

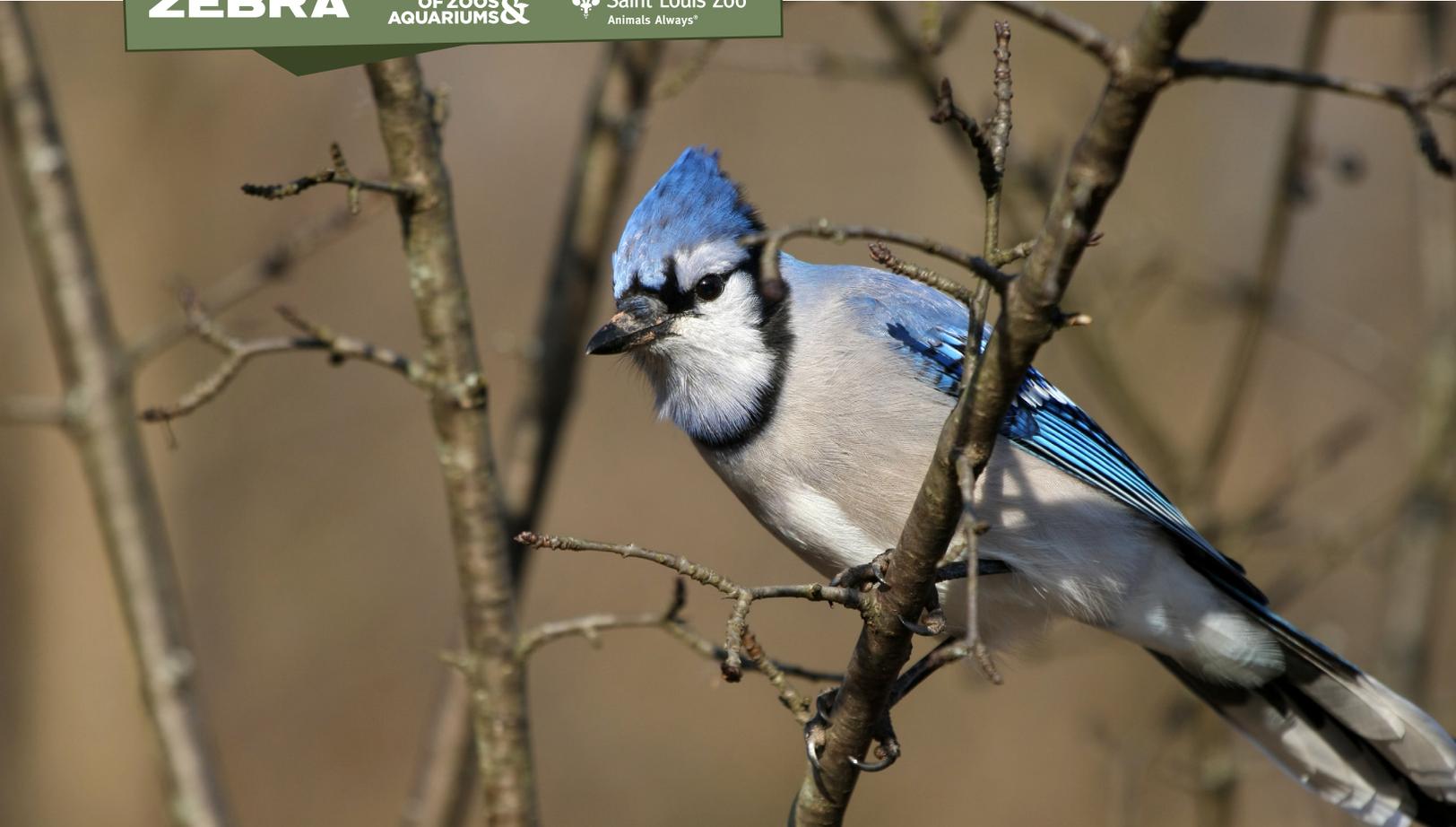
Learn
WITH **ZOOs**

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Saint Louis Zoo
Animals Always®



BACKYARD BIRDS

GRADES K-2

Children will experience life as a backyard bird and discover ways that we can help birds that live in our own backyards.

