One Bird
Two Habitats

A Middle School Environmental Education Curriculum on Neotropical Migratory Birds
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was originated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (PUBL-RS-908-93, Copyright 1994) and was authored by Susan Gilchrist, Kadi Row and David Borneman. Funding and support to make the project possible were provided by the University of Wisconsin – Center for Biology Education, National Association of the Partners of the Americas – Wisconsin-Nicaragua Partners and the United States Forest Service. The cover layout was produced by Jeanne Gomoll.

In addition, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) would like to thank the following individuals for the invaluable support, advice and assistance they provided in producing the Illinois version of One Bird—Two Habitats.

Deb Chapman, Chicago Botanic Gardens
Ken Nelson, Educator
Nan Buckardt, Ryerson Woods Nature Center
Cliff Knapp, Northern Illinois University
Lanis Petrik, Brookfield Zoo
Marylin Lisowski, Eastern Illinois University

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# One Bird – Two Habitats

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Introduction

The Theme

One Bird—Two Habitats was developed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a three- to six-week environmental education unit for middle school students, grades six through eight.

Recognizing differences in educational philosophies and environmental education requirements, use of the material as a unit in Illinois classrooms may not be practical. Recommendations for adapting the material to the Illinois situation are included.

The theme is Neotropical migratory bird conservation: a global environmental issue that illustrates the connections between people, birds and forests in different parts of the world. The major theme addressed in the unit is interconnectedness. People and wildlife share similar needs, and it is in trying to meet these needs that we are interconnected. Environmental issues are global and only through global connections among people can we address environmental concerns.

This unit presents one issue, the decline of some Neotropical migratory bird populations and emphasizes the connections between Illinois and Central and South America, to show how people, their actions and the environment are interconnected. A Neotropical migratory bird is one that moves seasonally between temperate regions of the Americas, where it spends its breeding time, and tropical areas, where it spends the winter months. A listing of Illinois Neotropical migrants and species fact sheets on 24 of these birds can be found in Appendices A and B.

The Issue

Researchers and casual bird watchers have observed population declines among some long distance migratory birds. Although grassland and wetland migratory birds are affected by changes in the environment, this unit focuses on Neotropical migratory forest birds. These are the forest-dwelling birds that breed in North America during summer months and migrate to the new world tropics, including Central America, to spend the winter. For various reasons, including increasing human populations, the once vast forests in the Americas—temperate and tropical—have been greatly reduced. The reduction and alteration of these northern nesting grounds and southern wintering grounds are major factors contributing to the decline of some migratory forest bird populations. Other factors have contributed to their decline as well. Predatory species such as raccoons (Procyon lotor), blue jays (Cyanocitta cristata) and house cats (Felis catus) disrupt the nesting of many birds. Pesticides and continuing pollution affect food sources used by birds.

Not all birds migrate. Of the birds that migrate, not all are Neotropical migrants. Some birds are short-distance migrants. Of the birds that migrate from northern North America to the tropics in Latin America, some live in forests, but many live in grasslands, wetlands or along the shore. Those requiring interior forest habitat are only a portion of the birds which inhabit forests. In addition, birds that live in forests during the nesting season may not require the same habitat when they are in the tropics and vice-versa.

Birds and people both depend on forest resources. In order to conserve forest bird populations, land use decisions regarding forests must take into account the impacts of those uses on people, birds and the forest itself. Because migratory birds spend time in North, South and Central America, they are a shared international resource. Their population declines illustrate the global effects of human actions.

The Project

To ensure as much accuracy as possible, the activities and background information have been based on research. The materials were reviewed by experts in ornithology, forestry, Latin America and education. Then, 23 Wisconsin teachers field-tested the curriculum in their classes. Data collected during this pilot indicated the success of the unit: students showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge and understanding related to the unit; and teachers and students both exhibited positive attitudes about the materials. With a research base, activities that teach about research methods, and a rigorous evaluation of its effectiveness, One Bird—Two Habitats bridges the gap between research and education.

