

GRADE 1 SPRING NATURE WALK
Birds and Animals in Spring



OBJECTIVES:

- Observe seasonal changes in schoolyard since winter.
- Discover how seasonal changes affect animals.
- Learn about robins and other birds.
- Discover food sources and compare with other seasons.
- Explore the open areas, edge areas, and woods for evidence of animals.

PREPARATION:

- Schedule the early spring walk for April and the late spring walk for mid- to late May, early in the morning.
- Walk should last about 60 minutes.
- Classroom organizers: Remind teachers to notify the school nurse one week ahead of the walk so the nurse can check for allergies in the classroom.
- Gather materials before walk. Check to see that there are enough “Robin Eyes” so each child in your group has one.
- Clear the growing underbrush away from the tree swallow boxes annually.
- Empty the tree swallow boxes immediately after April vacation. Place the found nest near the box so that the students may see its contents.

MATERIALS:

- Tongue depressors labeled: *food, water, warmth, shelter, air.*
- “Robin Eyes” and yarn “worms.”
- Clipboard and pencil, Spring Observation Report, Nature Walk Evaluation.
- Common Bird and Bird Silhouettes ID sheets.
- Bug boxes and hand lenses – approximately one for every 2 children.

ACTIVITIES:

- Observe birds and look for bird nests.
- Watch robins hunting worms; use “Robin Eyes;” discover worm castings.
- Discuss baby birds.
- Explore changes since winter in the open areas, edge areas, and woods.
- Explore animals, animal signs, water and food sources, and shelter.
- Walk leader records student observations on Spring Walk Observation Report during walk and submits to Teacher

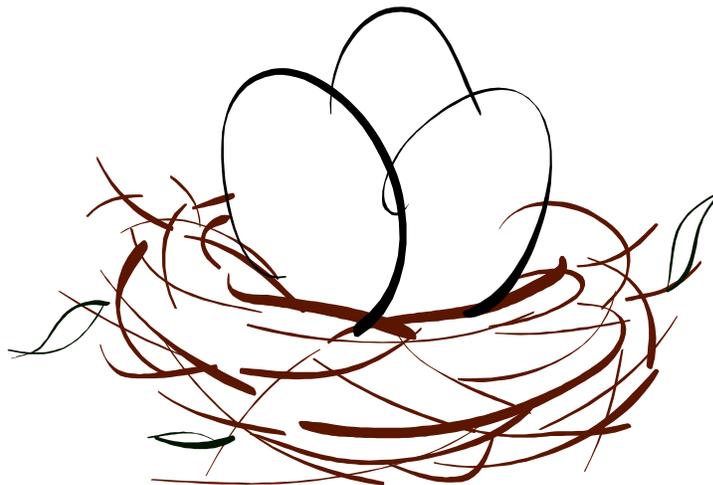
AFTER THE WALK:

- Leave Spring Observation Report with the teacher.
- Fill out Nature Walk Evaluation and leave in BBY room.
- Return all materials to the BBY area.

EARLY VS. LATE SPRING WALKS:

This walk can either be done in its entirety or broken into 2 segments. ++ Signifies topics which can be reserved for a stand alone second late spring walk.

- The early Spring walk concentrates on the change of seasons and the required elements for life and how this relates to the emergence of robins.
- The ++ late spring walk concentrates on the evolving bird life of Harrington, the food chain, and baby birds.



PRE-WALK ACTIVITIES: TO BE LED BY THE TEACHER

1. **Curriculum Connection: Science—Organisms.**

Ask: *What season is it now? Are you happy to see spring and warmer weather? Why or why not? What changes does spring bring for the animals in our schoolyard? Review the four ways animals survive winter. Ask: What do you think is happening to animals in each group?*

- **Hibernate:** They have woken up with the warm weather and are HUNGRY.
- **Stay active:** They don't have to work so hard to find food and shelter, and to get different kinds of food in their diet.
- **Die and leave eggs or larvae:** The eggs are hatching into new larvae and the larvae are emerging from their cocoons or pupas as adults, all looking for food. Many of these will be food themselves for other animals.
- **Migrate south:** They are coming back now that plants are growing and insects and other mini-creatures are available for dinner.

Ask: *How do you think the schoolyard, woods, and wet meadow will have changed? Will there be birds or other animals there you didn't see in the winter? What animals? Why? Do changes in weather affect animals and plants? How?*

2. **Curriculum Connection: Science--Organisms.**

Review what all animals need to live and grow. A habitat is a place where organisms find all these things.

