

Our Endangered Birds

Discover why some bird species in Canada are at risk

Goal

This activity focuses mainly on education. Upon completion, the members of the faith community will have grasped the main dangers and issues threatening the survival of some Canadian bird species.

Duration 1 HOUR 30 MIN

Equipment

Ornithologist's Kit	Video files / PC / screen or projector
Candles, Magnets, Plush Toy Bird	Sunflower Seeds

Suggested Locales

General gatherings could take place in the church and age group activities in available community halls. Give priority to holding activities outdoors, weather permitting



We can expect a variety of answers such as: their songs, their beauty, their tenacity, their ability to adapt, etc.

Take a few responses from the participants. The leader can make a short transition towards the intergenerational activity.

Example:

"Though several species of birds leave us in the fall, we can still observe those which remain all year long. Some species have adapted to be able to withstand the cold of our Canadian winters. Although many of our friends leave for the South, the better adapted and most resistant species remain throughout the whole cold season. Unfortunately, the birds that stay are still in danger due to the use of pesticides in agriculture, climate changes over the last decades as well as the modification of their environment and habitats. Their steadfast loyalty remains, however, more than sincere!"

Let's look at how we, in turn, can be faithful to them. The Bible teaches us that the Lord himself, like a bird or a mother hen, covers us with his feathers and that we can find refuge under his wings (Ps. 91: 4). We can do the same for the birds!"

Welcome and Introduction (15 min.)

The leader presents the theme of the day's activities:

"Welcome dear brothers and sisters! Today, we will discover the beautiful birds of our region. Have you ever taken the time to observe birds for long periods? Have you noticed their majestic grace and intelligence? Isn't it amazing that they can fly for thousands of kilometers while still knowing how to return to the starting point? What fascinates you most about our bird friends?"

Intergenerational Activity

(25 minutes)

Ask the community members to place the chairs in a circle.

This activity includes a testimony from an ornithologist, a member or not of the faith community. This will introduce the subject of ornithology: equipment, qualifications, recent findings, etc.

If an ornithologist is not available, you may be inspired by the following fictional account. The parts in quotation marks are read by the activity leader.

The ornithologist presents the equipment:

- binoculars and camera (possibly on a cell phone) to preserve what you observe.
- a small copybook and a pen or pencil to take notes
- an ornithological guide illustrating the bird species of your region
- a portable recorder and a microphone to record the bird songs and to compare them with existing song recordings (optional).

A Fictional Ornithologist Speaks

Introduction:

"Hello, I am Stephen, an amateur ornithologist. For over 20 years, I have enjoyed bird watching, either by myself or with others who share the same enthusiasm for observing our feathered friends. We are all great lovers of birds and of nature. Ever since this great quest took hold of me, I have traversed lands and seas to observe the most unusual and colourful bird specimens. My wish today is to convey to you some of my passion for these celestial creatures. I have had the chance to visit places extraordinarily diverse and blessed with all the best conditions for bird watching. The native

species of our own country, however, remain the ones closest to my heart."

Opening Question:

The leader introduces the subject with a question such as:

- How many bird species live in Canada?
- Have you ever seen a bird of prey in your area? Which one?
- What is the proportion of birds migrating south for the winter?
- When do they leave in the fall?
- Where do they go during their migration?
- When do they come back in the spring?

Sample Observations:

"For several years, my friends and I have noticed a decrease in the number of bird species in our forests. This indicates that major changes are taking place. I am thinking in particular of climate change which directly impacts birds and their habitats. As we do our yearly tally of the different species around us, we find the recent statistics alarming!"

The danger for these species is the deterioration or modification of their habitat as a result of climate change and human incursion. If we consider, for example, the black-bellied sparrow, the ivory gull or the bald eagle, scientists estimate that we could see a 75% decrease in their population in the next 65 years."
Reference: <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2017/10/30/climate-change-habitat-loss-hard-on-migratory-birds/>

"Although winter bird feeders may allow some species to survive, the situation is not perfect as some diseases such as avian trichomoniasis can decimate part of the population at risk. So, if you feed birds, you must also be sure to regularly clean their dining room. Bird feeders must be kept clean!"

