

Feathered Friends Lessons

By BirdSleuth

Feathered Friends Lessons are hands-on and easily adapted to fit your teaching, time availability, and elementary levels of student background knowledge.

Your students will:

- Practice bird identification skills
- Explore your local habitat
- Develop STEM skills

Use the below link for a free download of engaging lessons for each month of the year.

<http://www.birdsleuth.org/pennington/>

BirdSleuth is the K-12 education program of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#). Our mission is to create innovative K-12 resources that build science skills while inspiring young people to connect to local habitats, explore biodiversity, and engage in citizen-science projects. We take an inquiry-based approach to science curriculum that engages kids.

Adaptations—Form and Function



Bird feet are uniquely specialized to survive in a particular habitat—the form is perfectly suited to its function. But feet aren't a bird's only adaptation. A bird's bill, also called a beak, is another important feature that helps a bird to survive. Look at the illustrations and notice each bird's beak.

Design a Bird—Review and discuss the information in the following chart with your children. (This chart is also available as a download at dawnpub.com/activity) Have children work

in pairs or small groups to choose a habitat and design a bird that is adapted for living there. The bird can be imaginary, but the feet and beak should be accurate for their habitat and the food the bird eats. Children may draw a picture or create a 3-D model using materials such as foam balls, construction paper, felt, craft sticks, toothpicks, cardboard, paint, etc. Have children display their birds to the whole class and ask others to guess the habitat.

BIRD	HABITAT	FEET	BEAK
Swans	Ponds, lakes, rivers	Webbed feet for paddling	Flat bill with serrated edges to strain plants and insects out of the water
Hérons	Wetlands	Long legs and toes for wading	Spear-like bill to strike and grab fish, frogs, and other aquatic animals
Roadrunners	Desert	Agile feet and muscular legs for running	Pointed bill to catch insects, snakes, and small animals
Woodpeckers	Forest	Toes with claws that cling for climbing tree trunks	Chisel-like beak to drill into trees for insects
Cardinals	Trees, bushes	Small, flexible toes for perching	Thick, conical beak to break open seeds. Also eats insects and berries
Towhees	Bushes, shrubs	Toes that can perch and scratch	Thick, conical beak to break open seeds. Also eats insects
Owls	Wide variety	Strong feet and sharp talons for grasping prey	Sharp, hooked beak to tear up prey

GLOSSARY

The glossary is a list of words from the book about birds and how they use their feet.

claw a sharp curved part of an animal's toe

cling to hold onto something very tightly

flexible capable of bending; easily bent

grasp to take and hold something

paddle to swim by moving your feet in short quick motions

perch to sit on or be on something high

scratch to dig, scrape, or tear something out or off

sharp having a fine point that is good for cutting or piercing

snag to catch or capture something by quick action

talons sharp claws on the feet of some birds

wade to walk through water

TIPS FOR READING ALOUD

1. Preview the book *Paddle Perch Climb Bird Feet Are Neat* ahead of time. Engage children by reading with expression. Use a different voice for the “watch out” statements, such as “Watch out for the fox!” and “Be careful of the bobcat!”
2. Read aloud the title then identify the author and illustrator. Ask children to look at the cover illustration and make predictions about the information in the book. *What do you think you will learn by reading the book?*
3. Read aloud the entire text *Paddle Perch Climb Bird Feet Are Neat* with few interruptions. Pause to clarify the meanings of new words.
4. Have children review their predictions. *What does the author want you to learn by reading the book?*
5. Read the book again. Ask children to listen closely to find out how each bird moves to get its food.
6. After reading, discuss how the shape and size of each bird’s feet and legs are clues to what it eats and how it moves. Invite children to dramatize words, such as *paddle, perch, cling, scratch, and grasp*.
7. “Look Out!” Tell children that while birds are eating they need to be careful not to get eaten. Turn the pages and ask children to find each bird’s predator hiding in the illustration.