Ask: *Is spring a better time to find things that animals need to live and grow than winter? Think about today's weather. How has the weather changed since winter and early spring? (More sunlight, warmer air, rain instead of snow.)*

How have habitats for birds and other animals in the schoolyard, woods, and wet meadow changed in springtime? Are there more food sources? Is there better shelter both for protection from storms and from predators? (Trees have leaves, many wildflowers are growing.)

- **Water:** The snow and ice have melted, there is more liquid water to drink.
- **Warmth:** Longer hours of sunlight means warmer temperatures in the soil and air
- **Air:** The air is warmer.
- **Food:** More food sources as plants begin to grow, and insects and worms become active.
- **Shelter:** Shelter will be better when more leaves grow.

NATURE WALK: TO BE LED BY BIG BACKYARD VOLUNTEER

60 minutes

1. Observe changes since winter.

- Walk outside and look around. *Ask the children: *How has the weather and the schoolyard changed since winter? Is it easier for birds and other animals to “make a living”? Why?* Possible answers include:
 - Air: warmer—easier for animals to stay warm. *Can you see your breath?*
 - Water: rain instead of snow; there is water to drink.
 - Wildflowers (including grass): many are growing.
 - Trees and plants: Growing leaves. *Can you spy any bird or squirrel nests?*
 - Sun: higher in sky, more hours of sunlight. *Is anyone wearing sunscreen?*
 - Ground: warmer, maybe muddy. *Is it easier to run without the snow?*
 - Food: more food sources as plants begin to grow and insects and worms become active.
 - Shelter/protection: Better shelter, especially when the plants leaf-out.



2. Look and listen for birds. Write observations on worksheet.

- Walk around the Administration Building and look for birds. Look for robins, red-winged blackbirds, chickadees, sparrows, blue jays, crows, tree swallows, and hawks overhead. *Ask: *Some of these birds spent the winter in the south where it is warm. Why have they returned now?* Warmer days bring better shelter and protection, more food sources (including insects, seeds, fruits, and nectar in flowers).
- Listen for birds. *Ask: *Why are they singing? Do you hear these songs in winter? Can you tell the different calls?* Some songs are to help them find a mate so they can have baby birds. Some calls warn of danger or to shoo away another bird from their territory. Birds are like people – they come in all shapes and sizes speak different languages. But, they are still all birds.
- *Ask: *Would you like to be a bird? What do you suppose Harrington looks like from up in the sky? Can birds do things we can't do?* Examples include build a nest with their beak, see behind them, sing those beautiful songs, fly.

3. Observe robins.

- Observe robins hopping around in the open areas, looking for worms. (If there aren't any robins, encourage children to talk about their observations of robins.) *Ask: *What are they doing? Why do they tip their heads to the side? What are they looking for? Where are their eyes? Where are people's eyes?* Robins are often seen looking for

food, usually worms and insects. Robin eyes are on the side of the head where human eyes are in the front. A robin tips its head so that it can see better.

- Use the tongue depressors to remind the children what robins need to survive. (Warmth, food, water, shelter, air)
- Look for worm castings/worm poop (little piles of dirt in the grass). The March full moon is known as the Worm Moon.

4. Pretending to be a robin with the “Robin Eyes.”

- Pretend that we are robins. Show the children how to put on the “Robin Eyes.” Let children just have fun looking around with them for a few minutes. *Ask: *Is it easier or harder to see with the “Robin Eyes?”*
- Discuss the advantages of having eyes on the side of your head like a robin. They serve as an early warning for detecting danger. Being able to see behind and above is better than how people see with eyes in the front of their heads. *Ask: *What other animals have eyes on the side of their heads?* Rabbits and deer among others.
- Scatter the yarn worms on the ground. Let children pick up worms with their hands.
- *Ask: *Do birds have hands?* A bird’s wings are positioned such as if you pointed your elbow to the sky with your bent arm hugging your side.
- Instead of hands, birds use their beaks. Beaks are located right between its eyes, about where your nose is on your face. Have children hunt for their dinner using their fingers like a beak in front of their nose. *Ask: *Do you notice whether you need to tip your head to see the yarn worms? Is it easy or hard? How many tries does it take to catch a worm?* The many holes in the ground are made from robin beaks – not soccer cleats!
- Collect the “Robin Eyes” and yarn worms.

