

ELF NOTES

Environmental Learning for the Future - Vermont Institute of Natural Science
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Who Goes There?

The best way to learn a bird's identity is to first get to know its unique adaptations.

Watching bird antics will give you the clues you need to get to know feathered locals on a first name basis.

Calling birds by making a rhythmic "pssh" sound or by "kissing" the back or palm of your hand will bring birds closer so that you can get a better look at them and watch what they are doing. Setting up and watching a feeder is also a great way to get acquainted.

At first it will be hard to see everything before a bird flits away. You might want to start a notebook with words and drawings to help you remember what the bird ate, its size, beak shape, wing and body shape and color patterns, and where you saw it.

Use these clues and a good field guide to research the bird's identity.

ADAPTATIONS

BEAKS, FEET, AND FEATHERS

Birds! Birds are remarkable creatures. Some are adapted to fly great distances; others are adapted to dive in the ocean, hunt from the air, or stay warm in extremely cold weather. The greatest challenge for all birds, however, is to obtain adequate food to make it through each demanding day. Specially designed beaks, feet, legs, eyes, and wings help them to meet this challenge.

Feathers, unique to birds, contribute to birds' ability to fly. Feathers also keep birds warm and carry the colors and patterns distinctive of species.

Different species of birds have very different beaks. Each is adapted for obtaining specific kinds of food in specific ways.

Bird feet, wings, tail, legs, and eyes are also adapted for particular lifestyles, allowing birds to feed, hunt, avoid predators, find mates and nest. Each kind of bird is uniquely equipped to survive in its particular environment.

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