



# Using Bird Field Guides

## Overview

Students will explore field guides by identifying local bird species and their characteristics.

## California Science Standards

Grade 6: 7.b.-I&E

Grade 7: 7.a.c.-I&E

## Oregon Science Standards

Grade 3: 2L.1

Grade 6: 2L.1

Grade 8: 1L.1

## National Standards

Content Standard A:  
Scientific Inquiry

## Materials Included

- \* Student Journal
- \* Bird focus cards
- \* *Birds of Oregon* field guides

## Activity Time

Preparation: 15 min.

Activity Time: 50 min.

## Best Season

All Seasons

## Vocabulary

- \* Field guide
- \* Range map

**Grade Level:** 3rd-12th (O.S.S.: 4th, 6th, 8th) (C.S.S.: 6th & 7th)

## Learner Objectives

Students will:

- Explore and interpret field guides
- Use field guides when searching for a focus bird
- Describe why a field guide is a critical tool in birding

## Background Information

Field guides are indispensable when it comes to identifying and studying birds in the field (outdoors). A field guide is a book that carefully describes and illustrates different species so they can be easily identified. Just like binoculars, ornithologists (scientists who study birds) or birders (people who watch birds for recreation) are never in the field without this critical tool. They are typically compact and light enough to put in a backpack and provide a wealth of information on birds.

Field guides tend to be created for a particular region and include information about the organisms found there. There are a variety of Oregon bird field guides available, and many are appropriate for adult or children. *Birds of Oregon*, a Lone Pine Series Field Guide, is good for beginner birders and beyond. For this reason, this resource is included in the Klamath Basin Birding Trail Lava Beds National Monument kit as birds of Southern Oregon are seen in Northern California. This field guide contains species account for 374 birds that have been officially recorded in Oregon with in-depth species descriptions, range maps, and illustrations. Information about Oregon bioregions, bird activities, top birding sites, birding tools, and bird behaviors is also included.

This activity will help teach students how to use the *Birds of Oregon* field guide. It can also be adapted to other styles of field guides.

# Lesson Plan

## Getting Ready!

1. Read background information and review *Birds of Oregon* Field Guide.
2. Make copies of *Student Journal: Using Bird Field Guides*.

## Discuss!

1. Ask students if they know (or can figure out by its name) what a bird field guide is and what it is used for. *A field guide is a critical tool biologists use to identify organisms when outdoors (in the field).*
2. Let students know they will become Bird ID experts by using an exciting and critical tool used in bird studies.
3. Assign one field guide per 1-3 students.
4. Have students spend about 2-3 minutes looking through guide.
5. Discuss the following questions as a class: How is the field guide organized? *The field guide groups birds by similar characteristics based on evolutionary order. For instance, waterfowl (duck, swans, geese) are grouped together.*
6. How would you locate more information about a bird you didn't recognize using the field guide? *The four useful ways include: looking at the first pages of the guide for families, the back cover of the book for families and color codes, index for species name, and flipping through.*

## Investigate!

1. Give each student a Student Journal.
2. Have students spend about 5-10 minutes looking through the field guide and answering questions in their journal sheet.
3. Give each student or groups of students a bird focus card (use study skins if accessible).
4. Have students spend about 10-15 minutes looking up their species in the bird field guide. Ask students to learn as much as they can on their focus bird so they can become the expert on their bird! Have them record information on the journal sheet. Encourage them to practice note taking skills instead of copying information from the field guide verbatim.
5. After the time has elapsed have students show their bird card and share some interesting facts they learned about their species.
6. Direct students to page 32 to look at the provided range map key.
7. Have students fill in information about their species' range map.

## Follow-up!

1. Ask students to share information they found about their bird.
2. Ask students 2-3 questions to recap the lesson (see right panel).

## Take a Hike!

Take students on a nature hike along a Lava Beds NM trail (see map & brochure in kit) or around the school yard and have them use field guides to identify birds. Ask students to share information about their focus bird during the hike!



## Suggested Questions

*What information can you gather from using a bird field guide?*

*What color on a range map indicates a summer resident?*

*What is one way to look up a bird in a field guide?*