Another important factor is simply that bird feeders may attract other interested parties. Indeed, several different species can lay

claim to the same bird feeder (for example, cardinal vs. blue jay) or even another animal species such as squirrels. On this subject, here is a tip for winter bird feeders: it is better to put out simple foods like black sunflower seeds and a little fat (suet). Other seeds or prepared mixtures are less popular. Our friends are epicurean and scatter what they don't like on the ground. This can cause some hygiene and territorial problems with feeding around the bird feeders. Please be careful of others who come to dine!

Bird Watching – How to Do It

Here are some tips:

You have to learn to be patient, quiet and you obviously need a keen sense of observation! You must be able to recognize the distinctive signs of the species: the song, the colours of the feathers, the shape of the beak, the construction and shape of the nest, the flight pattern, the food it eats, etc. To approach, move as slowly as possible and do your best not to frighten the bird. This is a rule of good conduct generally observed by ornithologists: we don't disturb them! Their protection comes first. This is why we often submit our statistics to the government to help scientists better understand the behaviour of a species and to provide as much information as possible so as to protect it. We do everything we can to protect these birds and to safeguard their habitats.

Other tips to put the odds on your side: avoid bright colors, making noise with your boots or equipment or by talking; otherwise you will scare away what you are trying to observe. The best times to schedule your bird watching sessions are before 10a.m. and 3 hours before sunset. Although there are birds in the sky all day, you will see larger numbers during these hours and it will be easier for you to observe them."

Over 1/3 of North American bird species are at risk of extinction!

Reference:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/thirty-percent-north-american-bird-species-face-decline-across-season>

Reflection on Mt. 6: 25-26 by Pastor, Leader or Pastoral Animator

This is the time to make the connection between the presentation by the ornithologist and the Gospel passage.


Ideas for reflection:

1- If God even provides for sparrows, how does He provide for us?
Think about how anxious we feel regarding the uncertainty of the future.
How does God see to our present necessities?

2- Jesus teaches that the Father feeds the birds, but if a species is endangered, does God stop feeding them? (Of course not: God has wisely put in place ecological balances that allow birds to be fed. But, when greedy humans destroy these balances, God can no longer provide for them.)

Dispersal (5 minutes)

Indicate the locales for each age group. Introduce the volunteers who will accompany the youngsters. Everyone then moves to their assigned locale.

ACTIVITIES BY AGE GROUP (40 MINUTES) 6 years and under1. A Short Skit

Here is a skit proposal. The animator can disguise himself as a bird or simply hold up a picture or a toy to talk through.

"Hello friends! My name is Sandy. I am a small bird called a Sprague's Pipit and I live in the western prairies and grasslands. Unfortunately, my family and I are in trouble in Canada. Our food is becoming harder and harder to find. It is more difficult for us to build our nests and to raise our families. I look forward so much to seeing my relatives and also making new friends! But, every year when I look for them, more and more are missing. It makes me feel so lonely and afraid. Will I be the next one to disappear?"

How can you help us? Just for you to think about and to understand the problems we face is already a big help! For instance, we know that people need farms. Lots of the food you eat comes from farms. But, how many farms do you need and how big do they have to be? To make their farms bigger, farmers take away the grasslands where we live and plough them up for fields where they can grow their crops. If farms keep growing, we will have no place to live. When farmers spray their crops with strong chemicals, this hurts us too. When cattle ranchers build bigger herds, our homes can be destroyed because more cattle will eat up the grasslands where we build our nests. With the changes in the climate, it is getting hotter and we need the long prairie grass to shelter our families from the hot sun. Now that you know my story, I hope you will remember me and my brothers and sisters. Please tell your mom and dad, your teacher and your classmates about us so that they can stop doing the things that hurt us and find ways to help us. Your friend, Sandy"

2. Memory Game

Play a memory game with teams of 2 to 4 children. (You will find bird pictures, which can be printed and laminated, in Annex 3)

Rules of the game: All cards are turned face down so that you cannot see the bird pictures. Each child turns two cards at a time face up. The goal is to turn up two identical birds. When this happens, the child who turned up the two identical cards keeps them. Whoever has the most cards at the end wins.

