

Acting Avian

Play this fun matching game with family and friends (even through video chat)! Try to guess the different bird behaviors by acting them all out! As an addition, use our Backyard Birding guide to brush up on your identification skills!



Directions

While we know birds fly, they perform many other behaviors to obtain their basic needs, evade predators, and survive. Note that many of these behaviors have to do with foraging! Pick out a definition from the Behavior Guide - but keep it a secret! Using the information you have, act out your bird behavior. Feel free to make noises that a bird would make, but no talking!

Key Terms

Basic needs - Food, water, space, and shelter are the four vital needs having to do with physical survival

Foraging - The act in which a person or animal searches and obtains food

Behavior Guide

Alarm Call:

Oh no! A predator is in sight and you have to warn your flock. Alarm calls are vocal expressions that birds will use to express fear or to signal danger. These calls are different from normal chirps because they are often quick, quiet, and are not meant to be heard from afar.

Dabbling (Foraging):

Dip dip dip! Dabbling is a behavior used to look for food. Many ducks or geese, for example, will use their beaks to eat off of the top of water or in some instances to dip down into very shallow water.

Flying:

Easy breezy! Extend your wings and catch wind so you can soar - or flap your wings as fast as you can to get from point A to point B. From birds of prey to songbirds, wings are the way to go when it comes to movement.

Gleaning (Foraging):

I spy... dinner! Gleaning is used to catch invertebrate prey (think - worms!). Birds like thrushes or chickadees will glean from leaves, crevices, trees, or other bases.

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Hawking (Foraging):

Talk about multi-tasking! When hawking, a bird will capture its prey (often insects) and consume it while flying. Warblers, swifts, and swallows are just a few of the birds that use this method to obtain food.

Hiding:

Take shelter! Birds may hide due to weather or to evade a predator. They can use camouflage (to conceal or disguise), or other natural coverings like bushes or tall grasses, to help them survive.

Scanning (Foraging):

You're perched on a branch and watching and waiting... for the perfect time to strike! Raptors, like owls, will scan an area and keep their eyes wide open for prey to ambush. They also may hover over a specific area before diving in and attacking.

Scratching (Foraging):

No itching here! Birds like sparrows will use their feet to move dirt, debris, or brush to reveal food. This is used to uncover insects, worms, seeds, or grubs that are on the ground.

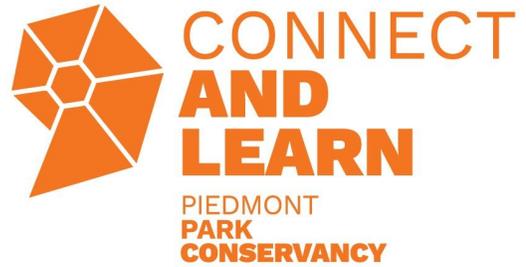
Singing:

Chirp! Simple, basic bird songs are used to communicate (like marking territory) or to attract a mate. Contact calls are commonly used to help flocks check in. A majority of songs we hear are male birds trying to signal a female bird.

Preening:

You've got to tend to your feathers! Preening is done in order to keep feathers in tip-top shape. Some birds might bathe in water (like a birdbath in a garden!), but others might flutter in the dirt because it can absorb oils and remove debris. It's even common for birds to use their bills to keep up their feathers and remove particles.

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Guiding Questions

1. Which of these behaviors have you seen in real life? What did the bird look like? Where did it live?
2. Think about each of the behaviors and list why it is necessary for the bird's survival. What are some behaviors that humans do for our own safety/survival?
3. Do all birds act the same? Why or why not?

Additional Activities

1. Art: What is the most interesting thing that you have ever seen a bird do? Draw a picture of this moment - be creative!
2. Math: Take 10 minutes to sit outside and observe birds on 5 different days. Make a chart of your data and track which behaviors are most common.
3. Writing: If you were a bird, what would you do in a day? Write a short story and get descriptive. If you're stuck on where to start, try to explain how you got your basic needs or what your view looks like from above!