

For the Birds Badge

For Girl Scout Juniors

Purpose: This badge was created to help girls explore the world of backyard birds.

To earn this badge, complete four activities from the Discover section, one activity from Connect and one Take Action project.



Discover:

Fun Bird Facts

Learn about the following 11 birds that live in the Northeast. Discuss their appearance, habitats and diets, so that you can identify them correctly in the wild. What do these birds have in common? How are they different?

Black-capped Chickadee
Bald Eagle
Tufted Titmouse
Carolina Wren

Red-breasted Nuthatch
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Eastern Bluebird
Baltimore Oriole

Downy Woodpecker
Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk

Use a Field Guide

Using a bird field guide, select five birds from the above list and learn about their winter range, their breeding or summer range, and/or their year-round range. Learn about their size, field marks, migratory patterns, and flight patterns.

Bird Songs

Listen to bird calls on a tape or CD and learn to identify five different bird songs. Look for tapes at your local library or download bird songs from the following website:

www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/

Binocular Use

Binoculars are a valuable tool for bird watchers. Learn how to adjust the eyepiece and how to focus the binoculars for viewing birds. Learn what the specification numbers on the binoculars stand for. Make bird flash cards for the 11 birds on the above list. Use binoculars from a distance to identify the birds on the flash cards.

Beaks & Feet

Learn about different types of beaks and feet. Choose five birds from the above list and discuss how they use their beaks and feet to help them get their food. For more information, visit:

http://www.normanbirdsanctuary.org/feet_adaptations.shtml and

http://www.normanbirdsanctuary.org/beak_adaptations.shtml

Non-Native Birds

Learn about the impact that non-native birds have on native birds in your area. Some areas to research are the impact of the Mute Swan on ducks and the impact of the House Sparrow on the Eastern Bluebird.

Connect:

Birds in Their Habitat

Attend a program event hosted by your Girl Scout council, Audubon Society, local bird sanctuary, or other venue where you can learn more about birds in your backyard and where you can find birds in their own habitat. During the event, look for birds that you've studied.

Meet an Ornithologist

Contact an avid birder who can share her/his hobby with you. Many birders keep photo albums or sketches of birds they've spotted. Ask her/him to share it with you. Find out what has made her/him so interested in ornithology.

Connect with others

Connect with other girls and go bird watching together. See how many birds you can identify. Also look for evidence of birds: a nest in a tree, droppings, feathers, woodpecker holes, etc. You may want to make it into a scavenger hunt! What can you find together?

Take Action: Complete one of the following projects, or design your own Take Action project based on the things you learned while earning this badge.

Assist Scientists

Assist scientists by counting birds in your yard or at a local park. The Great Backyard Bird Count (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>) is a joint project of the Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. By counting birds, you will provide scientists with vital information that assists them in tracking winter bird populations and understanding birds and their habitats. Learn why it's necessary to study bird populations and why birds are useful indicators of the quality of the environment. For more information, visit: www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

Be a Bird Home Builder

Create a new home for birds by building a bird house from scratch or a kit. Set it up in your yard, a local park, or a field near your school. Describe what birds you hope to attract and why. For free bird house plans, visit: www.craftybirds.com

Feed the Birds

Get to know the birds in your area by feeding them. Using one of the attached suggestions or designing one of your own, make a bird feeder and hang it in a place outside where you can watch the birds who visit.

Bird Diseases

Learn about the impact the West Nile Virus and other bird diseases have had on birds in your area. What birds have been impacted the most? What can you do to help or to educate others about what you found out?

Backyard birding can become a hobby that lasts a lifetime!

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Bird Feeders

Pinecone Bird Feeder

Materials:

pinecones or bagels peanut butter birdseed
ribbon, yarn or string

Spread peanut butter on pinecones or bagels and roll them in birdseed. Tie a piece of ribbon, yarn, or string to the top of each pinecone or bagel and hang on a tree branch.

Suet Feeder

Materials:

1 cup lard 1 cup peanut butter 1 cup flour
2 cups quick oats 2 cups yellow cornmeal

Melt the lard and peanut butter together in a six quart pot over low heat. Take off heat and add remaining ingredients. Sunflower hearts, raisins, peanuts bits, or chopped dried fruit may also be added. Pour mixture into containers and cool in the refrigerator or freezer. Remove suet cakes from containers and hang outdoors for the birds.

Onion bags or small cans with a string in the center may be used for containers. If cans are used, place a string through the middle of the can as you fill it. Place the can in the freezer until the suet hardens. Open the bottom of the can with a can opener and remove the frozen suet by pushing the contents out of the can. Hang the feeder outdoors.

String Feeder

Materials:

fresh cranberries popcorn string, yarn or ribbon
orange slices Cheerios®

String the ingredients onto a piece of yarn or string. Hang the string outdoors on a tree.

Box Feeder

Materials:

small box or milk carton string, yarn or ribbon birdseed
popcorn orange slices Cheerios®

Cut a hole in the box and put the birdseed and other ingredients in it. Poke holes in the sides to fit your string for hanging. Hang your feeder outdoors for the birds to enjoy.