While the children are playing, give them a small snack, maybe something with eggs - to remind us of all we owe to birds as hens are also birds. Also, most cakes and pastries are made with eggs.

3. Prayer for Birds and for Creation (Light a candle)

Lord, we know you protect us and shelter us under your wings. (Psalm 91) We pray today in your name that we may walk in your footsteps and continue to serve you by doing our part to take care of our feathered friends and all of your creation.

4. Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwiQ9m4DFRo> All Things Bright and Beautiful 5 min.


OR:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d3gO6qDLNA> All Creatures of Our God and King 4min.

5. Musical Chairs

The children sit in a circle. The leader plays some music. While the music is playing, the children pass around a plush toy bird. When the host stops the music, the child who has the toy bird must stand up and sing like a bird. He then

leaves the circle. The last child sitting with no bird in his hands wins the game.

 7-12 years

1. Feedback on the Presentation

Ask the young people the following question:

What did you take away from the presentation in the church? In other words, what did you understand about the dangers threatening birds in Canada? Answers *touching on habitat, climate change (warming), pesticides and predators such as overpopulation of non-sterilized cats may be expected.*

2. Short Video

Introduce the short video entitled: All About Birds, 4:53 Min.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_i5GMNik8 or

Boreal Forests and Birds, 3:42 Min.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WVD7UHXGRM> or

CBC, The National, Canadian Wildlife in Decline, 2:31 Min.

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/wwf-living-planet-index-1.4288173>

Ask the young people the following questions:

- What are the threats to bird populations?
- What can I do to promote the conservation of endangered birds in Canada?

Some possible answers:

- Install nest boxes or bird feeders in the winter and keep them clean and free from contaminating

factors: decaying food, excrement, etc.

- Get involved in cleanups of bird habitats: forests, shorelines, fields, etc.
- Take up bird watching in your area and collect data important for good management by the government authorities in charge of wildlife preservation.
- Reduce your ecological footprint. Make sure cats are neutered.

3. Bird Bingo

For a game of bingo, explain that the Bingo cards show 16 endangered Canadian birds. The rules of the game are simple: the leader picks a bird and the young people put a sunflower seed on the corresponding square. When you have a vertical, horizontal or diagonal line of seeds, you shout: BINGO!

Note: It would be good to have some little surprises on hand to give to the Bingo winners.

Bird Bingo cards to print and laminate are found in Annex 3.

4. Prayer of Praise: Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, 4:41 Min.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNq0WtMSmIY>

Teenagers and Adults

Note: While the same material is offered to both teenagers and adults, we suggest separating the two age groups.

Watch a video:

Decline of Songbirds in Canada, 1:51 Min.
<https://globalnews.ca/video/2529302/new-documentary-exposes-decline-of-songbirds-in-canada> or:

The Mysterious Case of the Disappearing Wood Thrush, 6:07 Min
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i57Mou6HiE>

Here are some questions to ask the participants: (You may prefer to stay together in one group or to break up into smaller sharing groups.)

- What touches me in this video?
- What are the major risks to their survival facing many Canadian bird species? Why are we losing them?
- What part do we play in shortening or in lengthening their existence in our country?

What is the effect of using plastics (PVC) as building materials?

- What are the effects of pesticides on bird populations?
- Which agricultural practices, respectful of bird conservation, could be adopted by farmers?

2) Know the Bird Species in Need of Protection in your Area

You may wish to consult the list of vulnerable and endangered bird species in your area and province. (Annex 6) You could simplify it by identifying the native species in your area and making these known to the participants. This will help you to more precisely target the specific conservation needs in your region.

3) Threat Levels for Canadian Species

Measure the Threat Game: Place the following 5 descriptions on the wall out of

order. Ask people to rearrange them according to the level of risk to the species.

