

Wild Wetlands

Teacher Post-visit

Target Grade: 4

Science Standard: 5: Students will understand the physical characteristics of Utah's wetlands, forests, and deserts and identify common organisms for each environment.
Objective 2: Describe the common plants and animals found in Utah environments and how these organisms have adapted to the environment in which they live.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Use field guides and other resources to identify migratory birds.
2. Identify the summer and winter habitats of two migratory birds that use Utah wetlands.
3. Create a poster showing the winter and summer habitat of a migratory bird.

References:

McElrone, A. and T.A. Messmer, editors. 2001. Connections: A Comprehensive Wetlands Education Master Plan for the Greater Great Salt Lake Ecosystem. Publication #20, Jack H. Berryman Institute, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
Project WET. 1995. The Watercourse and the Council for Environmental Education.
Aquatic Project Wild. 1992. The Western Regional Environmental Council.
WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands. 1995. Environmental Concern Inc. and The Watercourse.

Background Information:

Many migratory birds rely on the wetlands of northern Utah for food, shelter, and breeding grounds. In a 1998 survey, biologists counted over 7 million waterbirds on the Great Salt Lake, including almost 2 million shorebirds. Among the shorebird species that use wetlands in the Greater Great Salt Lake Ecosystem are Wilson's phalaropes, California gulls, eared grebe, American white pelican, white-faced ibis, American avocet, black-necked stilt, Franklin's gull, western and Clark's grebes, double-crested cormorants, snowy and cattle egrets, cinnamon teals, redheads, Forester's tern and tundra swans.

Materials and Resources:

- Bird field guides (Audubon, Stokes, Sibley, Golden Field Guide, Peterson's, and National Geographic)
- Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center: <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/> click on the "Migratory Birds: Where do They go?" link and the "Life History of Birds" link
- Online Field Guides: <http://www.enature.com/>
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Ebird Website: www.ebird.org – select the view and explore data option
- Drawing paper
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Lesson Plan:

1. Introduce this activity by asking the students to share some birds that they saw or learned about on the wetlands field-trip. Ask the students if they would expect to see the same birds at the wetlands all year long. Review the migratory habits of some birds.
2. Have students use field guides or internet or library resources to identify migratory birds that use Utah wetlands. Students can work alone or in groups. Have each student or group select one migratory bird to study.
3. After each student or group has selected a bird, have them research where the bird's summer and winter habitat is located. Then have students use the information to create a map showing the summer and winter habitat. Also have the students make a sketch of their bird to accompany the maps.
4. Display their maps and pictures around the room so that the students can learn from each other's work.