

# It's for the Birds

## Pre-Program Letter

During your trip to the State Arboretum at Blandy Experimental Farm to learn about birds, you and your class will be spending quite a bit of time outside. **We highly recommend dressing in layers so you can change with the weather.**

One of the activities in this program uses **sunflower seeds**. If you have a student who is allergic to these, please let us know in advance so we can make a substitution.

**What to expect:** The program includes an activity matching birds' beaks to the tool it simulates and the food the bird eats. Then, we will listen to and sing along with some bird songs. We will also be outside watching birds with binoculars. Each student group will get a checklist for keeping track of the birds they see and hear.

**Before you visit** there are ways of preparing your students for the program. We have found two wonderful children's books that provide a great introduction to our bird program. Both books emphasize the different beaks birds have adapted for a variety of functions. We highly recommend reading one, if not both, of these books with your class prior to your visit to introduce the idea that each bird beak is shaped to eat certain kinds of food. The two books are: ***Beaks!*** By Sneed B. Collard III (ISBN 1-57091-388-9) or ***Unbeatable Beaks*** by Stephen Swinburne (ISBN 0805048022).

Bird study can be a great topic for integration into your science curriculum. One book aimed specifically at teachers and other educators for teaching about birds is ***Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids*** by Laura Erickson (ISBN 0-8166-4211-7). The author shares her infectious enthusiasm for introducing children to the wonderful world of birds and offers many suggestions for activities, both short and on-going.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at 540-837-1758 Ext. 242 if you have any questions!

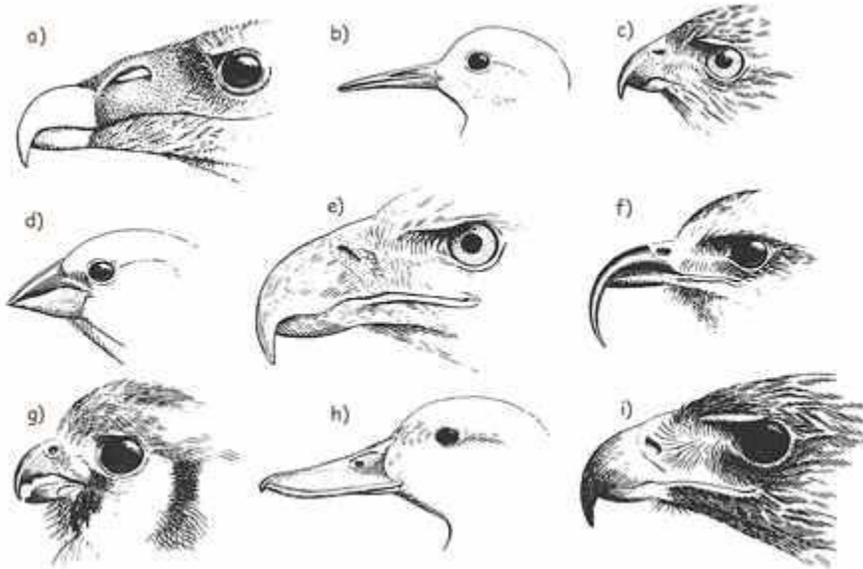
We look forward to seeing you soon!

*The Education Staff at the State Arboretum of Virginia*

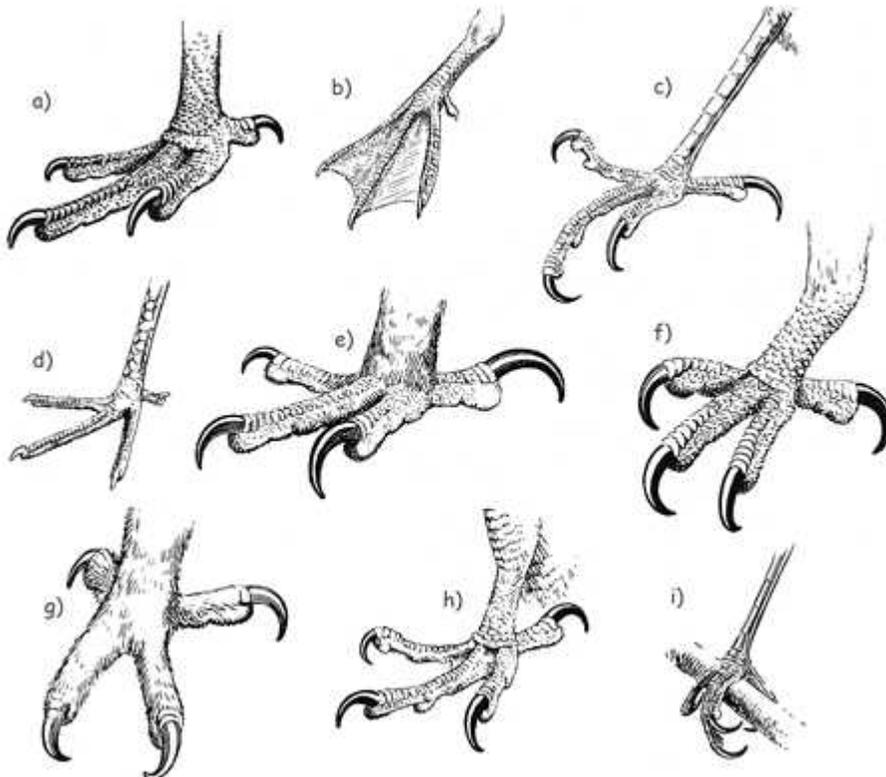


# It's For the Birds

## Beaks and Feet Worksheet



Find and circle the birds that do not have hooked-shaped beaks.



Find and circle the bird feet that do not have talons (sharp hooked feet).

# It's for the Birds

## Post-Program Suggestions:

**After your trip:** Now that your students have been introduced to the variety of birds and have done some bird watching, there are many ways that you can continue to use birds as a learning topic in your classroom. Encourage students to set up a bird feeder at home and keep a record of the birds that visit, or put one up at school!

For identifying birds that commonly visit feeders, we use and recommend the Peterson FlashGuide to *Eastern Trailside Birds*. These guides are much easier for children to use because they include only the most common birds. Remember, younger children can just keep track of bird colors and behavior so they are not overwhelmed by trying to identify every bird.

One book aimed specifically at educators for teaching about birds is *Sharing the Wonder of Birds with Kids* by Laura Erickson (ISBN 0-8166-4211-7). The author shares her infectious enthusiasm for introducing children to the exciting world of birds and offers many suggestions for activities, both short-term and on-going.

**Project Feederwatch** is designed for slightly older students, grades 5-8, and involves students in the world of ornithology by encouraging them to submit their own observations and species checklists to this national program.

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdsleuth>

**Journey North** is an online-project to create awareness of the seasons among students. Birds are a large component of the curriculum ideas on this website, and there are numerous tips for teachers. [www.learner.org/jnorth/](http://www.learner.org/jnorth/)

If you weren't able to read one of the recommended children's books before visiting, reading one after your trip would help reinforce the concept that a bird's beak is shaped to perform a special task. The two books are: *Beaks!* By Sneed B. Collard III (ISBN 1-57091-388-9) and *Unbeatable Beaks* by Stephen Swinburne (ISBN 0805048022)

We'd be happy to help you find resources and develop curriculum related to birds. Please let us know if any of these resources are particularly useful for you.