Status	Definition
Non-threatened species	This category represents the species that are not currently under threat
Special Concern	Especially fragile because of insufficient or declining numbers, restricted area or other reasons, but not at risk
Threatened species	Species that may become endangered in Canada if the factors that make it vulnerable are not countered
Endangered species	Species at risk of extinction or imminent extirpation in all or part of its range in Canada
Missing species from Canada	Species that no longer exists in the wild in Canada but found elsewhere

Source - Government of Canada :
<https://lop.parl.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublicationsArchive/bp1000/prb0019-e.asp> and for information on threatened birds in various Canadian regions as well as how to help:
<http://www.stateofcanadasbirds.org/birdsofconcern.jsp>

4) Birdhouse Construction

You can encourage participants to build bird houses or bird feeders. Be careful to design houses compatible with species in your area. In putting up the bird feeder and in drilling the access hole for the bird house, be mindful of nearby predators such as squirrels eating eggs, cats waiting to pounce, birds of prey and other animals that may attack birds. Birds need a safe and healthy habitat.

Here is an example for ducks:
<http://cwf-fcf.org/fr/ressources/activities/fiches-passez-laction/habitat/construction-de-nichoires-pour.html> OR:

Building a Birdhouse – Things to Consider, 8:38 Min.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhNH5Ma7jfo>

5) Biblical commentary on the bird species confirming the end of the flood in Genesis 8: the raven and the dove

Read chapter 8 of Genesis (Verses 1-12 summarize the essentials concerning the birds)

01 But God remembered Noah, all the wild beasts, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark and he sent a wind over the earth and the waters receded.

02 The springs of the deep and the floodgates of heaven were closed and the rain of the heavens stopped.

03 The waters receded steadily from the earth. After a hundred and fifty days, the waters had gone down

04 and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

05 The waters continued to drop until the tenth month and on the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

06 After forty days, Noah opened a window he had made in the ark that he had built and sent out a raven and it kept

07 flying back and forth, until the water had dried up from the earth.

08 Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground.

09 But the dove could find no place to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand, took the dove, and brought it back to himself in the ark.

10 He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark.

11 When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth.

12 He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

Biblical Comment by the Leader such as:

The Raven

We see that God, from the beginning, remembers *all the animals*. This concern is echoed in Matt. 6:26 and in Luke 12:24. It is also revealing to note the importance of the winds (the breath of God) which support the raven sent out by Noah as it flies "to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth". (Gen 8:6)

There is an obvious contrast between the black raven and the white dove which has become a symbol of peace and of the Spirit. The intelligence of the raven as well as its courage, robust endurance and ability to glide easily while in flight must be emphasized. Of all the animals capable of recognizing firm land, Noah chose the raven, the only species he thought able to face a hostile environment. Some ravens have no problem surviving in a polar environment. They are perspicacious animals with an extraordinary survival sense.

Although the raven did not return to the ark, Noah was confident of its mission. Both God and Noah recognized the qualities of this species. We can take this opportunity to reflect on how necessary all birds are for the good health of our planet. Even if the sight and sound of the most attractive birds more easily capture our attention, each species is worthy of our admiration, our respect and our efforts to see to its well-being and preservation.

There are no birds too ordinary or useless for our planet - nor for the Lord. It is now up to you to consider Creation in its entirety and to avoid discriminating against certain species. *We must preserve them all!*

Closure (10 min)

Family members sit together to share practical tips on bird watching and bird conservation. Those who wish can write on the wings of a bird, the concrete commitments they will undertake. They are then invited to colour their bird and bring it home with them. Magnets are passed out to the families so they can stick their bird on the refrigerator of the house to remind them of their commitment to protect our feathered friends.



To Go Further

Organize a sampling taste test of hard boiled eggs from organic farms.

Go on a bird watching outing.

