

Tom Bennett Art and Environmental Science Contest 2009  
San Bernardino County Museum Association  
**Birds of a Feather**

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**Student Page Requirements by Grade Level Category**

Follow the instructions for your grade level to be sure students include each required element on their pages.

Each student creates two pages for the scrapbook. On each two-page spread, the student's written work goes on the left, and their illustration goes on the right. This way, the text and picture on each spread go together. Have students label their written page with their name, and, if a multi-grade, home school or special education class, their grade level, on the bottom of their page. Written work may be done on lined paper or type-written and adhered to the left-side page.

**Some cautions for ALL grades:** Be sure you understand what students are researching and writing about. Many popular non-fiction books – especially those aimed to children – are very general, and do not give specific species for the ecosystems and habitats of inland southern California. For this reason, online sources are the best for locating bird species of your region, especially those of local and state agencies and wildlife organizations such as Audubon Society or California Fish and Game Department. Many birds live in multiple habitats, so be sure you can identify the specific range of the species your students are illustrating and writing about.

**Notes for Home Schools:**

Home schoolers may participate in their family group or as part of a multi-family home school association. Either way, you'll likely have students in multiple grade levels. Have each individual student follow the guidelines for their particular grade. A contest referee will decide which grade level group that entry will compete in, based on the average grade represented (each student's grade added, and the total divided by the number of students). Each student's work will be graded according to the grade level indicated on their page.

**Notes for Special Education Classes:**

Contest judges are aware that many special education classes are multi-grade, and that many special education students function at lower grade levels than their chronological grade. In this case, have each student follow the guidelines according to their *functional grade level*. Have each student write their functional grade level (determined by the teacher) with their name at the bottom of their written pages. A contest referee will decide which grade level group that entry will compete in, based on the average of the grade levels

included (each student's grade added, and the total divided by the number of students). Each student's work will be graded according the grade level indicated on their page.

## **Kindergarten**

### **Illustration:**

Each student will illustrate a different bird. Help the students select a bird to work with that lives in any habitat within your ecosystem. Give them basic information, which can be gained from a field guide, nature encyclopedia, or online. (Be sure your research is accurate, as each habitat is home to some closely related birds.) Show students the basic drawing technique of identifying common shapes in their subject, and then building from there. This technique works even when you use other art media. Student artworks should show some detail of their bird – color, stance or typical position, etc.

### **Writing Element:**

Students will write two simple, descriptive sentences about their bird, telling about a physical characteristic or behavior. For example, they might write, "House sparrows eat seeds. They live in gardens." Or "Mockingbirds are noisy. They eat insects and nuts." Given the early time of the school year, you will need to help students with their sentences by writing models they can copy. Just be sure that students select the information they want to include, and perhaps dictate the words they will ultimately copy. Each student's written work must be different from that of other students.

### **Level Hints and Suggestions:**

Use the Birds of Inland Southern California Habitats page in this program guide to help students find appropriate bird species. (NOTE: many print encyclopedia are insufficient for this task, as they are too general to include specific species of southern California deserts, mountains, chaparral and urban habitats.) Encourage each student to write different characteristics about their bird, so the scrapbook gives the idea that bird species have very different behaviors and morphologies. Some suggestions include: what they eat, color of plumage, where they build their nests (on the ground or in a bush), how many chicks they have, how they find their food, anything about specific behaviors (they keep in small flocks or they are solitary or they are common and noisy), etc.

## **Grades 1-2**

### **Writing Element:**

Have the students research (or read information provided by the teacher) about their chosen species. Discuss as a class the various characteristics and behaviors of some of the chosen bird species, noting physical characteristics such as color, size, shape, stance, etc. Also note behaviors, including what they

eat, where they nest, how they raise their young, and how they interact with other animals around them.

Students will write two pairs of sentences comparing their bird species with humans. One pair of sentences will discuss a physical (morphological) characteristic, and the other pair a behavior. For example, “Humans wear clothing. Mockingbirds are covered with brown and white feathers.” And, “Red-tailed hawks build nests in trees. Humans build houses to live in.” Encourage students to make the information as specific as possible. When writing the bird’s name, be sure students use the complete common name (i.e. “red-tailed hawk” not just “hawk”).

### **Illustration:**

Next, have students create an artwork of their bird, positioning it in a way that illustrates both the physical characteristic and the behavior they wrote about. For example, they might draw a color-correct house finch building or roosting in its nest. (Be careful – in some species, males and females look different, and only one or both may build the nest. Be sure the student work accurately reflects this aspect of bird diversity.) These details are easily found in field guides that include species in western North America.

