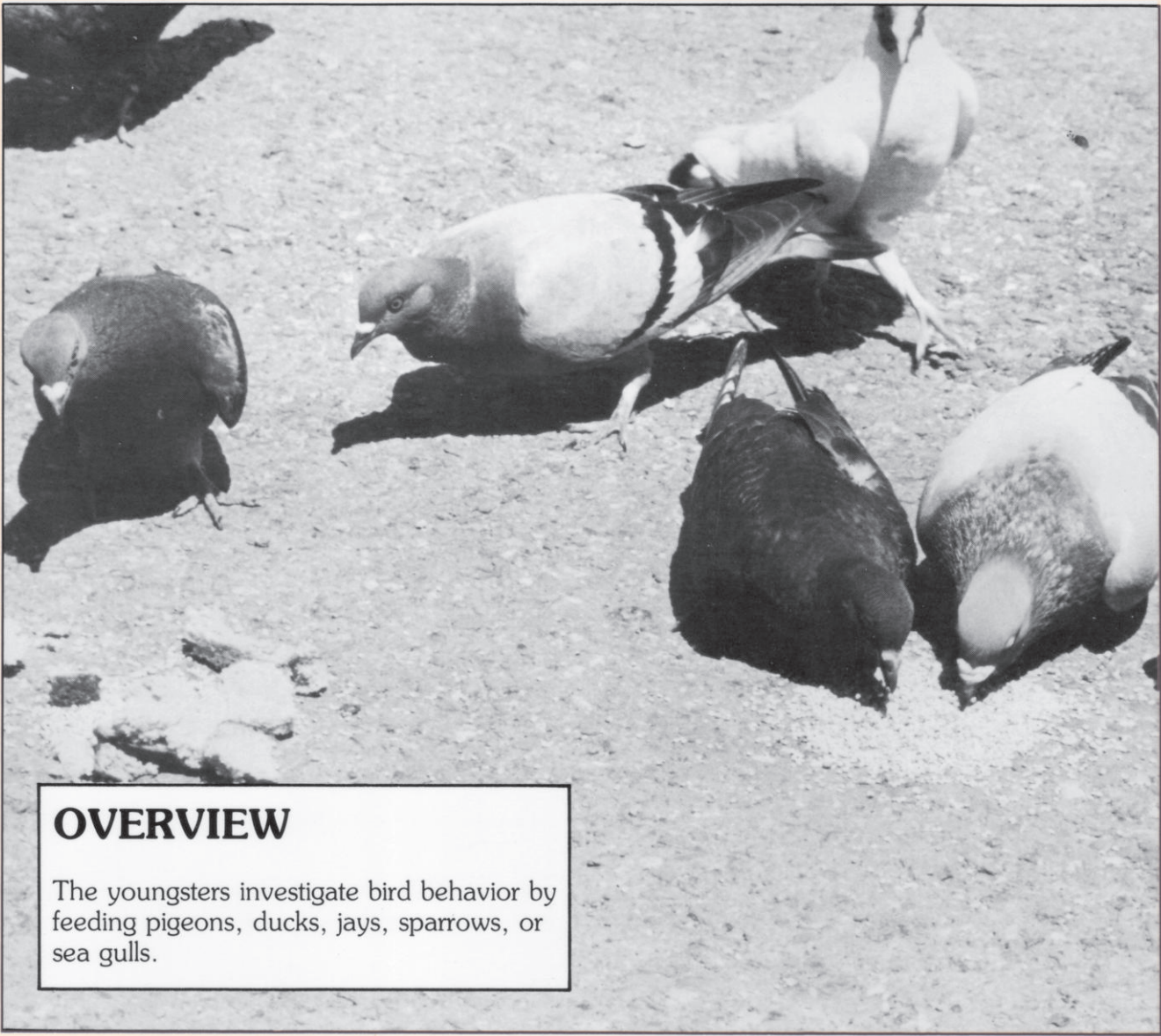


FOR THE BIRDS



OVERVIEW

The youngsters investigate bird behavior by feeding pigeons, ducks, jays, sparrows, or sea gulls.

BACKGROUND



Nearly everyone has fed birds at one time or another: perhaps pigeons or sparrows in the city, jays in picnic or camping areas, ducks in local ponds, or sea gulls at the seashore. These five kinds of birds are especially easy to attract and feed.

Most people enjoy the almost personal contact that comes from feeding these animals. *For the Birds* encourages you and your youngsters to observe birds and,

through feeding them, to discover more about them and their behavior. Families and other groups of almost any size can enjoy this activity.

CHALLENGE: ATTRACT BIRDS TO YOU AND INVESTIGATE THEIR BEHAVIOR.

