

~ **Bird by Bird** ~  
by Wallace Oscar Hughes and Rama Hughes



- Elementary school activity
  - One classroom session
- (Can be tailored to any timeframe: 30, 45 minutes, an hour)

**Purpose:** This activity provides a fun, simple, effective method for students to learn to differentiate between physical details of various birds. **The objective is to notice and show what physical attributes make each bird unique.** Drawing these observations and following up with discussions can help students retain details they discover.

**Ties to the Next Generation Science Standards:**

- **Disciplinary Core Ideas** (Variation of Traits):
  - plumage (feathers): consider colors, markings — do they differentiate gender? attract opposite sex? camouflage?
  - wing traits/flight — soaring vs. flapping? useful for attracting a mate?
- **Crosscutting Concepts** (Structure & Function):
  - variation of bird plumage: flight vs. insulating
  - beaks: specialized for which foods? seeds? insects? fish?
  - feet: perching? hunting?

**Ties to the National Core Visual Art Standards**

- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work
- Develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings
- Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design in new ways through art-making
- Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art-making
- Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art

## Lesson

### Materials:

- Paper, pencils, colored pencils, water-based paints & brushes, or watercolor pencils
- Collected photographs from the Internet, or multiple paper copies of various photos of birds from field guides. \*\* Assign each bird a number.
- Have a way to project bird photos (either on a screen or whiteboard), **or**
- Distribute multiple paper copies of several bird photos
- A timer

### Method:

1. Remind students that they will notice and draw one or more characteristics that make each bird unique
2. Ask one of your students to “pick a number” corresponding to one of the photos in your collection (either online photos or one on paper).
3. Determine the timing for drawing the photo of each bird, between 1-4 minutes:
  - a. Suggestion: Ask the student who initially picked the photo number to also choose the time limit for drawing (between 1 and 4 minutes)
4. Project the photo or distribute paper copies of the photo to your students.
5. Start your timer while students begin to draw
6. When time is up, consider doing a quick show-and-tell
7. Select a new photo and repeat the process
8. Depending on the paper size, students can draw several birds on one sheet. This can make it easier to compare their birds.

### Additional thoughts:

1. The goal of this activity is for your students to include in their drawings enough detail to show what characteristics make each bird unique.
2. Notice color, feather markings, beak shape, feet.
3. Have fun. Make it a game.
4. Try this activity with other types of animals: insects, fish, farm animals

cont'd



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**Follow-up questions for your students:**

- What did you learn about birds by making your drawings?
- Are all birds the same? If not, how might they be different?
- How do the wings of birds affect how they fly? Which ones flap? Which ones soar?
- Do all birds like to float on water?
- Are the feet of all birds the same? How are they different? Why?
- How does a bird's beak show how a bird hunts for food?
- Do you now look at birds outside with greater observation or knowledge?



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