### **Level Hints and Suggestions:**

The 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> grade scrapbook will demonstrate the vast diversity among bird species, even in the same ecosystem, and compare bird life to humans. Use the Birds of Inland Southern California Habitats page in this program guide to help students find appropriate bird species. (NOTE: many print encyclopedia are insufficient for this task, as they are too general to include specific species of southern California deserts, mountains, chaparral and urban habitats.) Students choose a bird from a list provided by the teacher, each having a different bird species to work with. Students can use the Bird and Habitat Resources pages in this program guide to find the life histories of their chosen bird. (Be sure that the species you select are accurate for the ecosystem, as many similar birds live in different habitats.)

## **Grades 3-4**

Students will create a simple field guide of the birds of their home ecosystem. Field guides help us identify birds. They typically describe the bird’s physical features, as well as the kind of habitat they live in, whether or not they migrate, what they eat, and some behaviors such as how they build their nests or how much they interact with other birds. Look at various field guides, easily obtained from public libraries and some school libraries, to get a feel for what they contain. Students should try to find their species in a field guide; be sure to locate field guides that cover **western North America or California** (many encyclopedic books, textbooks and popular trade books address eastern species and not western species; be careful). Each student will write about and illustrate a different bird species for the field guide.

Each student will choose and research one bird species selected from their home ecosystem. Use the Birds of Inland Southern California Habitats page in this program guide to help students find appropriate bird species. (NOTE: many print encyclopedia are insufficient for this task, as they are too general to include specific species of southern California deserts, mountains, chaparral and urban habitats.) You can title your class scrap book “Birds of *whatever your ecosystem is*.”

**Illustration:**

In their illustrations, students will place the bird in a realistic situation, such as positioning a song sparrow on a tree branch, and illustrating a mountain quail or towhee on the ground. The important aspect of a field guide is identification of the bird species. Therefore, the illustrations should indicate the specific niche of the species, as well as accurate shape, proportions, colors and patterns of the bird and its plumage (feathers).

**Writing Element:**

For the written portion of each species page, students will write a well-crafted paragraph, using standards-appropriate skills for their grade, to describe their species. The paragraph should include both morphological description and behavioral characteristics in at least four complete sentences. Students will also include both the common name and the two-part scientific name of their bird species as the title of their written work (just like in a field guide). For example, Red-tailed Hawk’s binomial name is *Buteo jamaicensis*. The format given here is the standard convention for writing scientific names. English names should be written with capital letters, as in Black-chinned Hummingbird and Verdin.

**Level Hints and Suggestions:**

Be sure that your students select a bird that really does live in your ecosystem; many similar birds live in different regions. The field of taxonomy is constantly changing as new information about species is learned. The names of birds do change, though infrequently. Therefore, it is important to use resources that are less than 8-10 years old, as they will reflect the newest names. (Look up a history of the Bullock’s oriole for an example of this phenomenon.)

**Grades 5-6**

Bird-watching is one of the biggest recreational activities in America, generating over \$150 billion a year in activity-related sales by 30 million enthusiasts. When bird-watchers travel to a new destination, they often purchase or do research in field guides and other travel material to discover where they will find the best birds. Fifth and sixth grade students will create a travel guide for visiting bird-watchers.

Each student will select, illustrate and write about one bird species that lives in their home ecosystem. Bird-watchers like to find the less common birds and those that are endemic to the places they visit. Encourage students to select

birds that are not widespread in other ecosystems for their place-specific travel guide, as much as possible.

**Illustration:**

The bird species' morphology (physical appearance) will be presented in the students' illustrations. Since this traveler's guide functions as a field guide, careful accuracy of the bird's appearance is important. Because the written accounts give information about the bird's habitat, students can restrict their illustrations to just the bird, and not include any habitat placement detail.

**Writing Element:**

For their written work, students will write three paragraphs. The first will be a description of their selected species' specific habitat and where it is located within the larger ecosystem. (For example, a California towhee is found in brushy areas and suburban yards, scratching for insects in leaf litter on the ground.) The second paragraph will be a description of the species' interesting behaviors, including the time of day they can be observed and interactions with other individuals and species. The third paragraph will tell visiting bird-watchers specific details on where to find the bird. For example, they might write that wrentits are common chaparral birds, and can be seen from the fire road that leads west from the Forest Service Station on Hwy 330 above Highland. A map may be selected as a good way to convey this information to readers, and should be included *in addition to* the third paragraph.

Finally, students will include citations for their resources, using commonly accepted conventions. Ideally, students will use at least one print and one electronic resource, meeting current education content standards.

**Level Hints and Suggestions:**

Since students are creating a travel guide for their own area, they should be able to identify the specific locations required in this category. Students should include both the common name and the two-part scientific name of their bird species as the title of their written work (just like in a field guide). For example, Red-tailed Hawk's binomial name is *Buteo jamaicensis*. The format given here is the standard convention for writing scientific names. English names should be written with capital letters, as in Black-chinned Hummingbird and Verdin.