**BIO
KEY**

Bird Behavior
Food Preferences
Observation

MATERIALS



Bird Foods:

bread (can be stale)
popcorn (popped)
birdseed*: sunflower seeds, chick mash,
or pigeon mix (available at pet shops)

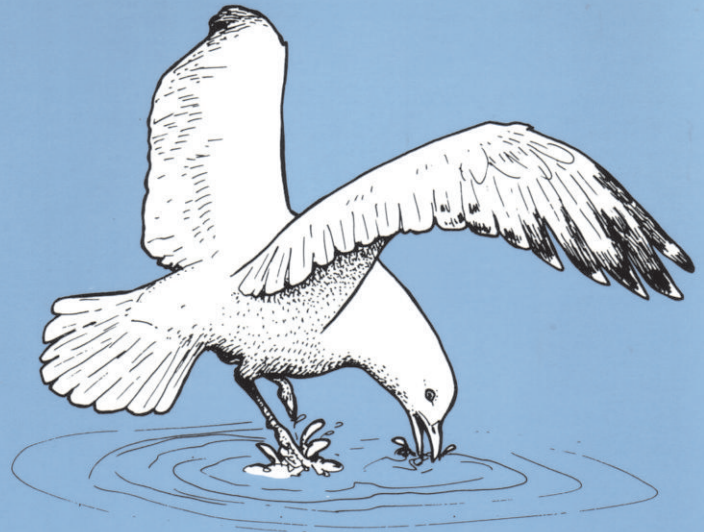
For each team of two:

1 small paper bag or cup
1 set of duplicated Action Cards

For the group:

1 sheet of Action Cards*
1 "Models" card*
colored construction paper* for making
bird models
1 large lump (1 kg) of clay* for making
snake models
marking pens* (many different colors)
2 pairs of scissors*
6 clear plastic cups*
6 pieces of cloth* (each 20 cm x 20 cm)

* Available from Delta Education.



HERRING GULL

PREPARATION



Group Size. This activity works well with almost any size group, depending on how many birds there are to feed.

Time. Plan on forty to fifty minutes for this activity.

Site. There are many places where birds regularly gather to be fed by picnickers or by folks who just like to feed animals. Such gathering places are the sites to choose, because the birds have learned to associate people with food. For the greatest excitement, choose the site that has the largest number and greatest variety of birds.

Action Cards. Duplicate a set of Action Cards for each team of two.

Models. Make several copies of the "Models" card. Use one copy to prepare a clay snake and a paper bird as examples to show your kids. Color the bird model with the marking pens. Use a small lump of clay on which to stand the bird model up. (Bird and snake models are required for one of the Action Card challenges.)

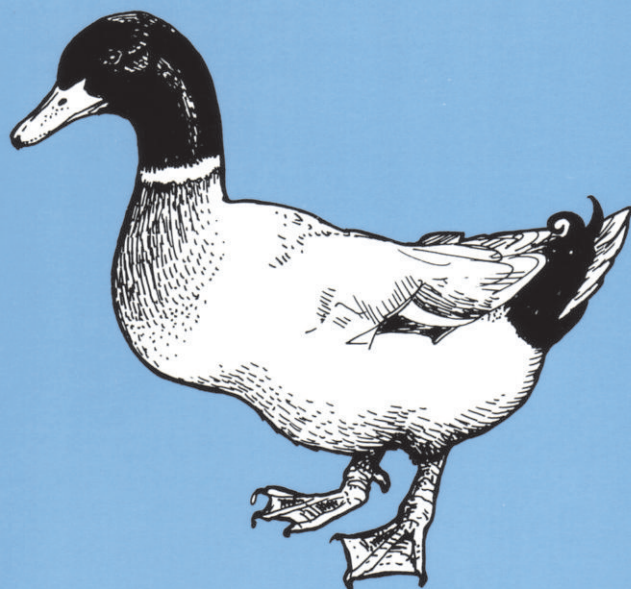


PIGEON



ACTION

1. Gather at one side of the feeding area. Divide the group into teams of two, and then read the challenge. Point out any birds that might already be approaching you.



MALLARD DUCK

2. Give each team a set of Action Cards. Explain that each card presents a different problem to solve. Challenge the teams to investigate as many of the Action Cards as they can. The Action Cards are listed here for your convenience. *Don't read them to the kids!*

- Get the birds to come as close to you as possible.
- Offer equal amounts of two kinds of food to the birds at the same time. Which do they select?
- Put the birds' favorite food in a plastic cup. Do the birds find it? Hide the food under a cloth. Now do they find it?

- In a group of birds, try to find one individual or kind of bird that gets most of the food. What happens when you try to feed the birds that are getting less food?
- Make a loud noise while remaining perfectly still. Then *quietly* make a sudden movement. Which frightens the birds more: the noise or the sudden movement?
- Find out if clay snakes or paper bird models affect the feeding of your birds. If so, how?

3. Warn the kids not to let the birds eat directly out of their hands. (Some birds, especially geese, might nip a finger or hand.) Suggest that the kids use only small amounts of food at any one time, so they don't run out of food too quickly.

