

## **Bird Classification/Adaptation Activity**

- Objectives:** 1) Identify three birds they see on the island.
- 2) Name four different ways birds adapt to their environment.

### **Introduction**

Antelope Island is a migratory pit stop for many birds. Hundreds of thousands of birds come and go every year. They stop off on the island to rest, eat and sometimes to nest and raise their young. If it were not for the Great Salt Lake food web, these birds would not come here.

Many types of birds that to the island: waterbirds, raptors, shorebirds, waterfowl, and songbirds are the main groups. Each group has special adaptations that help them find food, avoid predators and raise their young. The goal of this activity is to have children observe and identify these adaptations, while learning about the huge variety of birds that come to Antelope Island and the Great Salt Lake.

### **Inventory Items**

Bird Identification Cards Packs (2)  
Adaptation Signs (4)  
Build a Bird Grab Bag  
Paper  
Monoculars (20)

### **Activity**

1. Divide class into groups of four and give them a bird identification card pack. There should be 20 cards.
2. Tell groups they have 10- 15 minutes to classify the birds into groups by themselves, relying on their observations alone. There is no limit on the amount groups they come up with. (Round 1)
3. Have each group give a brief explanation of the types of groups they came up with.
4. Now hold up the Adaptation Cards. Explain how the bodies of birds have adapted to different types of habitats and foods.

(Bills/Beaks)

Different bills are meant for different foods. Long thin bills are best for **picking** and **probing** in the sand and mud for worms and insects; small, hard bills are used for eating seeds and **cracking** nuts, flat bills are better for **skimming** the water's surface for plants and algae, and hooked bills are better for **ripping** and tearing meat.

### (Legs)

The length of a bird's legs can tell a lot about its habitat. Long legs can help a bird wade out in the water, while short sturdy legs can help a bird perch and grip onto branches better.

### (Feet)

Talons are good for gripping, long thin toes are good for wading in the sand and mud, webbed feet are excellent for swimming.

### (Feathers)

Many birds you will find on Antelope Island will be a brown/ sandy color. These birds are colored that way to hide from predators in their environment. If they hide in the grass, it will be hard for you to spot them. When birds are ready to find a mate, the male bird's dull colors will change into bright feathers with many different colors. This adaptation is to show off and attract the female.

5. Have groups take 10-15 minutes to re-classify their birds based on their adaptations. (Round 2) What would they do differently? Are there multiple ways to classify these birds?
6. Discuss if and how their groupings changed. Remind class that they have the opportunity to see many of these birds here on the island if they keep their eyes open.

### **Extra Activity (Drawing)**

### **-Build a Bird Grab Bag-**

\*This is a great activity if group brings journals\*

1. Give out paper and pencils
2. Tell students they will be drawing a bird.
3. Have students pick adaptation cards from the grab bag. Each card has a set of adaptation clues that students must use to draw their bird..
4. Return adaptation cards to grab bag.
5. If there is time, have students share information about their bird- what it would eat, where it live, etc. based on the adaptions it has.