

Listening for Birds

Lesson Plan

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Rationale:

Students will listen to a variety of bird calls and to the Coast Salish story “Raven Steals the Sun”, as told by Joe Jack, to gain insight on how Indigenous stories and histories give meaning and explanation to aspects of nature such as the diversity of bird calls.

First Peoples Principles: Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge; Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships and on a sense of place); Learning is embedded in memory, history and story

Curriculum Connections:

Grade 1 Science

Big Ideas: Living things have features and behaviours that help them survive in their environment

Curricular Competencies: Recognize First Peoples’ stories (including oral and written narratives), songs and art as ways to share knowledge; ask questions about familiar objects and events

Content: Names of local plants and animals; classification of living and non-living things; local First Peoples’ knowledge of the landscape, plants and animals

Grade 3 Science

Big Ideas: Living things are diverse, can be grouped, and interact in their ecosystems

Curricular Competencies: Make observations about living and non-living things in local environment; experience and interpret local environment; identify First Peoples’ perspectives and knowledge as sources of information

Content: Biodiversity in the local environment; First Peoples’ knowledge of local ecosystems

Estimated time required: 60 minutes

Lesson Activities:

1. Tell students that you are going to do an activity called “Who am I?” that will test their sense of hearing.
 - a. Have students form groups of three to four. Tell students that they will be hearing different bird sounds, discussing them and trying to guess what species of birds made them. Print off the images from the [look](#) section of the Listening for Birds pathway and hand them to each of the groups. Students will try to match each bird with its call.
 - b. Play the bird calls and songs found in the [listen](#) section of the Listening for Birds pathway, allowing time for discussion in between each one.
 - c. Have students write group notes to explain why they think the call belongs to the bird they picked.
 - d. Once you have gone through all the bird calls, play them again. This time have students share their notes and ideas with the class in between each call or song. After they finish sharing their notes, share the correct answers and show pictures of the birds from the look section of the pathway with the class.
2. Ask students if they have heard of bird listening? Then Ask:
 - a. Do you think birdwatching or bird listening would be easier? Why?
 - b. Read students the letter from Grace Bell found in the “About Grace Bell” document in the [read](#) section of the Listening for Birds pathway.
 - c. If Grace Bell were to visit our classroom, what questions would you ask her?
 - i. Examples: How many other people did bird call recordings? What is your favourite bird call you ever recorded? What was the hardest part about recording bird calls? How many different types of birds do you know?
3. As a class, brainstorm a list of reasons why birds might have different calls.
 - a. Possible answers include: birds come from different parts of the world; some are predators and some are prey; males and females may have different calls.
 - b. Play students The Language of Birds (academy.allaboutbirds.org/the-language-of-birds/). The video is about ten minutes long and explains how and why birds use calls to communicate.
4. Tell students that different cultures also have explanations for why birds have different calls.
 - a. Tell the story “The Raven Steals the Sun”, which has been passed down for generations. The story, as told by Cowichan artist Joe Jack, is included at the end of this lesson plan.
5. Ask students the following discussion question:
 - a. How does this Indigenous explanation for how birds such as seagulls got their calls and names differ from how scientists might explain it?

Extensions

1. Take students outside to listen for birds and record their findings. You might try to find bird calls that are similar to the ones found on the Learning Portal—or entirely different.
2. Contact your local nature centre or municipal park to find someone knowledgeable about birds in your community. Invite them to your classroom.

Fully immerse yourself in the Royal BC Museum’s Learning Portal by making a [playlist!](#)

Works Cited

Jack, Joe. 2017. “Raven Steals the Sun.” Coast Salish Art. Accessed August 16.
www.joejack.com/ravenstealsthesun.html.

The Raven Steals the Sun

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A long time ago, it was always dark. The people lived in a dim twilight so that if they wanted to see what was going on they had to light torches, or they stumbled about in the darkness

The reason for this darkness was that Seagull had taken precious Daylight and had shut it tightly up in a chest and he had hidden it in his house. He would roughly say "No, no" to everyone who came to ask him to release Daylight from his prison and to allow the world to be flooded with lovely light again.

Raven was very concerned at the discomfort of the people always stumbling about in darkness, so he made up his mind that some way must be found to make Seagull share Daylight with the world. He thought often on the matter, and one day he made a plan, which he believed would bring back Daylight to all his friends.

So he made a large torch and went down to the seashore to hunt for sea urchins. These he ate greedily, and the spiny shells he carried up to Seagull's house, where he spread them thickly over the doorstep. Very soon Seagull woke up and said to himself, "if is time to get up and get some fish for breakfast." So out of his door he stepped. But alas! As he put down his feet the sharp spines of the sea-urchin shells, which he could not see in the darkness, wounded his webbed toes, so that quickly he drew back indoors, unable to put one foot to the ground so great was the pain.

Crafty Raven had been on the watch close by. Now he knocked at Seagull's door and asked if he might come in for a friendly chat. He expressed much sympathy with poor Seagull in his pain, and as Seagull told him what had happened, Raven pretended great surprise at the cruel trick, which had been played. At once he offered to remove the sharp spines if Seagull would lend him a knife, but he proceeded to use it so roughly that Seagull screamed with pain. "I cannot see what I am doing," said Raven, "I must have more light, then I shall not hurt you". So Seagull, in his misery, pulled out from its hiding-place the precious chest in which he had imprisoned Daylight, and opened it just a crack to allow Daylight to shine through.

Then Raven set to work again with his knife, but again he purposely hurt poor Seagull so severely that Seagull screamed even more loudly than before. Raven pretended to be sorry. "Give me just a little more light," he said, "then I shall see so clearly you will have no more pain." Seagull, mad with pain, lost all caution. "Be sure you raise the lid very cautiously," he said, as he pushed the chest close to Raven. "On no account open it at all wide." But crafty Raven, having gained his object, threw the lid of the chest wide open, seized Daylight and flew right off up through the smoke-hole. And Daylight, happy to be set free from his prison, rushed forth in his full strength and flooded the whole world.

But Seagull's heart was broken. In his sore distress he cried "gwuni, gwuni, gwuni", and to this day his children never cease to make this same sad cry.