5. Shelter and Protection: Looking for bird nests.

- Robins, red-winged blackbirds, and crows build nests in early spring before they have their spring babies. These birds eat the plants and few animals available at this time. Bats and tree swallows arrive in late spring. They dine on mosquitoes and prefer warmer weather.
- All birds build their nests from materials in their environment. Some even use trash!
 - ~ Robins use grasses and mud, with softer grasses in the center.
 - ~ Crows use grasses and twigs and often build their nests in evergreens (a form of protection so as not to be spied in the winter).
 - ~ Some birds use milkweed fluff or other soft plant material.
 - ~ Birds usually build a new nest each spring, abandoning last year’s.
 - ~ Some birds build nests in low shrubs close to the ground, but only after the

leaves have come out.

- ~ Killdeer prefer open spaces with little or no vegetation, such as a beach or on rocks, which is why they can be found on the gravel roof of the old Kindergarten wing. Their eggs are colored brown and mottled, just like the stones, which give them camouflage for protection.
- ~ Wild rose and other thorn bushes lend protection with the plant's thorns.
- ~ Notice the small sparrows who build their home in the high in the vents located on the cafeteria side of the playground.

- Tree Swallow Boxes

Harrington has 2 tree swallow boxes. With the adult removing the top, have each student peer into the box in order to see last year's nest. No one should touch the contents of the box.

In the late spring, the students can revisit the box and observe the what remains of the now weather-exposed contents, located on the ground to the box side.

**Ask: What is the nest made of? It has a twig base with baby bird down feathers on top. Occasionally, bits of trash can be found. Are tree swallows large or small birds? Why do you think this bird prefers an enclosed box off the ground versus an open nest in a tree?*

Tree swallows eat mosquitoes and other flying insects. These are not living at Harrington in April when the robins are so plentiful. Instead, once their food source returns with the warmer weather, the tree swallows will then migrate back from the south.

Tree swallows puzzle scientists by always placing a white feather in their nest. Perhaps one of you will be the scientist that solves that mystery!

++In late spring, observe the mother bird flying in and out of their nest, feeding their baby birds. Be careful not to get too close so as not to scare the birds.

- Building a quick bird's nest

**Ask: What building materials can we find to make a bird's nest? Gather some tall grass or mowed grass clippings in your hand and form a nest with them.*

**Ask: Would this be easy to do using only a beak? Imagine how long it would take for a bird to build an entire nest.*

- ++The Harrington Maze as a Virtual Bird's Nest

Walk to the Harrington maze, located on the playground's blacktop area. Have the students stand in its center. The parent guide should stand outside of the maze.

Tell the students to pretend that they are a baby bird in a bird's nest. Imagine having many brothers and sisters and living in one room. That one room is your

bedroom, dining room, and bathroom. It would be most crowded with no privacy!

6. ++Baby birds

Some interesting baby bird facts:

- ~ Birds feed their babies with worms and insects more than 100 times a day! Can you imagine eating 100 peanut butter sandwiches in one day!
- ~ Baby birds often jump out of the nest just before they learn to fly. The best thing to do if you find a baby bird is to leave it where it is. The bird parent will most likely come to feed the baby.
- ~ Baby birds grow rapidly. Robins increase their body weight 1000% in just 10 days.
- ~ Robins have a second brood. The mother will start a second nest while the father feeds the young birds.
- ~ When feathered birds leave their nest at 2-3 weeks, most can fly a little, but still need to be fed and protected by their parents for several more days until they can better fly.
- ~ Some birds (ducks, Canadian geese, chickens) are hatched with feathers and can run and swim immediately. They leave their nest and follow their parents on either water or land. They imitate their parents and can feed themselves.

7. ++Exploring the open areas, edge areas, and woods. Write observations on worksheet.

- Explore Harrington's BBY, looking for evidence of animals and insects. *Ask: *Why are birds and other animals drawn to this habitat?* There are plentiful food sources, water and shelter. Make a list of food sources, water, warmth and shelter. Things children may find include:
 - Food or signs of eating:
 - Seeds, berries, and flower nectar.
 - Small branches bitten off (rabbit or deer).
 - Insects - flying, hopping, crawling, jumping, walking.
 - Galls and insect eggs
 - Worm castings.
 - Holes dug in dirt made by skunks hunting grubs.
 - Holes made in the grassy areas from worm-seeking robins.
 - Woodpecker holes.
 - Chewed green leaves.
 - Shelter:
 - Meadow mouse tunnels.
 - Squirrel and bird nests.
 - Chipmunk and rabbit burrows. Remember the story of Pooh getting stuck in Rabbit's front door after eating too much honey? Rabbit found Christopher Robin by leaving thru his back door. Burrows always have more than one exit route.