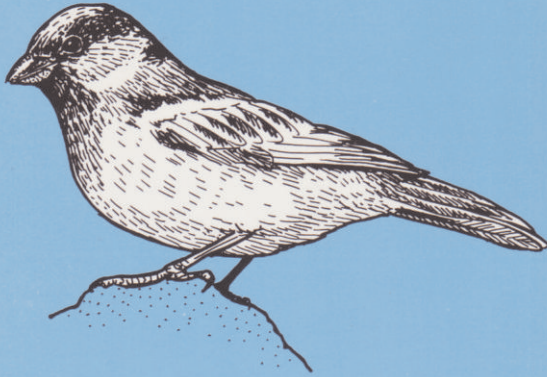
4. Point out the models you made earlier, and the bird food. Tell the kids that everything they need to carry out the challenges on the Action Cards is there. (The kids can gather their materials now or come back and get items as they need them.) Distribute paper bags or cups for carrying the food.

5. Point out the boundaries of the feeding site. Let the teams spread out around the site, but tell them to stay where you can see them.



STELLER'S JAY

6. As the youngsters get involved in the action, grab some food and join in the activity. Move from team to team, sharing discoveries, questions, or approaches to particular problems. Encourage the kids to attempt answering their own questions by trying different ways of feeding the birds. When interest begins to wane or you run out of food, call a halt to the feeding.



ENGLISH SPARROW OR HOUSE SPARROW

7. After cleaning up, have everyone share their observations and discoveries. Ask if any of the teams have different answers to the same challenge. Did different kinds of birds prefer different foods?

SOME WILD IDEAS



While *For the Birds* deals specifically with bird behavior, it also gives us the opportunity to share some feelings and ideas about animals in general.

1. Why is it so much fun to feed animals?
2. Are the birds you were feeding wild? What does the term "wild" mean?
3. What might happen if we continued to provide food for birds? For other animals?
4. Do you think we could use food in some way to change an animal's behavior? How?
5. What kinds of animals, if any, do you think we should not feed?

BRANCHING OUT



1. Try to keep track of a single bird's behavior for thirty minutes. How much time did the bird spend looking for food? What did the bird eat?
2. Set up a birdfeeder around your home so you can observe birds all year long. (See the *Birdfeeder* activity in the OBIS Schoolyard Module.)



**For the Birds
Action Card #1**



Get the birds to come as close to you as possible.

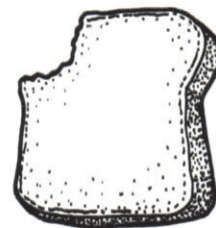
Warning: Do not feed birds directly from your hand.



**For the Birds
Action Card #2**



Offer equal amounts of two kinds of food to the birds at the same time. Which do they select?



**For the Birds
Action Card #3**



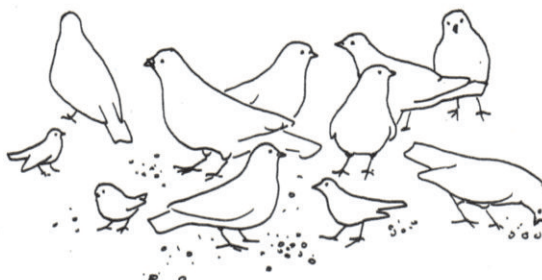
Put the birds' favorite food in a plastic cup. Do the birds find it? Hide the food under a cloth. Now do they find it?



**For the Birds
Action Card #4**



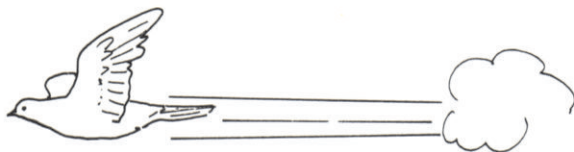
In a group of birds, try to find one individual or kind of bird that gets most of the food. What happens when you try to feed the birds that are getting less food?



**For the Birds
Action Card #5**



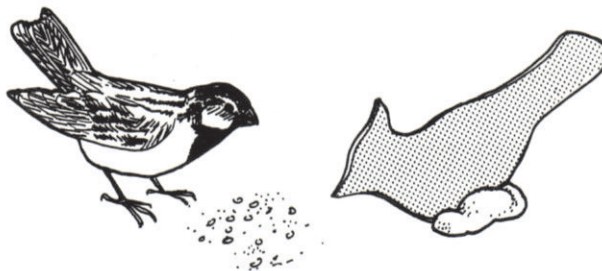
Make a loud noise while remaining perfectly still. Then quietly make a sudden movement. Which frightens the birds more: the noise or the sudden movement?



**For the Birds
Action Card #6**



Find out if clay snakes or paper bird models affect the feeding of your birds. If so, how?



For the Birds
MODELS

Equipment Card

