

CONNECTING KIDS THROUGH THE BIRDS THEY SHARE

Newsletter Issue 1
November, 2011

Welcome Teachers!

By Jennifer Fee, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

In 2009, educators from Cornell Lab of Ornithology approached seven partners with the idea of creating a middle school curriculum that would connect kids through migrating birds. We wrote a proposal to the EPA, and were thrilled when they gave us the funding necessary to create these resources and share them with you. Thank you for participating... together, we'll make this curriculum a wonderful resource for teachers around the country! We hope you'll enjoy this, our first newsletter, which highlights some of the interesting things happening so far.



Peachtown Elementary students learn about bird migration from an Audubon educator. See page 2.

Your Feedback Matters!

By Jennifer Fee, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

We've already received some feedback from teachers—and we apologize for some of the errors we now realize we made (misnumbered pages, for example). Thank you for catching these mistakes! We also need to know how the lessons work for you and any changes you'd recommend. For example, to the teacher who recommended adding life cycle symbols to the "Bird Survivor" cards—great idea! This will definitely help visual learners. We can't believe we didn't think of that before!

"Even my 3rd graders are enjoying the bird lessons. They especially love the games, which they ask to play over and over."

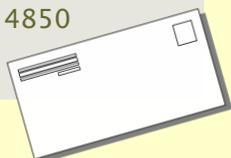
What do Your Students Know?

By Jennifer Fee, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

How often do you watch birds? Do you like science or consider a career in science? Do you care about birds and the environment? Can you name two birds that live in your neighborhood?

Please mail your pre-tests and lesson feedback to me:

Jennifer Fee
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, NY 14850



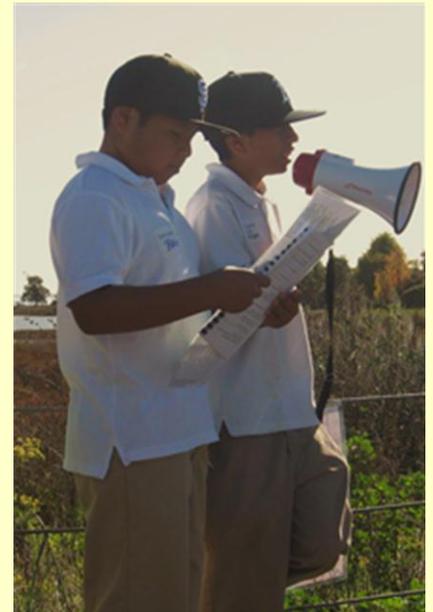
It's critical for us to understand what your students know and how they feel before they take part in the "Connecting Kids" lessons. If you haven't already, please give your students the pre-test and send them to me as soon as you can! Even if you don't plan to teach the unit until spring, do the pre-testing now. We've given you 25 tests; if you teach more students or multiple classes, please select a target class since we can only assess a maximum of 25 samples per teacher.

Connecting Kids and Communities through Birds

By Missy Wipf, PRBO Conservation Science

For the past 4 years, I've been delivering a program called Bird Education and Awareness in the Canal Community (BEAC). The program, funded by the Marin Community Foundation, consists of classroom visits and field trips that teach students about science as it relates to bird and habitat conservation in their community of San Raphael. Participants focus on the importance and connection to the ecology and natural resources of the community's local green space, Pickleweed Park. The program culminates with student-led tours of the park in both English and Spanish, giving students the opportunity to share their knowledge with their community.

Pickleweed Park is located along San Francisco Bay and is home to a variety of bird species. Located only one block from the local elementary school, it provides the perfect setting for the BEAC program and student-led tour. Approximately 200 students, parents, teachers, and community members have attended the event in the past. This year's event will be held on November 9th and will include 4th and 5th grade students from Bahia Vista Elementary and their teachers, including Emily Koller and Kristine Brand who are participating in the *Connecting Kids* curriculum field test. The tour this year also includes a 4th grade class from Ross Elementary in Marin County and their teacher Alison Quoyeser, another *Connecting Kids* classroom. We couldn't be more excited about this truly collaborative event!



Two Bahia Vista 5th graders lead a community tour.

Share Your Actions!

By Alberto López, Sciencenter

I'd like to recognize Peachtown Elementary School in Aurora, New York for their excellent work in Sharing Their Actions! This school's efforts have contributed to the conservation of birds, including:

1. Submitting data on eBird through a classroom account; some students have registered for home accounts too!
2. Participating in a lake front clean-up day; also planning a clean-up day for Earth Day.

