

Nature Study for March

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ABOUT the beginning of March is an excellent time to commence the study of birds. It is desirable first to let the pupils become familiar with the appearance, song and name of the common birds of the neighbourhood, and later, the habits of a few can be studied more carefully.

The pupils should be told to observe any birds they may see and should be encouraged to go in search for them. Tell all to observe the following points about each bird:—1. Size; whether larger or smaller than a sparrow, larger or smaller than a robin. 2. Colours; if any bright colours are conspicuous and where they are to be found, the colours of the different parts, whether striped, barred, mottled or uniform, whether any flash colours show when it flies. 3. Beak; long or short, straight or curved, strong or weak, also the colour if conspicuous. 4. Habits; whether in flocks or singly; in the meadow, on the road, on the fence or in the trees; if in the trees whether on the trunk or perching on a branch; when flying if it goes straight or in a jerky line; if it soars or continually moves its wings when flying; if it sings while flying or when at rest.

Then comes the problem of identifying the birds that the children find. For this the teacher will need a good chart of coloured pictures of birds or a book with coloured pictures, and by an examination of these pictures the name should be found. Books very useful for identification are: "Bird Guide, Part II.", by Reed, "Colour Key to North American Birds", and McClement's "New Canadian Bird Book".

A bird record should be kept posted up in the school; on it should be placed from day to day the name of bird seen, date first observed, and the name of the pupil who observed it first. This will produce a keen competition, as each pupil desires to see his name appear as frequently as possible. Besides this, each pupil should keep a record of his own in which all the birds found by him are recorded. The numbers on each list can be recorded on the blackboard and revised frequently.

Each day should have five minutes devoted to the pupil's descriptions of birds they were unable to identify and the teacher can probably assist them in finding the names.

The following are the most likely birds to be seen during March: meadowlark, crow, song sparrow, chickadee, robin, bluebird, bronzed grackle, redwinged blackbird, kingfisher, flicker, junco, killedeer. Descriptions or coloured pictures of these can be found in the above books.