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Build a Bird
k-4 grade

Goal: Children learn about bird adaptations by creating their own imaginary birds.

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Supplies:

Printed copies of the bird body parts

Construction paper


Glue

Coloring supplies

**this lesson pairs well with the Climate Change Lesson 6: Build a Bird Adaptations.

Materials: presentation found on the MAS website under “Climate Change Education”, projector & laptop.

1. Ask children if all birds look the same. (no!)
2. Ask children for examples of how birds are different (wings, beaks, feet, etc)
3. Define **adaptation**: a change in a body part or behavior that helps an animal survive in its environment.
 - a. Also define **environment**: in this case, we’re defining it as a place where an animal lives. You could also call this its **habitat**. Here, it can find food, water, shelter, and other animals of the same species. This is where it makes a home for its babies.
4. Birds have many adaptations to help them survive in all kinds of different environments.
 - a. Beaks:
 - i. Tearing: eagles and other hawks or owls have sharp, hooked beaks for tearing meat off of bones
 - ii. Eye droppers: hummingbirds have long, thin beaks that are good at extracting nectar from flowers
 - iii. Strainers: ducks have beaks that are good at removing small animals or plants from water. They strain out the water, and eat the food that it left.
 - iv. Spears: great blue herons have long, pointy, strong beaks that they use to spear fish. Then they pop the fish off of their beaks and swallow them whole.
 - v. Funnels: swallows have wide beaks that they hold open as they fly. They swoop around catching insects in their beaks when they fly over water.
 - b. Wings:
 - i. Fighter Jets: Cooper’s hawks have narrow wings that are great for making tight turns. They are very agile, and can catch other birds while they are flying!

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- ii. Kites: American Kestrels are small hawks that are able to hover in the air above a field of grass. While it is hovering, it looks for small mice to eat.
 - iii. Paddles: penguins use their wings to fly underwater! They flap their wings to propel themselves forward
 - iv. Helicopters: hummingbirds have very special wings that allow them to fly backwards and hover, just like a helicopter!
 - c. Feet:
 - i. Paddles: ducks have webbed feet to help them swim through the water
 - ii. Snowshoes: jacanas have feet with very long toes. This helps them to walk on lily pads without falling into the water- just like snowshoes keep people up on the top of snow.
 - iii. Grasping feet: osprey have little ridges on their feet that help them to carry slippery fish.
 - iv. Lures: snowy egrets have bright yellow feet! They wiggle them in the water, which attracts little fish. Then the egret can eat the fish.
 5. Ask students if they can think of any other adaptations that birds have.
 6. Have students build their own birds. Print off several copies of the bird body parts. Students may cut out the pieces they want, and glue them all to a piece of construction paper.
 - a. Depending on students' age and ability, have them describe the adaptations that their birds have. Color the birds, and color in habitat around them.
 - i. Where do the birds live?
 - ii. What do they eat?
 - iii. Are they camouflaged or colorful?
 - iv. When are they active and when do they sleep?
 - b. Are their birds generalists or specialists?
 - i. Specialist: require a certain type of food or a certain habitat (or both!) to survive.
 - ii. Generalist: are able to eat many different types of food, or live in many types of habitat (or both!)