



Hermit Thrush in October
Photo by Loretta Kuse

Be an Ornithologist in Fall Learn About Birds

- Be a bird watcher or ornithologist. What questions will you ask? What equipment would help you? Find field guides specific to the local area.

Evidence of the Presence of Birds

- What evidence of the presence of birds other than the birds themselves is seen? (Feathers, tracks, parts of dead birds, partially eaten food, owl pellets, droppings)
- Why are some birds no longer here? Which birds stay and how will they survive?
- Watch for flocks of birds flying over during migration.
- What fall sounds do birds make?
- Think about the country or region to which birds travel. Which birds will stay over winter? How will they prepare and cope?

Habitats for Birds

- What are the best places to look for birds? Why are some places better than others?

- Look at the “Wood Duck or Merganser Box” near Bench A. What might live in the box in fall or winter?
- Look for cavities birds have made in trees. What birds may have made them? Why?
- Look at other bird houses along the trails. Why might people clean the bird houses in fall?
- Why do different kinds of birds come to trees in fall? How and where do they sit on or in the trees? (Roosting, nesting, food gathering, shelter, look out or hunting locations, food collection under bark)
- Find bird nests built during the year in bushes and trees. What kinds of birds may have built the nests? Take photos of the nests. Why might the birds have chosen each of these places for their nests? (Oriole nest high in a maple tree, nest in a conifer, etc.) Which birds built their nests in cavities? What cavities were made by animals and which cavities were provided by people?
- Why might it be good to leave old nests in trees or bushes?

Identification

- Use the list of birds seen in the Kuse Nature Preserve in fall. How many of them do you see? (Blackbirds, Bluebirds, Blue jays, Bobolinks, Bobwhites, Brown Thrashers, Cardinals, Catbirds, Chickadees, Cowbirds, Crows, Mourning Doves, Wood Ducks, Mallard Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Purple Finches, House Finches, Goldfinches, Flycatchers, Geese, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Hawks, Hummingbirds, Indigo Buntings, Killdeers, Kingbirds, Kingfishers, Meadowlarks, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, Phoebes, Red-eyed Vireos, Robins, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Chipping, English, Song, and Tree Sparrows, Starlings, Turkeys, many kinds of Warblers, Cedar Waxwings, Downy, Hairy Pileated, Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Wood Pewees, House and Sedge Wrens and others)
- What bird calls might you hear in fall? What tapping sounds do different species make? Use audio recordings of birds to help you learn the “language” of birds of our area. Often we hear a bird before we see it.
- Learn how shape, size, plumage, flight patterns and other visual clues help with identification of birds.
- How do birds appear differently in fall plumage?

Learning More about Birds

- Read children’s books about birds you expect to look for to learn about their habits.

- Be a citizen scientist. Participate in field trips to see migrating birds.

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