

4: BIRD COUNT



Materials

A

- *Bird Count* stickers

Loose Items

- SAC notebooks
- binoculars
- bean bags

Rock pigeon
Columba livia

Your mission today is to count birds and share your observations.

Bean Bag Flock

Counting one bird is easy, but 10 might be tough. Whether birds in a flock are flying or standing, you can estimate their number by making groups of ten. When you see a flock flying over:

1. Count the first 10 birds in the flock.
2. Estimate how many groups of 10 remain.
3. Sum the total for a rough estimate of your bird count.

Your final count doesn't need to be exact. Scientists just want to know if there was one bird, a few, or a lot.

Practice estimating bird counts with a bean bag toss.

1. Gather in an open area and give everyone a bean bag.
2. Before each round, players must silently decide if they will or won't toss their bean bag in the air. This will keep the number of bean bags in the air random.
3. On the count of three, toss—or don't! As the bean bags fly, everyone must call out an estimate of the number of bean bags in the air.
4. Once the bean bags fall, count how many were actually tossed and compare that to the estimates made.

Practice until everyone feels comfortable making an estimate. Alternatives:

1. A few players can stand aside and count without tossing.
2. Players can hold two bean bags and decide each round whether to throw one, both, or none.

Share out: What was challenging about counting the bean bags? What strategies worked for you?

Prepare for Citizen Science

You now have the skills to find, identify, and count birds. You are ready to become an expert citizen scientist! Citizen scientists are everyday people who use their science skills to help professional researchers make important discoveries about our planet.

For example, in 2015, a 10-year-old citizen scientist shared a photo of a bird she found near her home in Los Angeles.

15 min. | outside
or inside





[Investigating Birds](#)



10 min. | outside

As it turned out, it was the first ever sighting in California of a rare bird called the social flycatcher.

In Science Action Club, you will use your birding skills to find and identify birds, then upload your observations to the online database [eBird](#). Your discoveries will help scientists around the globe better understand bird habitats and behavior.

Watch [Investigating Birds](#) (3 min.) to get excited about birding!

Get Stealthy

Before your bird count, play a quick round of *Stealthy Birders* (see Activity 3) to practice your stealth skills.

15 min. | inside and outside

Bird Count

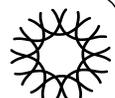
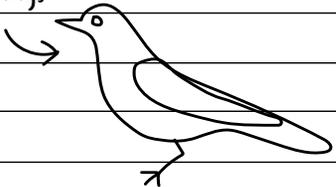
Watch [How to Do a Bird Count](#) (3 min.). Then, follow the steps below for your first *Bird Count* experience.



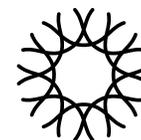
[How to Do a Bird Count](#)



1. Form teams of four. Each team needs the following *Bird Count* tools:
 - *Bird Count* sticker (this goes in the recorder's notebook)
 - a pair of binoculars
2. Head outside to start birding. Record the location, date, and start time on your *Bird Count* sticker.
3. Record notes on all the birds you see or hear. Keep track of size, color, field marks, and if a bird was flying, walking, or perched.
4. Note the different types of birds you see and the number of individuals of each type. Be careful not to count the same individual more than once.
5. After 10 minutes, record your end time.

Location: California Academy of Sciences		
Date: 12/01/2015		
Time started: 3:05 pm		
Time ended: 3:18 pm		
Bird (name or description)	Number seen	
robin - about the size of a softball, had a red belly, yellow beak, and gray wings	III	
		
crow - all black, eating trash, about	###II	

Example Bird Count notebook entry.



Submit Your List

1. Use the Merlin Bird ID app to identify your birds. Enter the location, date, bird size, feather colors, and what the bird was doing. The app will use that information to generate a list of options. If you don't see your bird, go back and adjust the size or colors you selected.
2. Your club will submit just one checklist each time, so you'll need to combine your counts. For each type of bird observed, record your club's best estimate for the total number seen. This is your club list.
3. When you're ready, open the eBird app and select **Start New Checklist**.
 - Select **Choose a Location From Map** and confirm your birding location.
 - Indicate the date and time, then select **Start Checklist**.
 - For each bird on your club list, enter the name and number of individuals recorded. When you're done, select **Review & Submit** at the bottom.
 - You are submitting a complete checklist, so select **Yes** at the top. Then, select **Stationary** as your Observation Type.
 - Finally, enter the following data:

Number of observers: This is the total number of people who looked for birds today.

Duration (minutes): This is the total number of minutes you spent birding.

Share out: What was challenging about doing a bird count? What might you try to do differently next time?

Explore more: Play the [Bird Song Hero Game](#) to test your bird observation skills.

Call to action: Check out other [citizen science projects](#) at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Is there a project that you would like to try with your family?

Attendance & feedback: How many youth attended? How did it go? Record notes here, then click or scan the link to let us know.



10 min. | outside
or inside



[eBird](#)



Explore more:

[Bird Song
Hero Game](#)



Call to action:

[Mission:
Citizen Science](#)



How did it go?

[Let us know!](#)

