

Girl Scouts of Central and Western Massachusetts

For the Birds Badge

For Junior Girl Scouts

Purpose: This badge was created to help girls explore the world of backyard birds. Girls must complete six of the following ten requirements to earn the For the Birds Badge.



1. Fun Bird Facts

Learn about the following 11 birds that live in the Northeast. Discuss their habitats and diets so that you can identify them correctly. 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

2. Using a Bird 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.

3. Binocular Use

Learn what the specification numbers on the binoculars stand for. Learn how to adjust the eyepiece and how to focus the binoculars for viewing birds. Make bird flash cards for the 10 birds from the above list. Use binoculars from a distance to identify the birds on the flash cards.

4. 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

5. 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/

6. Birds in Their Habitat

Schedule a field trip to a local bird sanctuary, a recreational park, or a state forest. While on your field trip, look for and identify birds that you've studied. Take notes about what you see and share what you discover. Make a sketch of one of the birds.

7. Assist Scientists

Assist scientists by counting birds in your yards or a local park. The Great Backyard Bird Count is a joint project of the Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. By counting birds, your troop will provide scientists with vital information that assists them in tracking winter bird populations and understanding birds and their habitats. Explain 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/

8. Non-Native Birds and Bird Diseases

Understand 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 Blue Bird.

Learn about the impact that West Nile Virus and other bird diseases have had on birds in your area. What birds have been impacted the most?

9. Be a Bird Home Builder

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

10. Feed the Birds

Get to know the birds in your area by feeding them. Make one of the following bird feeders with your troop:

- **Pinecone Bird Feeder**

Ingredients:

pinecones or bagels peanut butter birdseed

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 them on tree branches.

- **Suet Feeder**

Ingredients:

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**

Ingredients:

fresh cranberries popcorn
orange slices Cheerios

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

- **Box Feeder**

Ingredients:

small box or milk carton string birdseed
popcorn orange slices Cheerios

Cut a hole in the box and put the birdseed and other ingredients in it. Hang the feeder outdoors.

Backyard birding can become a hobby that lasts a lifetime!

Developed by:

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