- Ant hills.
- Living under a log or rock.
- Spider webs. These can be on the grass, a tree, shrub, or between tree branches.

Evidence of animal life:

- Woodpecker holes.
- Galls, insect egg cases, tent caterpillars.
- Scat
- Animal tracks
- Feathers or fur
- Animal sounds – birds singing, woodpecker pecking
- Skunk aroma from previous evening
- Leaf miner trails

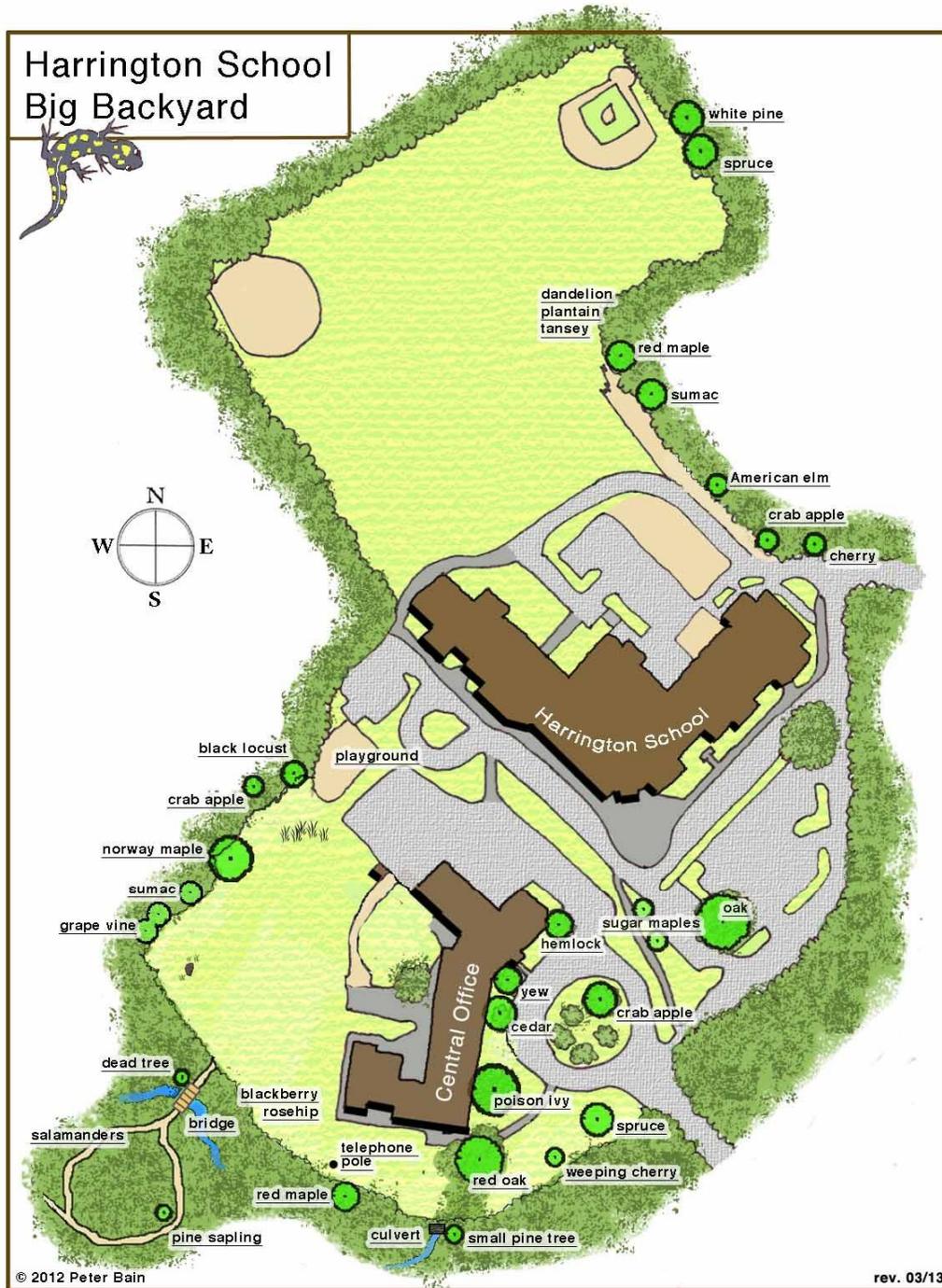
8. Wrap up.

