



Bird Storytelling and Storylistening



Activity Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to build relationships with and learn to appreciate the birds in our own backyards, neighborhoods, local parks, and/or forest preserves as well as those who are important figures in our traditional stories.



Activity Overview

- ◇ Find traditional and/or personal stories about birds from your or another tribe. This might mean looking for books written by our tribes or by anthropologists, looking online, asking Elders or other relatives, etc.
- ◇ Read or tell the story as a family. When you tell a story, it's important to try to make it come alive for those listening.
- ◇ After reading or listening to the story, talk about the lessons that the story offers about bird-human relationships and life in general.

Roles, Relations, Responsibilities & Gifts

- ◇ Bird relatives are prominent in our stories and cultures, and we have many things we can learn from being in right relations with birds.
- ◇ We can (re)make relationships with birds by learning about them, (re)membering the bird stories our tribes tell, recognizing their gifts like feathers, and taking on roles in our communities to educate others through telling stories and bringing others' attention to birds, too!

Learning across generations & with other families

- ◇ This is an activity for the whole family and across generations. How can you connect with family members and friends who live near or far while you tell stories? Online platforms like Skype or Facetime could make storytelling a family event no matter where you are.

Making connections with stories

- ◇ Starting this lesson with a story about birds from your own or another tribe can help you connect with your original teachings around birds. If you choose a story about a bird relative who lives in the same area you do, you might see them on a walk at some point!
- ◇ See the Bird Arc activity for two recorded stories. Here are other stories you could use:
 - ◇ [WA State Laser](#)
 - ◇ [LC Tribal Legacy](#)
 - ◇ [Native Languages](#) *Use your best judgment with this site about the authenticity of the stories, but some are very good.
- ◇ Remember we listen with more than our ears. There are lessons embedded in stories about how to live in the world when we listen well, we are listening with our whole selves.
- ◇ Consider personal stories from your family history or from your own life that you could tell about birds or the place you are walking in.
- ◇ Ask children to consider what stories they will tell when they are Elders. It can be traditional stories that they are learning or personal stories that they will tell of this time and place.

Supporting Learning & Wellbeing

- ◇ While listening to the story, consider perspectives of birds. How would this bird think, feel, or wonder about this or react to this situation? What agency do the birds in the story have? What is their effect on the world?
- ◇ Extension: You can use story while you make relations with birds in other ways. When you see a bird, discuss what you think the story of this bird might be? Ask family members, what will be the traditional story that future generations tell about our time, especially considering bird-human relationships?

Making Relations with Lands & Waters

- ◇ How does the story relate to our everyday lives and our relationships with birds we see in our daily lives? How do stories strengthen our relations with our bird relatives and with one another?
- ◇ Learning about birds is also about learning about their roles in ecosystems. Who are they interacting with in the story (other animals including humans, plants, soil, water)? How do those interactions matter for the meaning of the story? What do these interactions teach us about the ecosystem where the story takes place?



Decolonization, Resurgence & Good Relations

(Re)making relationships with birds through observation and storytelling means that we are connecting with our ancestors through engaging in a practice that they also engaged in. When we find bird feathers, we can use them for craft and prayer. This is resurgence of our traditional lifeways.

When we try to live in right relationships with birds through learning how to best protect them and taking actions in our local communities to teach others to notice and have strong relationships with birds, we are working against systems that have caused humans to forget their relationships and responsibilities to the rest of the natural world and each other. Bird watching is decolonization and resurgence!