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BACKYARD BIRDS ACTIVITY

Grades K-2

Materials:

- Bird wings (cardinal, blue jay or bluebird, goldfinch – or three similar birds native to your area)
- Food pieces (yellow, brown, and white fun foam squares)
- Water pieces (blue fun foam squares)
- Cardboard bushes
- Cat mask
- Child-sized birdfeeder
- Birdbath
- Bell for the 'cat'
- Squirrel puppets

Introduction:

Backyards can be a great place for birds to live. What birds have you seen in your yard or around your house? (Pigeons, doves, house sparrows, cardinals, house finches, robins, blue jays, grackles and starlings are probably the most common.) Let's look around here (in the yard, very briefly) and see if we see any birds.

What do birds need in their backyard homes? (Some possible answers: food to eat, water to drink or bathe in, maybe a place to hide or to build a nest.) What do birds like to eat? Maybe some worms or insects (robins, woodpeckers) or maybe some seeds (pigeons, doves, cardinals, and finches). Some birds will eat just about anything (starlings, house sparrows, pigeons, and grackles). Where do you think birds might find water? Do you see a place that would make a good shelter for a bird? What animals might birds want to hide from? (Some possible answers: cats, bigger birds like hawks, snakes.) Food, water, and shelter are all things birds need to survive.

Game:

Round One –

Set up a small rope circle with a small number of water pieces inside. Scatter a few food pieces around in the grass. Place a single cardboard bush in the playing area.

We are going to see what it's like to be a backyard bird. Tell the children that you are going to turn them into cardinals, blue jays, and gold finches! All of these beautiful birds eat seeds and need to drink water and find shelter in trees and bushes. (Pass out wings and help kids put them on! Allow them to try out their wings for a few minutes.)

Show a food piece and a water piece. Discuss how birds need to find enough food and water. The children will have to look around in the grass to find food and visit the little puddle (rope circle) to find water. They can pick up the food and water pieces one piece at a time, but watch out for the cat! If the cat is around, the birds will need to hide in the bushes. Ask the children if they see a bush they could hide behind. Only three birds can fit in the bush at a time, so if the bush is full, they will have to fly away from the cat.

Let the kids fly around, picking up food and drinking water. Occasionally a cat (you or a student teacher/aid) should come out and prowl, taking swipes at (but missing) the birds. The birds should then attempt to take shelter in the bush. After a few minutes, gather the flock back in and discuss. Could everyone find water? Could everyone find food? What was it like when the cat came out? Could everyone hide in the bush?

Round Two -

Ask the children what would make it easier for the birds? What could we do to help them? (Add a bird feeder - more food; add a pond or birdbath - more water; plant trees or shrubs that birds can hide in - more shelter; keep the cat indoors or add a bell to the cat's collar so the birds can hear it coming.) Let's try it!

Add the giant milk carton bird feeder (with lots of food pieces inside). Add the swimming pool with lots of peanuts inside. Add more bushes and put a bell on the cat.

Go! Children should have a pretty easy time meeting their needs and staying away from the cat.

Round Three (optional) -

With all of this food and water and good shelter, the squirrels think that the yard is great too! Squirrels don't hurt birds, but they do sometimes scare the birds away. Designate a teacher as a squirrel (use the squirrel puppets). Now this time, if the squirrel is in the bird feeder, no other birds can eat until it leaves. Go!

Conclusion:

Birds can be really fun and interesting to watch! Do any of the children have a birdfeeder at home? How about a birdbath? What kinds of birds come to visit you? Helping the animals that live around us is easy to do. By adding a bird feeder, bird bath, or good plants and trees, we can attract more birds to our backyards.