

Bird Skull Matching & Memory Game

These lessons are just a small sample of what will be available in **Forces of Nature**, the Madison Audubon Environmental Education Handbook.

Exploring bird skulls is a fantastic way to learn about the amazing adaptations birds have evolved. This document contains photos of birds paired with photos of their skulls. All of the skull photos were downloaded from Skulls Unlimited, which is also the company we purchased our replica bird skulls from.

The photos in this document are large! Check out our printer-friendly version to save on ink.

There are many activities you can do with these images. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

First, print this document out single-sided. Cut the pages in half so that you have two pieces: one with the bird image on it, the other with the skull. Each page is labeled with the bird species. You can either leave the name on the images or cut them off. If you forget what a bird is, use the document as a reference.

1. **Matching Game:** Shuffle the images and lay them all face up on the floor or table. Help kids to match the bird with its skull! Players may work together to match them all, or take turns earning 2 points for each match they make. Pay special attention to the shape of the bird's beak and the shape of its forehead. Beak color is not as important here, as some of the skulls include the keratin layer (that's the hard, shiny part of the beak that also gives it its color) and others only show the underlying bone.
 - a. More challenging: use all of the birds & beaks at once.
 - b. Less challenging: use fewer birds at once.

2. **Memory Game:** Pick your favorite 5 birds & their skulls (you'll have 10 images total). Flip them upside down, shuffle them around, and lay them out in a grid. Each player takes turns flipping over two papers to see the image underneath. If they are a matched pair (bird & its skull), that player gets to remove the images from the game. They get 2 points! If the flipped papers are not a matched pair, flip them back over. The player to find the most pairs wins!
 - a. More challenging: use more or all of the bird & beak images
 - b. Less challenging: use fewer images at once.

3. **Nature Journal Exploration:**
 - a. **Observational Drawing:** Pick your favorite skull. Make a scientific drawing of it in your nature journal! Be sure to include the date and the species of bird you are drawing. Don't worry too much about making a very accurate drawing. The important part is taking the time to look at the skull carefully and notice new things. Glue the printed picture of the bird or skull into your journal if you like.
 - b. **Compare & Contrast:** Pick two skulls. They can be very similar or very different. Point out things in the skulls that are the same. You can circle them, make arrows pointing to them, or color them all using the same colored crayon. Then, point out things in the skulls that are different. Mark them in the same way you did the similar things. Glue these pictures into your nature journal.

4. **Build A Bird:** Look at all of the pictures of birds and their skulls. There are SO many types of birds, and each bird has its very own beak! Imagine your very own made-up bird. What kind of food does it eat? How does it catch or find that food? What does its beak look like? Draw a picture of the bird's head, and draw a picture of the skull below it.
 - a. More challenging: Draw the whole bird's body. Where does it live? Draw the habitat around it too!
 - b. Less challenging: check out the Madison Audubon Build-A-Bird lesson for bird parts to cut out, glue, and color. <https://madisonaudubon.org/stand-alone-activities>

5. **Bird Skull Research (for older kids):**
 - a. Pick out your favorite picture of a bird skull. With an adult's help, go online and look up "parts of a bird skull". Try to find all of the parts on your bird skull picture, and label them. Write the word for the skull part, and make a line pointing from the word to the skull part.



Bald Eagle: Maria via Flickr



Bald Eagle



Blue Jay: Linda Peterson via Flickr



Blue Jay



American Robin: danielusescanon via Flickr



American Robin



Wild Turkey: Roger Daigle via Flickr



Wild Turkey



Mallard/Domestic Duck Hybrid: Eric begin via Flickr



Mallard/Domestic Duck Hybrid



American Crow: Steve Creek via Flickr



American Crow



Turkey Vulture: kPepels via Flickr



Wild Turkey



Great Blue Heron: NicoleW0000 via Flickr



Great Blue Heron



Sandhill Crane: Mike Miller on Flickr



Sandhill Crane



Pileated Woodpecker



Pileated Woodpecker



Northern Cardinal



Northern Cardinal



Great Horned Owl: Eric SF via Flickr



Great-horned Owl



Ruby-throated Hummingbird: Lynn Tweedie (Flickr)



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Red-tailed Hawk: Ellen & Tony via Flickr



Red-tailed Hawk