

ACTIVITY SHEET II : DOCUMENT CHANGES IN NEIGHBOURHOOD BIRDS

In 'The Meditating Heron', a farmer from Bhutan wants to introduce his children to a heron who had been his fishing companion for a long time. The bird is no longer at its usual spot. The farmer also learns that birds of its kind are disappearing from his neighbourhood. Human activity plays an important role in this disappearance. Do you know the birds in your neighbourhood well enough to notice when they start disappearing?

Aim:

- Discover some of your neighbourhood birds from the observations you, your friends, and elders from your community have made of them.
- Find out how the numbers and kinds of birds in your neighbourhood have been changing over the years.
- Think about the relationship between birds and us (humans).

You will need:



An observation notebook



A pen/pencil

What to do:

1. In class: Your teacher will divide you into groups. Use **Table I** to make a list of all the different kinds of birds you see around you almost every day. Record any details that will help your classmates and teacher identify the bird. Here are some things to think of:
 - Do you know the common names of these birds? These names could be in any language. If you do not know their names, describe them. For example, tell your friends what you know about their size, colour, beaks, or the sounds they make.
 - If you can, make a note of where you often see them. For example, do they usually perch on trees, electric wires, near water, or on the ground?
 - Have you seen them eating? What do they eat?
2. At home: Talk to your parents, grandparents, and other elders in your community. Find out what they can tell you about the birds in your neighbourhood. Listen carefully to what they share and make a note of it in your notebook. Here are some questions to ask:
 - What kinds of birds did they see when they were young? Do they see them now?
 - Do they see a change in the number of birds over the years? What do they think may be the reason for this change?
 - What can they tell you about what different birds eat and where they nest?

Table I: Describe the birds in your neighbourhood.

Name of the bird (Common English name/Local name)	Description of the bird*	Description of the beak**	Where you see them #	What they eat

* Size (sparrow size, crow size, smaller or bigger than sparrow or crow), colours, call of the bird, and whether they are single or in groups.
 ** Colour, thickness (thin, thick), and length (short, long, curved, straight).
 # On the ground, on a tree, on electric wires, near a water body, or on houses.

Life in Your Backyard

ACTIVITIES I & II

- 1) Activities I & II can help meet the following learning outcomes:
 - For science at the middle stage (Grades VI–VIII): The learner can identify and classify living organisms based on their observable features, can conduct simple investigations to seek answers to queries, and makes efforts to protect the environment (by spreading awareness on the need to protect plants and animals).
 - For EVS at the preparatory stage (Grades III–V): The learner can identify simple features (like movement, eating habits, and sounds) of birds in their immediate surroundings, group birds according to similarities and differences using different senses, predict patterns, and show sensitivity towards plants and animals.
- 2) One of the goals (CG–3) in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF–SE) 2023 for science in the middle stage is for students to have the opportunity to explore the living world in scientific terms. Activities I & II are designed to help meet this goal and two of its related competencies:
 - Describe the diversity of living things (including birds) observed in the natural surroundings.
 - Analyse patterns of relationships between living organisms and their environments in terms of dependence on and response to each other.
- 3) In Activity I:
 - Start the activity by narrating the story of 'The Meditating Heron'. You may want to read the parts that describe the features of the bird and its fishing routine again if students request it.
 - The kinds of birds in **Sheet I** are: (a) Kingfishers, (b) Grebes, (c) Skimmers, (d) Herons, (e) Sea Eagles, (f) Pelicans, (g) Cormorants, and (h) Spoonbills.
 - In **part B** of the **Think about** section: Kingfishers, Grebes, Sea eagles, and Cormorants are divers. Skimmers are named for skimming. Pelicans and Spoonbills are scoopers. Herons are ambushers.
 - Encourage students to attempt the questions in the **Discuss** section after you show them a short 4-minute YouTube video (by Roundglass Sustain) on your mobile phone. Titled 'How Namdapha's Most Statuesque Bird is Quietly Disappearing', this video is available in English here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-H5zn4xCDw>. If students prefer, you could play it in Hindi instead: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTPr31KbHeE&t=0s>.
- 4) In Activity II:
 - Encourage students to listen carefully to the stories and information their elders share. Ask them to record these details in their notebooks.
 - Also, encourage them to listen carefully to presentations by the other groups in class.
- 5) Facilitate the discussion in both activities by encouraging students to think about and share the effects we (humans) have on birds in our neighbourhoods. End the session by posing these questions: Do human activities always have harmful impacts on birds? Can they think of some activities that don't? Do they know of efforts in their locality that help protect birds or their habitats? Let students take at least a couple of days to think about these questions. If you see a lot of interest in these questions, you could invite them to share their responses in a class discussion.