See "*Share Actions*," continued on page 3.



Peachtown Elementary students share about their habitat and actions on the "Connecting Kids" wikis.

Learning Close Up

By Kim Check and Carrie Samis, Ward Museum

Fourth grade teacher Pat Davis knows the power of using birds to connect her students to local and global environmental issues. Davis, a teacher at Princess Anne Elementary on Maryland's Eastern Shore combines in-class and field experiences to bring science to life. A focus on birds establishes relevance for the students—connecting them with feathered friends that can be seen in their backyards, school yards, and nearby natural areas, like the Nassawango Creek Nature Preserve (which is The Nature Conservancy's largest holding in Maryland). By using curricula—such as the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's *Bridging the Americas* and Cornell Lab's *Connecting Kids Through the Birds they Share*—Davis is able to guide her students as they discover fascinating facts about the natural history of birds such as the Ovenbird, Northern Parula, and Louisiana Waterthrush.

Living on the Delmarva Peninsula, these students are situated between the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland's coastal bays, and the Atlantic Ocean. The Nature Preserve offers desirable nesting habitat for a tremendous diversity of species. Many species arrive during the late spring, mate, raise young, and migrate to more southern regions during the fall. Dick Roberts, a master bird bander, has been conducting research here for six years. Kim Check, Director of Education for Salisbury University's Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, assists with banding birds – but she doesn't stop there. She works with local teachers to provide unique, hands-on opportunities for students at the banding station. While in the field, students have the chance to hone their observation skills, learn how to use binoculars, check mist nets for birds, witness banding techniques, and assist with data collection for each bird caught.

Share Actions, *continued from page 2*

3. Attending the Cayuga County Soil and Conservation Field Days at Emerson Park in Auburn, NY in September, where they learned about bird migration and shared about the projects they were doing.
4. In October, taking a field trip to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to practice their bird observation skills and learn about the birds in Sapsucker Woods. They took a tour around the pond and observed Great Blue Heron, American Crow, Canada Geese and Mallards, among other species.

What are you doing to learn about and promote bird conservation? You can also be featured in our newsletter!

Share your actions: <http://shareyouractions.wikispaces.com>.



A student patiently looks for birds.



Few experiences are more exciting than an up-close look at a wild animal. This student will probably always remember the day he held a bird that had just been banded!

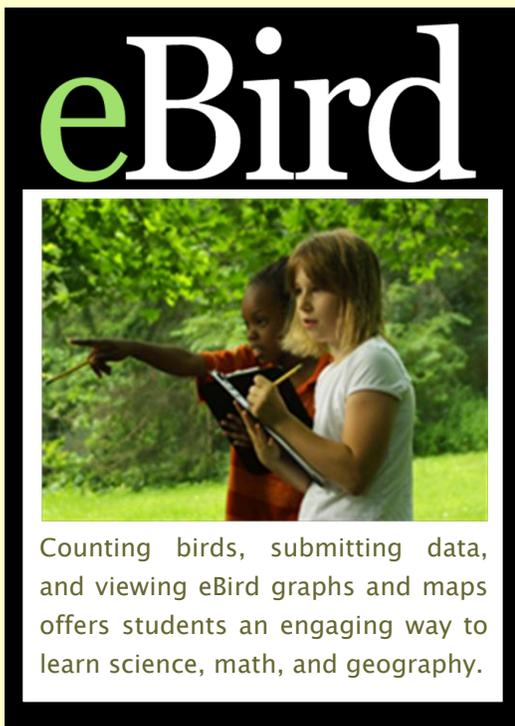
Teachers, your feedback makes us wise! Please take a moment to send in your pre-tests and lesson evaluations!



Tricks of the Trade: eBird in the Classroom!

By Alberto López, Sciencenter NY

Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird citizen science project was designed to be a real-time, online bird checklist program, and it has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. With a little bit of creativity, teachers can easily use eBird as an educational resource in their classrooms and homes. How can you do this? Easy! Here are two examples:



Counting birds, submitting data, and viewing eBird graphs and maps offers students an engaging way to learn science, math, and geography.

Math: eBird can be used for basic lessons like counting bird species seen in a class field trip, and for more advanced lessons like creating and analyzing graphs or learning about population trends and averages. Check the “view and explore” data tab on the eBird website and you’ll be able to see a variety of line graphs.

