for certain times of year. Mark any of these birds that you have observed today.



Gray with bright yellow rump. Found on trees and catching insects in mid-air. Eats berries from shrubs and travels in flocks. Here mainly from October – April. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user jackOinat)*



Brown, gray, and yellow. Has a crest and a black mask over eyes. Found in berry bushes. Has higher-pitched call. Here mainly from October – May. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user chinmaychinara91)*



Brown and feeds in the air. Makes nests in holes, such as drainage holes. Rests on telephone wires and posts. Here mainly from March – June. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user tmills)*



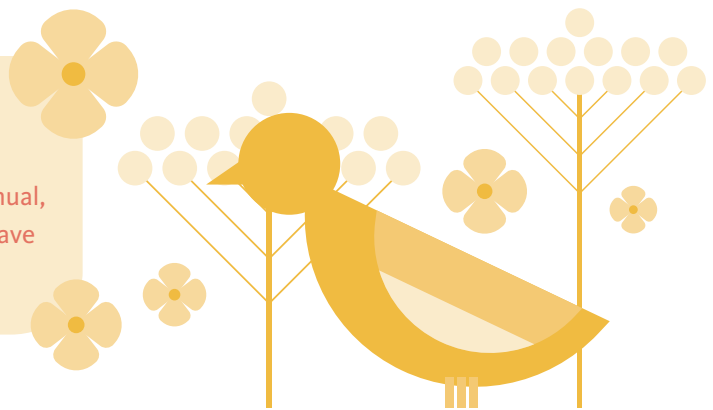
Shiny blue head and outer feathers with orange chest. Has a thin bill and short tail. Eats insects and berries. Perches on tree branches. *(Image courtesy of iNaturalist user jmaley)*

Write or draw some of your observations of a seasonal bird:

EXAMPLE: The Cedar Waxwing was eating the berries on the bush.

DID YOU KNOW?

Birds are observed in many important scientific surveys, such as the Christmas Bird Count - an annual, one-day national event during which volunteers have conducted bird surveys for the past 100 years!



ACTIVITY
7

NOTES, OBSERVATIONS, QUESTIONS, AND WONDERINGS

Look closely at a bird and draw a picture of it. What color is it? What kinds of markings or feather patterns does it have? What shape is its beak? Try to include as many details as possible.

What is the bird doing? Write down any behaviors you notice using some of the words we learned about earlier in this guide!



Written by Sharon Nakata

2019–2021 NHMLAC Teacher
Advisory Council

Sharon Nakata is a special education teacher at San Pascual STEAM Magnet in Highland Park, where she oversees the school's native habitats and edible garden and, along with fellow teacher Josephine Yadegar, co-sponsors the Nature Club. Sharon hopes that students' hands-on experiences with nature will generate a respect and responsibility for living things that will inspire students to become future stewards of the Earth. Sharon enjoys contributing her own observations of nature to the community science app, iNaturalist.

She is a big fan of P-22, and two of her favorite places in L.A. are right across the street from each other: the USC campus (Go Trojans!) and the Natural History Museum (where she has visited regularly since age 4). Sharon makes it a point to always stop by the Nature Lab and Nature Gardens when at the Museum. She is very honored to be a member of NHM's first Teacher Advisory Council.

STANDARDS

- Crosscutting Concepts: Patterns
- NGSS: LS1.B

“ With immense gratitude to Kimball L. Garrett and Allison J. Shultz, Ph.D. of the Natural History Museum's Ornithology Department for their invaluable expertise and assistance. ”

RESOURCES


Want to see more birds at the Natural History Museum?

Visit the NHM Nature Lab or Hall of Birds to see a wide variety of bird specimens, or visit the Dinosaur Hall to see some early bird ancestors!

Want to keep birdwatching?

- Look around your school, backyard, neighborhood, and parks for local birds and document what you find.
- Ask an adult to help you add any photos you take to community science projects on eBird.org or iNaturalist.org – your observations can help scientists and researchers who are studying birds around the world!

Learn more about birds!

-  Find out more information on identifying birds through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds
- Read about birds found in our local region in *Birds of Southern California* by Kimball L. Garrett, Jon L. Dunn, Brian E. Small.
- Ask an adult to look up your local Audubon youth chapter online or join your neighborhood birdwatching group.

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PITS
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