The Project in Illinois

Because of the curriculum’s documented success in Wisconsin, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) sought and was granted permission to revise the materials for use in Illinois. Funding for the revision and distribution of the materials was provided by the IDNR and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) through a Scientific Literacy grant. Two additional activities have been added to the Illinois version, “Interview a Bird” and “Interpreting Data.”
Connections to Central and South America
The National Association of the Partners of the Americas (NAPA) initiated the One Bird—Two Habitats project to further NAPA’s goals in creating connections between North America and Central America. The Wisconsin Project utilized the Partners of the Americas Program to partner with their sister state, Nicaragua.

NAPA has designated Sao Paulo, Brazil, as the Illinois partner. Many of the Illinois Neotropical migrants do not travel as far south as Sao Paulo. Most Brazilian people speak Portuguese, a language not commonly spoken in Illinois schools, according to a survey conducted by the ISBE listing the top 17 non-English languages spoken in Illinois public schools. For these reasons, less of an emphasis is placed in this document on promoting any one “sister state/country” for participating classrooms to work with.

As an educator, you do have the opportunity to utilize local resources and select an alternative sister country. Working with the students and community, you may establish an alternative partnership. Partnerships with a Latin American (including Central and South America) country may already exist through the Foreign Language Department in your school or district, or there may have been foreign exchange students attending school in your area who would be willing to help facilitate a partnership. Other sources of contacts may include members of your community, former Peace Corps representatives or service organizations. Using technology to contact schools in other countries makes the process easier.

Allowing students to select the partner country will give them an opportunity to research the country and interview people in their school or community, thereby enhancing social science learning skills.

Because the original material was devised for the Wisconsin-Nicaragua partnership, many of the activities provide examples of Spanish-based literature from Nicaragua. These samples remain in the Illinois version as the concepts and translations meet the concepts and objectives of the activities.

Scientific Names
The scientific name for the Neotropical migratory birds featured in the text can be found in Appendix A. The scientific name for all other species is shown in the text immediately following the organism’s common name.
One Bird—Two Habitats is a series of interconnected activities, built on a conceptual framework. Activities cover such topics as bird appreciation, habitat, migration, forest management, research and human impact. Some activities build upon knowledge and understanding gained through previous activities. The unit introduces the issue of declining Neotropical migratory bird populations and ends with an activity that encourages students to share information about the issue beyond the classroom. Because the issues related to land use decisions, forest management and Neotropical migratory bird population declines are very complex, it is important that the activities are interrelated through discussion.

Many of the activities require more than one class period to complete. Some require set-up time over several days prior to conducting the lesson. Two sample activity schedules are included to facilitate planning to provide a balance of fun and serious, simulation and discussion, short and long and introductory and evaluatory kinds of activities. One schedule proposes use of all activities while the other is an abbreviated schedule touching on the major topic areas. The order of some activities may be switched. Please review the schedules and note the activities which require prior planning.

Some of these activities require active participation and are interdisciplinary. It is important that a discussion follow each activity to emphasize connections between the activity and the issue and to ensure that learning occurs. To support such discussions, teacher background information accompanies each lesson. Additional background information can be found in the appendices.

This material lends itself very well to interdisciplinary team teaching. There are activities suited to social science and science, as well as foreign languages, physical development and health, mathematics and English language arts (see Appendix H). In team teaching communication is critical to ensure that all the concepts and key points are covered and that the activities are interconnected.

Just as interconnectedness is a major theme in the content of this material, so it has been incorporated in the teaching methods through the use of cooperative learning strategies in some of the activities. Cooperative learning creates interdependence among students in order to reach a learning goal. Each student must be responsible for the understanding of the whole group.

Methods of evaluating student learning are incorporated in each activity. The activities "Town Meeting" and "Tell the World" are designed to serve as indicators of student understanding of the issues. Appendix I offers suggestions for action projects.

The goals of this material are to increase awareness of the need for conservation of Neotropical migratory forest birds and their habitats and to increase understanding of the global aspects of environmental issues. We hope that increased awareness and understanding will lead to conservation action.

