



**Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation
Environmental Education Field Study**

**Observing Birds
Elementary and Middle School Level**

Description: Observing Birds

Learn the important roles of birds in the environment and how to identify common birds of the desert southwest. Students use binoculars to complete bird diagrams to exercise their observational skills.

Linked to Arizona Academic Standards: Science S4: C1: G1PO2, G1PO3; G2PO1; G4PO2; C2: G1PO2; C3: KPO1; C4: G3PO1, G8PO5, G8PO6.

Duration: 2 hours

Objectives:

- Students learn the proper use of spotting scopes and binoculars. Scopes and binoculars are provided.
- Students develop basic birding skills and learn birding ethics
- Students improve observation skills by observing and comparing birds (body shapes, location, flight patterns, calls and songs), and by completing a detailed diagram of several duck species at Agua Caliente Park or desert birds at Feliz Paseos
- Students learn the ecological roles of various birds
- Students become aware of local bird and Sonoran Desert conservation issues

Conceptual Framework:

- Opportunities to experience nature such as birding field trips can contribute to human physical, mental and emotional health.
- Natural resources sustain human life and economic prosperity. Birding is big business in southern Arizona.
- Effective conservation practices depend on clearly defined management objectives, and understanding of natural processes and the application of knowledge from many disciplines.

Vocabulary:

Bill	Diving Duck	Lens
Bird Calls	Eye Placement	Raptor
Bird Songs	Field Marks	Silhouette
Dabbler	Flight Patterns	
Diopter	Focus	

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Materials and supplies:

- Binoculars (one per student)
- Spotting scopes
- Bird Basics and Duck Diagram worksheets
- Clipboards and pencils, color pencils
- Bird Guides
- Bird call and sound recordings (Identiflyers)

Description of Activities:

- Give students an overview of the objectives of the class including the proper use of spotting scopes and binoculars, developing good observation skills, and learning good birding skills and birding ethics.
- Give each student binoculars and go over the proper use. Cover wearing the neck strap at all times, proper positioning of eye cups, focusing and adjusting the diopter, and how to find sighted birds through the binoculars.
- Allow student time to look at birds and listen to their sounds. Explain the difference between calls and songs
- Identify different bird sounds (Gila woodpecker, Mourning dove, Cactus Wren, American Widgeon, other available birds depending on season)
- Identify ducks at Agua Caliente Park
- Take students on a bird walk, and allow them to practice birding skills and good birding ethics.
- Use the Birding Basics worksheet to introduce bird identification skills.
- Use bird guides to identify some common birds at Agua Caliente Park.
- Complete the Duck Diagram worksheet using color pencils.
- Conclude with discussion of bird conservation issues in the Sonoran Desert. Include overview of Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan

Late Arrivals: Reduce the time spent on the introduction, time spent listening to birds sounds, and the time spent on the bird walk. Time may not allow students to complete both sides of the Duck Diagram if the program is at Agua Caliente Park.