Geography: eBird can be used to observe how geography plays a key role in determining the distribution of different bird species. eBird recently went global! Consider asking student to research which states and countries one migratory bird species goes throughout the year, or asking studnets to research a bird native to the countries where their families are from. The eBird site offers maps of where bird species have been sited.

If you want to try a different approach to teach these and other subjects, we invite you to use eBird at www.eBird.org!

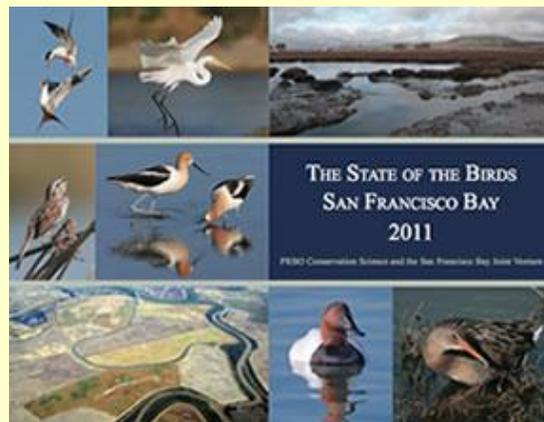
State of the Bay's Birds

Submitted by Missy Wipf, PRBO Conservation

The first-ever **State of the Birds Report for San Francisco Bay** was recently released by PRBO Conservation Science (PRBO) and the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBayJV). Based on decades of monitoring, 29 partners detail the actions needed to keep birds and their habitats thriving in the Bay area as sea levels rise and extreme storm events increase due to global climate change.

“The good news is that a majority of bird species are doing well after decades of investments in habitat restoration and other conservation measures around the Bay. The bad news is that increasing sea levels, extreme weathers events, non-native predators, contaminants, and invasive species pose serious threats to the gains we have made,” explained Melissa Pitkin, PRBO Outreach Director and editor of the report. “Birds are excellent indicators of environmental pollution and climate change. They are providing early warning of the health of the ecosystems on which we all depend,” Ms. Pitkin said.

This report complements the national State of the Birds reports, published annually since 2009 at <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>.



Download the full report, edited by M. Pitkin and J. Wood, at: www.prbo.org/sfbaystateofthebirds.

Kids, Earn Online Badges for Your School!

What are you doing at your schools and in your community to improve the environment for birds and other animals (including humans!)? If you do something you're proud of and share about it, you can earn **Online Conservation Badges** to recognize your efforts! In future newsletters, we will highlight schools that are making a difference, and rumor has it that one classroom will even win a cool prize from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology!

This table lists the badges and gives example actions that you and your classmates can consider. Take time to brainstorm with your classmates about how you'll participate, then post about your accomplishments on the "Share Your Actions" wiki. Do it for the honor... do it for the glory... do it for the birds!



Get out there and do something!

	<p style="text-align: center;">Citizen Scientists</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Submitting data to any citizen science project</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Food Habitat Helpers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Putting up bird feeders or planting a garden for birds</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Water Habitat Helpers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adding a bird bath, pond, or other water feature Cleaning up a creek or beach</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Shelter Habitat Helpers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Planting trees and bushes or putting up nest boxes Cleaning up the schoolyard or other areas</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Sustainability Stars</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Taking actions to reduce, reuse, recycle Lowering your carbon footprints</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Community Builders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Raising money for bird conservation Sharing what you know about birds and conservation with your community</p>

Kids at Buck Lake Elementary in Florida report seeing: Northern Cardinal, Carolina chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Hairy Woodpecker, crows, mockingbirds, Blue Jay, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-shouldered Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Black Vulture

Kids at Mead School in Connecticut report seeing: Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, House Sparrow, House Finch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-tailed Hawk, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Goldfinch, European Starlings, Turkey Vulture, Fish Crow, Mourning Dove, Canada Goose, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker

Figure it out! Learn about these students' schoolyard habitats on their wiki pages. How do these habitats differ from each other, and from your habitat? Are there any similarities between all the habitats? What bird species do both schools report? Do you also see these species?

Finally, can you identify these birds, which are all mentioned in the above species list?



Photo credits, all from flickr: fawltly128, Sergey Yeliseev, Ed Gaillard, and IthacaBarbie

Need implementation advice or looking for support? Your regional coordinator (Sharon, Ben, Missy, Lori, Alberto, Kim, or Peggy) is ready and willing to help!

Have questions about the project, want a mailed copy of this newsletter, or want to submit your pre-tests and lesson feedback? Please contact me!

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