SAMPLE #1 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduce cooperative groups—Interview a Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cultural Exchange (begin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cultural Exchange (complete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Avian Olympics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>If There Were No Birds... (begin and assign homework)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migrateering (begin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining a Forest (hang first trees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Migrateering (complete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining a Forest (hang more trees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Balancing Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining a Forest (hang more trees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Defining a Forest (hang more trees and discuss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Habitat Squeeze (begin the squeeze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Habitat Squeeze (continue the squeeze)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Habitat Squeeze (discuss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If There Were No Birds... (discuss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A Round Trip Ticket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Migration Migraines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Designing Researchers (begin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Designing Researchers (complete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpreting Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Buddy Banding (introduce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Buddy Banding (discuss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Meeting (introduce and assign roles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Intelligent Tinkering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Territory Tango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cowbird Capers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Town Meeting (begin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Town Meeting (continue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Town Meeting (complete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Tell the World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAMPLE #2 SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Day  Activities
H1  Introductory homework reading assignment: articles in
     Appendices C and D
1   If There Were No Birds
H2  Balancing Act (make mobile)
2   Balancing Act (discuss)
H3  Read species fact sheets
3   Habitat Squeeze
4   Town Meeting (start)
5   Town Meeting (finish)
H6  Research Latin American country
6   Cultural Exchange (start)
7   Cultural Exchange (finish)

H = homework assignment

LIST OF MATERIALS NEEDED BY ACTIVITY

Activity  Materials
Interview a Bird  fact sheets
Cultural Exchange  mailing materials; international money
                  order; funds to cover cost of reply from
                  partner country
Avian Olympics  triple-beam balance; clock with second
                  hand; world map with scale in miles
Migrateering  five compasses; ribbon; index cards; map
                  of the stars
The Balancing Act  string or fishing line; sticks; objects
                  gathered by students
Defining a Forest  paper cut-outs of trees
Habitat Squeeze  rope; off-limits sign
A Round Trip Ticket  copies of map enclosed with activity;
                     colored pencils
Migration Migraines  construction paper; buttons or bottle
                    caps; copies of data sheet enclosed with
                    activity
Buddy Banding  construction paper; masking tape;
               banding permits
Intelligent Tinkering  old machines; tools
Territory Tango  craft dough; jar lids; jars; waxed paper;
                 table knife
Cowbird Capers  blindfold; paper cups; plastic bowl;
                 string; popcorn
Town Meeting  copies of research article summaries in
               appendix; copies of role-playing cards
               enclosed with activity
Tell the World  whatever students require to carry out
               their projects

No materials needed for activities not listed.
The Illinois Department of Natural Resources' (IDNR) Division of Education developed this unit on Illinois Birds for use in Illinois classrooms. Additional supplemental resources to help you teach about birds in Illinois are also available from the IDNR.

**Illinois Birds Resources Trunk**
Posters, field guides, lessons, replica skulls, replica eggs, rubber feet replicas, books and bird songs and calls on DVD are just some of the items contained in this “trunk.” The trunk is a large plastic container filled with hands-on resources that will help make bird lessons more meaningful for students. *Illinois Birds Resources Trunks* are available for loan from locations throughout Illinois. Visit http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/birdtrunk.aspx to access the list of lending sites and the trunk content list.

**Publications**
Posters, activity books, books and other items can be ordered or downloaded through the IDNR Publications page at http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/Publications.

**Illinois’ Natural Resources Trading Cards**
The cards provide images and information to be used in a variety of ways in the classroom. Each card contains an image, habitat association, common name and scientific name (where applicable) on the front side with additional relevant information on the back side. Teachers in Illinois schools may request one pack of each of the available sets of cards. Send your request on school letterhead to the address shown on the next page.
Videos
Videos from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources about Illinois birds can be accessed through the Podcast page at http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/podcasts.aspx or through YouTube.

Field Trip Tips Web Page
Let the IDNR help you plan your field trip with this interactive site. Field trip destinations are correlated with topics that can be studied, lesson plans and supplemental resources. Go to http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education/Pages/fieldtrip.aspx to access the Web page.

Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant
Take your students to visit Illinois’ natural or cultural heritage with an Illinois Biodiversity Field Trip Grant. Visit http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/education for details and an application form.