

Leader's Guide to Project PigeonWatch

This information is designed to help educators and group leaders succeed with Project PigeonWatch. It includes ideas and hints about how to recruit participants (particularly family groups) and how to work with a group while conducting PigeonWatch.

The ideas and hints come from group leaders who participated in the Parents Involved—Pigeons Everywhere (PIPE) grant from the National Science Foundation. Some ideas also come from the evaluator's observations during site visits at participating institutions.

PIPE is a collaborative effort between the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Community Television of Southern California (KCET), and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you have comments, success stories, or insights on any aspect of this booklet, write to

Project PigeonWatch
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850
or send e-mail to <pigeonwatch@cornell.edu>.

Getting Families Involved

Strategies for recruiting parents and children

- Provide incentives such as food or birding kits.
- Encourage children to invite their parents or mentors to attend informational meetings.
- Hand out materials to children to take home to their families.
- Show the short introductory video at meetings of other groups or during other group activities at museums, science centers, and youth agencies.
- Announce the project in newsletters for agencies such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Scouts, Girls Incorporated, and YM/WCA.
- Place announcements in youth columns in local newspapers.
- Use personal phone calls to invite parents or mentors and children.
- Write letters to families to invite their participation.
- Promote past or current participants to recruit new ones. Children often recruit other children by talking about their excitement with the project.



Margaret Banker

Conducting PigeonWatch Workshops

Find pigeons first

Group leaders have been amazed at how hard it is to find pigeons at locations where they were guaranteed to be there. Be sure to identify a flock before the workshop.

Counting pigeons with groups

To simplify counting when you have a large group, assign participants different tasks: for example, counting the whole flock, counting one of the color morphs, or recording the colors of courting pairs. Have one person record the data and be sure to submit only one Data Form for each flock on each day that you count.

Anyone can be an expert

The simplicity of conducting PigeonWatch helps participants, particularly teens and adults, feel empowered to be experts.

Put up bird feeders

Window feeders that attach directly to the window or feeders hung close to a window will bring birds close enough to identify easily. If possible, provide a pair of binoculars near the window for use by your participants. You also may want to have a journal where participants can record what birds they watch at the feeders.

Use local contacts to benefit your participants

Many groups have worked together with local institutions or organizations to help broaden their participants' experiences. For example:

- Natural history and science museums often have displays about birds or archives of bird specimens that you can tour. Museums may also consider giving discounted memberships to your participants.
- Bird/raptor rehabilitators and zoos give regular programs about birds or may allow you to tour their facilities. Some of these organizations also allow you to adopt or sponsor an animal or work behind the scenes.
- Local bird clubs and Audubon societies may have members who are interested in presenting programs or leading your group on a bird walk. Or, you might offer to have your group do a presentation for one of their meetings.
- Art museums occasionally have exhibits on nature or bird art and programs about nature photography or drawing.
- Public libraries may have rare or unusual collections of bird art or bird identification guides.
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has citizen-science ambassadors in many regions who may be available to give a presentation on Project FeederWatch or other Lab projects.
- Hardware and feed stores, local corporations, and local foundations have, in many cases, contributed things from birdseed to binoculars or even cash to support these kinds of educational projects.
- News releases sent to local newspapers and news programs have been very successful for highlighting groups' activities. Contact us if you would like a sample press release. (Please send us a copy of any news items that describe your PigeonWatch activities.)

Make a "birding kit"

Consider including some of these in a birding kit:

- disposable cameras
- binoculars (small plastic children's models are inexpensive)
- books about birds (eyewitness series, field guides, and so forth)
- clip boards and pencils or pens (include your logo)
- other science activities/materials
- use materials to produce games, for example, pigeon bingo or flash cards

Other activities for group leaders

- Read to kids from the pigeon stories in the Reference Guide (for example, Cher Ami) or from the Internet or other sources.
- Cut the "cool facts" into strips and put them into a hat—have participants draw and read the facts to the group; use this also as a vocabulary or language exercise by keeping the English and Spanish together on the strips.
- Make loads of copies of the coloring page; provide other art projects.
- Develop lessons using the bird anatomy page: discuss how birds fly, hand out unlabelled copies to identify.
- Play "Pin the 'bars' on the pigeon" by enlarging the pigeon in the Reference Guide.
- Use web sites: <<http://www.parentsinvolved.org>> and <<http://birds.cornell.edu/ppw/>>.
- Review and discuss your data.
- Conduct a scavenger hunt for pigeon/science learning.
- Encourage kids to use Project PigeonWatch for science fairs at their schools.
- Connect with local teachers and encourage them to collaborate with your group.

Develop "Pigeon Pals"

If you would like your participants to share their ideas and information with another PigeonWatch group, contact the Lab and we will try to find you a Pigeon Pal group. Call (607) 254-2455; send e-mail to <pigeonwatch@cornell.edu>; or write Project PigeonWatch, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.