

Songbirds of Missouri

Red-Winged Blackbird



Vocabulary

Match the word with the definition, then write a sentence using each word. Share your sentences with the class.

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| ___ Predators | A. Something that originates from somewhere else |
| ___ Reclusive | B. Something original to a particular area |
| ___ Camouflage | C. Low, wet land |
| ___ Native | D. In the country, away from towns or cities |
| ___ Brood | E. Located in or near the city or other population centers |
| ___ Exotic | F. The ability to adjust to different conditions |
| ___ Fledge | G. To hide or disguise |
| ___ Abundant | H. Animals that prey on and eat other animals |
| ___ Incubate | I. To sit on an egg to provide the heat necessary for hatching |
| ___ Urban | J. To acquire the feathers needed to fly |
| ___ Molting | K. Dwelling in seclusion or isolation from others |
| ___ Adaptability | L. The process of shedding old feathers and re-growing new ones |
| ___ Marshes | M. A family of young birds |
| ___ Rural | N. Plentiful in supply |

(Missouri Show-Me Standards: CA.1, CA.6, Goal 2.1)

Short Answer Q&A

1. What is the approximate population of red-winged blackbirds in the United States?
2. Why are there so many more red-winged blackbirds than other birds?
3. Is the red-winged blackbird an exotic or native bird species?
4. What habitats can the red-winged blackbird be found in?

(Missouri Show-Me Standard: Goal 1.5)

Classroom Activity

Grade levels: 3-5

Objectives: After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- List different species of birds that travel in large flocks
- Describe the advantages for birds traveling in large flocks

Materials:

Notebooks, writing materials

Background:

Red-winged blackbirds are one of several birds that gather in large flocks at certain times of year. Group traveling has several advantages over flying solo. This activity will illustrate this.

Procedure:

- 1) Select one student to be a "solo flyer" and the other students in the class to be the "flock." Designate a large open area of the school grounds as a "fly-over zone."
- 2) Place 10 chairs in the "fly-over zone," putting several yards between each chair.
- 3) Teachers make signs to place on each chair. Each sign should show a detailed description of one aspect of bird habitat. Students should not see the signs until the activity begins.

Examples of what signs might say:

- "Food: 10-acre field of milo, 100 yards from barn and a quarter-mile from pond"
- "Roosting area: Small stand of trees, located in far corner of pasture, tall trees, each have several sturdy branches"
- "Water: small farm pond in middle of pasture; no trees around pond"
- "Danger: occupied home, several pets, including cats"

You can have four or five "food" headings, a couple of "danger" headings and the remainder can be "water," "shelter" or "roosting" headings.

4) Once the chairs and the signs are in place, take the "solo bird" student to the fly-over zone. The student should have a notebook and pen or pencil. The student will have one minute to gather information about the fly-over zone's characteristics. The student will do this by running to a chair, copying information on the sign verbatim (partial transcriptions do not count), and then moving to the next chair. When time is up, the "solo bird" leaves.

5) Next take the "flock" students to the fly-over zone and repeat the procedure with one important difference: Divide the flock so an equal number of students go to each chair. Designate a note-taking "bird" to write down the information on each group's assigned chair and have other "birds" in the group proofread it for errors. Give the flock one minute to record the information on their assigned chairs.

6) Once inside, have the "solo bird" write the habitat information he or she recorded on the chalkboard or on large flip-chart where the pages can be displayed. Next, each of the flock's designated note-takers will write their habitat information. Discuss how it was easier for a group to get information than it was for a single bird. Discuss and research how birds communicate this information with each other.

(Show-Me Standards: CA 6; S 3,4; Goal 1.2, 1.3 1.8)