Read and discuss the book: *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson (1962)

Annexe 1 - Annex 1

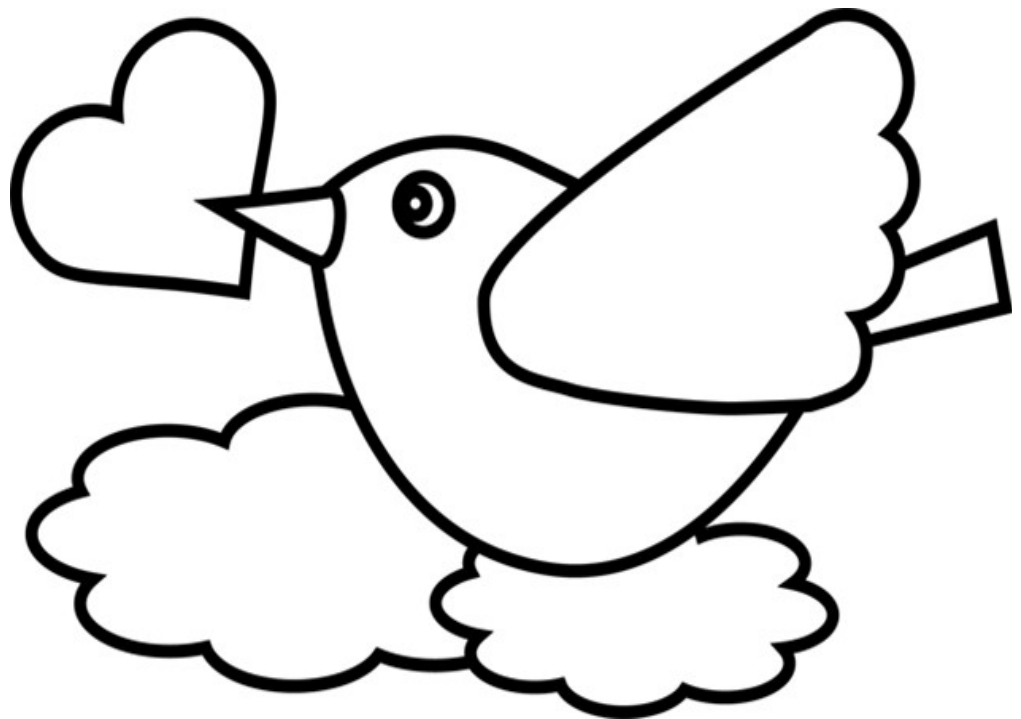
Sites essentiels / Reference Sites

<p>Espèces sauvages canadiennes en péril - Octobre 2017 http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=Fr&n=16B141D8</p> <p>Canadian Wildlife Species at Risk October 2017 http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=16B141D8</p>	
<p>Compte rendu des espèces https://faune-especes.canada.ca/situation-oiseaux/sel-sel-fra.aspx?sY=2014&sL=f</p> <p>Species Account https://wildlife-species.canada.ca/bird-status/sel-sel.aspx?sY=2014&sL=e</p>	
<p>Espèces menacées et vulnérables au Québec http://www3.mffp.gouv.qc.ca/faune/especes/menacees/liste.asp</p>	



Annexe 2 / Annex 2

Oiseaux à colorier - Birds to color





BINGO



BINGO



BINGO



BINGO





BINGO



BINGO



BINGO



BINGO





Pie-grièche migratrice
espèce non menacée

Loggerhead Shrike
Non-endangered species



Faucon pèlerin
espèce non menacée

Peregrine Falcon
Non-endangered species



Pluvier siffleur
espèce quasi menacée

Piping Plover
Near-threatened species



Chevêche des terriers
espèce non menacée

Burrowing Owl
Non-endangered species

Grive de Bicknell
espèce vulnérable



Bicknell's Thrush
vulnerable species

Harfang des neiges
espèce vulnérable



Snowy Owl
vulnerable species



Aigle royal
espèce non menacée

Golden Eagle
Non-endangered species



Quiscalle rouilleux
espèce vulnérable

Rusty Blackbird
vulnerable species

Paruline azurée
espèce vulnérable



Cerulean Warbler
vulnerable species

Martin pêcheur
espèce non menacée



Kingfisher
Non-endangered species

Grue blanche
espèce en danger



Whooping Crane
endangered species

Fou de Bassan
espèce non menacée



Northern Gannets
Non-endangered species

Bernarche du Canada

espèce non menacée



Canada Goose

non-endangered species



Geai bleu

espèce non menacée

Blue Jay

non-endangered species

Pyguarge à tête blanche
espèce non menacée



Bald Eagle
non-endangered species

Cygne trompette
espèce non menacée



Trumpeter Swan
non-endangered species