

Bird Behaviour

Level

2-3

Key question

How does the behaviour of bird species differ?

Key outcome

Observation of animals in their natural habitat.

Adapted from Moroney et al, *Coastal Activities for Primary Schools*, and the Australian Littoral Society's *Moreton Bay Kit*.

What you need

Field sheet
Clipboard, pencil
Binoculars
Field Guides, posters of birds

What you do

Survey of bird population

1. Before leaving the classroom, students should prepare their own bird survey sheets, following the suggestion below.
2. Each site or group of birds will become a separate survey. It is not necessary to name each bird unless students are especially interested in doing so. However, if certain birds are always observed on a beach, or collect close to a school, then field guides may be used to identify them.

Survey sheet

	Survey 1	Survey 2	Survey 3
Where did I see it?			
What was it doing?			
What did it look like?			
Were there any other birds?			

Silver gull behaviour

Most students will be familiar with the silver gull along the foreshores. As they become more expert at bird observation, they will be able to recognise certain behaviour and relate this to activities amongst the flock of seagulls (see sheet illustrating silver gull behaviour).

1. Select a suitable site and watch seagulls.
2. After making some observations, students could discuss what they have seen:
 - Are there apparent leaders?
 - Do some birds always give way?
 - Do certain birds always display aggressive characteristics?

Bird Behaviour

- Do some birds hang round at the edge of the flock, apparently taking little interest in what is going on?
- What makes all the birds fly off together?
- What makes them all return to the one place?
- What happens if some food is found by one bird?

3. Discuss:

- Why do we often see flocks of gulls on playing fields, airports and parks?
- Why are we not encouraged to feed seagulls?







References

Project ReefEd (Activities 88-94), mainly secondary and community level).

Ryan, F. and Ray, S. 1991, *The Environment Book, Activities and Ideas for Environmental Education*, Macmillan, South Melbourne.

Gould League of Victoria publishes numerous stickers, bird identification posters with appropriate activities on the reverse side of the poster, and also publishes survey forms and follow up activities.

Silver Gull Behaviour

 <p>“UPRIGHT ALARM POSTURE”: Eyes wide open, neck stretched, feathers pressed against the body, wings held slightly out.</p>	 <p>“HUNCHED THREAT” Threatening behaviour, body is hunched, feathers ruffled, bird makes quick walking movement at other bird.</p>	 <p>“OBLIQUE THREAT POSTURE”: Neck is stretched up and head tilted down, wings may be lifted a little.</p>	 <p>“FORWARD POSTURE” Head is dropped until it is lower than the tail with bill pointed upward – a sign of submission.</p>	 <p>“GRASS STABBING/ GRASS PULLING”: Signalling territory (these are human interpretations of the birds behaviour, the birds may have different ideas!)</p>
<p>1 Using food scraps gather a flock of gulls.</p>	 <p>‘AT REST’</p>			<p>2 Hold back on the food for a moment and observe their behaviour.</p>
<p>3 Tick each gesture shown on this page as you observe an example of it.</p>				<p>4 Notice how distant gulls keep on coming – What attracts their attention?</p>
<p>5 Notice that there is a characteristic call/sound for each gesture. Listen carefully – Try to imitate these sounds.</p>				<p>6 Notice the distribution of young and older gulls. Comment on the position of the younger gulls.</p> <p>-----</p>
<p>7 What words would you use to describe the gulls feeding habit?</p>				