

ACTIVITY SHEET II : MEET OTHER RAPTORS

Kites are raptors. Here are some things we know about raptors:

- They are diurnal birds that feed on other animals (their prey). Some hunt, catch, and kill their food. Others feed on dead animals. Some do both.
- The word 'raptor' comes from a Latin word that means 'to grasp or seize'. These birds have eight sharp claws (called talons), which they use to capture and secure their prey.
- Their hooked upper beaks allows them to tear into their prey.
- They have a strong sense of vision. They can see at least four times farther than we can. This helps them spot their prey even when they are soaring several thousand feet above the ground.
- Because of their looks and their feeding habits (they eat 'pests' or dead animals), people often think of these birds as unclean, fearsome, or disgusting.
- Their feeding habits help control the population of pests (like rats who eat up our crops and stored food) and clear up the bodies of dead animals (which when uncleaned can cause the spread of disease).
- Droughts, our use of pesticides, and the loss of their habitats by human activity threaten the survival of these birds. Scientists treat a fall in their numbers as a warning about the health of the environment.

Kites are not the only raptors. Here are some other kinds seen in India:



(a) Indian Vultures:

Seen near open fields in villages and near garbage dumps in cities. Feed mostly on the bodies (carcasses) of dead animals, including cattle.

(b) Shikras:

Small birds that feed mostly on rats, mice, squirrels, other small birds, lizards, and insects in farmlands, cities, and forests.

(c) Indian Spotted Eagle:

Live in forests, wetlands, and grasslands. Very rarely seen in cities and towns. Feed mostly on small animals such as rats, frogs, lizards, small birds, and insects.

Observe:

Take a few minutes to look at the photographs of the different kinds of raptors. Then record your observations and findings in the table below.

Photographs	(a)	(b)	(c)
How would you describe its eyes?			
What is the colour of its beak? Is the beak thick or thin? How long is it? What is its shape? Does it look light or heavy?			
Can you see its feet? Are the talons long or short?			
Did you find any other features interesting?			
Have you seen this bird in your neighbourhood? If yes, where have you seen it? (For example, on an electric wire, flying high, sitting on a tree, on the ground, or the top of a building or hill)			
Does this bird have a local name? What do the elders in your community call it? What else do they know about it?			



Think about and discuss:

- A lot of birds are carnivorous. What makes the birds in this sheet different?
- Think about where these birds live and hunt. Can you guess how they are affected by changes in:
 - (a) The amount of smoke and dust in the air?
 - (b) How we manage our solid waste?
 - (c) What we grow on our farms and how we take care of our farm animals?
 - (d) The numbers and kinds of trees that grow near our homes and farms?
- Think about what these birds eat. What do you think would happen to them if their source of food disappears? Or if their food is poisoned by the chemicals we use to rid our fields and homes of pests (like insects, rats, and mice)? Or if these birds get injured and cannot hunt for food?
- Have you ever rescued or treated an injured animal? How did you take care of it? Where did you learn to take care of it? Did the animal survive? What did you do with it after it had recovered?

Sources for images:

- (a) Avirup Guha Roy, Wikimedia Commons. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Vulture1.jpg. License: CC-BY-SA 4.0 International Deed.
- (b) J. M. Garg, Wikimedia Commons. URL: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shikra_\(Female\)_at_Hodal_-_I2-Haryana_IMG_7970.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shikra_(Female)_at_Hodal_-_I2-Haryana_IMG_7970.jpg). License: CC-BY-SA 3.0 Unported Deed.
- (c) Ikshan Ganpathi, Wikimedia Commons. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Spotted_Eagle_near_Nalsarovar_Bird_Sanctuary.jpg. License: CC-BY-SA 4.0 International Deed.

- Activity Sheets I and II are designed as Environmental Science (EVS) projects for Grade III–V students. They can be connected to:
 - Unit 2 ('Life Around Us') of the Grade III EVS textbook (NCERT, 2024–2025). This unit invites teachers and students to enjoy observing the animals and plants around us: *"The more we watch them, the more we learn about their fascinating lives. This curiosity drives us to explore further, discovering new and exciting things. Recognising and respecting the well-being of both plants and animals is essential for maintaining ecological balance and fostering a more compassionate society"*.
 - Chapter 1 ('Super Senses') of the Grade V EVS textbook (NCERT, 2024–2025). In this chapter, children learn about the strong sense of sight that raptors have.
- Each activity can be done over 2–3 days. Each sheet has some tasks that can be done in the classroom and some that need to be done outside. Plan to allot three hours to the classroom tasks.
- For the classroom tasks:
 - Introduce the two activities by screening the film on a computer or mobile phone. If this is not possible, read the article titled 'All that Breathes: Why Raptors Matter' in this issue. Then briefly narrate the story of the kite 'carers' to your students.
 - Start each classroom session by giving students 5–10 minutes to observe the photographs of the four kinds of kites in Activity Sheet I and that of the other kinds of raptors in Activity Sheet II.
 - Share clear instructions for each activity. Remind students that they need to record their observations in the tables provided in each sheet.
 - Give students enough time to record their observations and answer the questions in each sheet. Facilitate a discussion based on students' observations and any questions they may have.
- For the tasks that can be done outside the class, encourage students to:
 - Work together if they live in the same neighbourhood.
 - Observe these birds carefully without disturbing or harming them. (You may want to draw your students' attention to the kinds of observations listed in the tables in the two sheets before assigning this task).
 - Talk to the elders in their community, listen carefully to what they tell them about these birds, and carefully record these details in their notebooks or activity sheets.
- Make a note of any student questions that have not been addressed during the class discussion. You could take these up later. Or assign them to your students to explore on their own and share their findings with the class.
- Encourage students to think about how interdependent all living beings are on each other and the environment that we are part of. By inviting students to observe their surroundings with attention and learn from the lived experience of their communities, we can help them develop care, empathy, and compassion even for beings that appear fearsome or disgusting to people.

Contributed by:

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