



Birds

May Dawn Chorus

Age: 7-14

Topic: Biology

Time: 1 hour



Learning through Landscapes

What should learners already know?

- Birds sing for many reasons; one important reason is to attract a mate. Birds sing to attract a mate when it is quietest, early in the morning.

What equipment will I need?

- A computer with speakers

How will learners explore this?

1. As a class, choose three common birdsongs that you wish to learn to identify.
2. Good ones to focus on might be: robin, blackbird, woodpigeon, wren, house sparrow.
3. If it is possible, record the dawn chorus in your local area.
4. In May, the dawn chorus begins! It is at its peak half an hour before sunrise. In May, this is roughly 4:30 am, although it will carry on well after sunrise.
5. If not, use online resources to find recordings of the dawn chorus.
6. Your national birdlife organisation may have recordings, and in the UK the RSPB has recordings from around the country.
7. Listen to these recordings as a class. Can children identify the birdsongs you chose to try and learn in amongst the chorus?
8. Listen to bird dawn choruses from around the world. What is similar and what is different about them compared to the ones in your home country?

How can we show the learning?

- Can children repeat back each of the three birdsongs they chose to learn as a class?
- Which songs were the most easy to learn, and which were the most difficult?
- Which songs do children think will be the most easy to identify when outdoors? Can they explain why these songs are easy to identify?
- Challenge children by asking them to discuss why birds do a dawn chorus? In the morning, when the air is cool and still, and much of the rest of the world is silent, birdsong can travel up to 20 times further through the air than at other times of day. Birds sing loudly at dawn to attract a mate and defend their territory.
- Why is the dawn chorus different in other countries? Different species of bird all have different songs, so that they can be identifiable to other members of their own species. However, you might have noticed that some species of birds have a very large distribution – so you can hear their call in different countries!

International Dawn Chorus day is the first Sunday of May. Have a look at some of the free resources online made for this event.

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Did you know:
The RSPB has a 'bird song identifier' on their website which is perfect for this activity!

If you would like to develop your outdoor learning knowledge and skills, take a look at our range of training courses: ltl.org.uk/outdoor-learning-training

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