Gather your student group together and while walking back to the school, *Ask: *Is it easy to be a bird? What kind of bird would you like to be? Where you you choose to build your nest? Can birds do things which we can't do? Can you sing like a bird?*

- Give the Spring Walk Observation Report to the teacher.
- Return all materials to the Big Backyard room.
- Fill out a Nature Walk Evaluation and leave it in the Big Backyard room.

Explore Different Sites

- Infront of Administration Building
- Grassy Area behind Administration Building
- Woods
- Edge Areas



POST-WALK CURRICULUM INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES
TO BE CHOSEN AND LED BY THE TEACHER

1. **Curriculum Connection: Language Arts.**

Have each child pretend to be an animal in their schoolyard and draw a picture of the schoolyard as it would look to that animal. They could choose to be a robin, a crow, a skunk, a grasshopper, an ant, a squirrel, a rabbit, or any other animal that lives in the meadow or woods near the school. They could be in their home or out looking for food. For example: If you are an ant, the blades of grass may look like trees, many times bigger than you are, but the door of your shelter will be just the right size. Or imagine that you are a hawk soaring over the schoolyard looking for a mouse.

- After doing the drawing, have each child write several sentences about their animal and how it lives. Include the animal's shelter, food and water sources.
- In small groups have children share their drawings and written sentences with their friends. Post all reports in the room.

2. **Curriculum Connection: Art/Language Arts.**

Fold a piece of drawing paper in half twice, then open it up to make four sections. Label the sections Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Have each child choose a bird or other animal and draw their choice with its shelter and food sources in each season.

- Then have the children write a short story about how their animal lives in each season.
- Share their drawings and story with a friend.

3. **Curriculum Connections: Library Research.**

Ask children to choose a favorite schoolyard animal. Invite them to tell what is special about that animal. Challenge students to make a list of questions about their animal. Guide them in using library resources or the Internet to answer these questions. Tell students that this is another way scientists learn about the world. They wonder about things, ask questions, and try to find answers.

4. **Curriculum Connections: Science--Food chains.**

Hand out tongue depressors labeled *leaves, caterpillar, robin* to three children and ask them to read their stick and then take the hand of what they eat. They've made a food chain! Give *grass, rabbit, hawk* to three other children and have them make a food chain. Suggest that children make up other food chains, just verbally or using blank sticks. *Acorn, squirrel, fox* could be one. Could they make up a food chain for the tree swallows or other birds that they observed on their walk? Lastly show children tongue depressors labeled *seeds, chicken, people*. Are they part of a food chain?

5. Reflections: **Thinking about animals living in the schoolyard and the Grade 1 Nature Walks.**

Say: We have made many discoveries about the animals in our Big Backyard this year. What did you like most about your Nature Walks this year? Were you surprised to learn how many birds and other animals live in the schoolyard, marsh, and woods near our school? Did you enjoy learning how these animals live? How can you learn more about animals near your home or the place where you go on vacation? What tips would you give someone who wants to do this? (Look for food sources, walk quietly, observe closely, etc.)

Walk Leaders— Spring Walk Observation Report
(Please give to teacher after walk.)

ANIMALS SEEN /ACTIVITIES OF ANIMALS:

EVIDENCE OF BIRDS AND OTHER ANIMALS:

HABITAT: FOOD SOURCES:

HABITAT: SHELTER:

Things that interested the children and questions they asked:

NATURE WALK EVALUATION
(Please leave in Big Backyard Room)

Walk Leader: _____

Grade and Teacher: _____ **Date:** _____

Children in Group: _____

1. What parts of the walk interested the children the most? (check all that apply)

Identifying birds	Animal signs	The woods
Robin Eyes	Holes in ground or trees	The wet meadow
Nests	Seeing animals	Edge area
Food sources		

Other: _____

2. What parts were not successful? (check all that apply)

Identifying birds	Animal signs	The woods
Robin Eyes	Holes in ground or trees	The wet meadow
Nests	Seeing animals	Edge area
Food sources		

Other: _____

3. This walk was: (circle one) TOO LONG JUST RIGHT TOO SHORT

4. The children seemed adequately prepared: (circle one) YES NO

5. This was a good working group: (circle one) YES NO

6. I felt adequately prepared to lead this walk: (circle one) YES NO

Other comments or suggestions: