

ACTIVITY BOOK #2

BIRDS OF THE CREEKS



AS YOU GET OUT AND EXPLORE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE EVERYTHING YOU'LL NEED FOR YOUR ADVENTURE! HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU:



Binoculars Compass Water Backpack Sunscreen

And, don't forget to grab a buddy for extra fun and always tell an adult where you are going!

DID YOU KNOW?

Birds use the creek for drinking water, food, safety from predators, and an occasional bath.

Birds use the plants and trees around the creek for shelter, nesting materials, food, and safety from predators.

Storm drains transport materials left on the sidewalk, street, and out in the open into the nearest creek...without any treatment.

The California state bird is the California Quail.

CREEK PROTECTOR SCAVENGER HUNT

What symbols, signs, or clues
can you spot that remind us to protect
our storm drains, creeks, and rivers?

Circle the items you find:



(Write name of creek)



Storm drain catch basin, curbside



Storm drop inlet, grate



Pick up poop sign



Storm drain label



Storm drain outfall

HOW MANY STORM DRAINS CAN YOU COUNT IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Write how many you find of each below:

Drop inlet



Outfall



Catch basin



Earthen swale



NAME THE CREEK(S) THEY FLOW INTO?

Hint: Look for the Ours to Protect Sign with the creek name



TIC-TAC-GO OUTSIDE

Go outside and play tic-tac-go with a friend or family member. One person is X and one is O. Take turns picking squares to complete and mark. First to get three in a row wins.

(If you're doing this activity by yourself, try getting three in a row or the four corners.)

TELL SOMEONE
WHERE THE
STORM DRAIN
GOES.

FIND A
STORM
DRAIN.

MAKE UP A
SONG ABOUT
CREEKS AND
SING IT.

FIND SOMETHING
RED IN NATURE.
WHAT WAS IT?

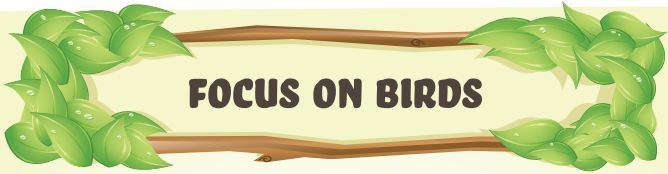
INVENT A STORM
DRAIN AND CREEK
SUPERHERO.
TELL YOUR FRIEND
ABOUT IT.

DRAWN AN INSECT
YOU SEE NEAR
THE CREEK.

LISTEN TO THE
SOUNDS OF NATURE
FOR 3 MINUTES.
WHAT DID YOU
HEAR?

NAME ONE
BIRD THAT YOU
CAN SEE ON A
CREEK TRAIL.

FIND SOMETHING
THAT SHOULD NOT
GO DOWN A
STORM DRAIN.



FOCUS ON BIRDS

WHAT MAKES A BIRD A BIRD?

Did you say they fly? Remember there are other animals that can fly, like insects or bats.

What do all birds have that no other type of animal has? See if you can come up with an answer while exploring your local creek.

You are very likely to see birds while exploring creeks. Look in the sky for soaring birds. Check out the trees for perching birds. You may see birds on the ground and in the water, too.

See the answer on the next page.

WHO LIVES IN OUR CREEKS?

SPOTLIGHT: MALLARD

Fun Facts:

- They live in our creeks year around (they do not migrate).
- Their mouth is called a bill and it strains small plants, insects and crustaceans out of the water.
- The males are colorful and the females are brown. This "cryptic coloration" camouflages the female while she sits on a nest.



WHAT MAKES A BIRD A BIRD? BIRDS HAVE FEATHERS.

Different types of feathers do different jobs. Some are for warmth; others are for flying and some feathers are for looking fancy.



KEEP WARM

**DRAW A LINE
TO CONNECT THE
FEATHER ON THE
NEXT PAGE AND THE
JOB IT DOES FOR
BIRDS**



LOOK FANCY



FLY



Listen for birdsong. Did you know that with some practice you can learn to tell what bird is singing without ever seeing them?



1



2



3



4



5



6

Answers:
1 - Look fancy
2 - Fly
3 - Keep warm
4 - Look fancy
5 - Keep warm
6 - Fly

**NATURALIST
CORNER**

COMMON CREEK BIRDS



Snowy
Egret



Common Merganser




California
Scrub
Jay

SNOWY EGRET


Snowy Egrets wade in creeks and at creek edges.

FUN FACTS:

- Their feet are like snowshoes, so they don't sink in the soft mud.
 - You might see them dance! Shaking their bright yellow feet disturbs hidden prey, such as small fish, amphibians or invertebrates, flushing them into the open where the sharp-eyed bird can strike at them.
 - The old name for Snowy Egrets is golden slippers.
- 

COMMON MERGANSER

FUN FACTS:

- Like most ducks, the males and females look very different. The male is more colorful and the female doesn't stand out as much. Can you tell which is which? Why is this? Review the spotlight on mallards for a reminder about why they appear different.
 - They have a hook at the end of their beaks. Hooked bills are common in birds that catch fish and that is what mergansers eat!
- 

CALIFORNIA SCRUB JAY

California Scrub Jays are noisy and active on our creeks.

FUN FACTS:

- Jays, crows and ravens are in a family called Corvidae. Corvids are known for their smarts. They store surplus food in hidden caches and can remember the location of thousands of caches!
- The acorns and other seeds not recovered will sprout and become new plants, so jays are master gardeners!

Red-winged
Blackbird



Belted
Kingfisher



Black-
Crowned
Night
Heron



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Red-winged blackbirds are mostly seen in the spring and summer on our creeks. The males often sit on the top of a cattail and sing.

FUN FACTS:

- The bright red patch on the male's shoulder is not always visible. Blackbirds can control their display by raising and lowering feathers.
- Red-winged blackbirds make a sound like dripping water. They live by water and sound like water!
- At night, red-winged blackbirds roost in groups, called flocks. Flocks tend to be smaller in summer and larger in winter.

BELTED KINGFISHER

Belted Kingfishers live up to their name. They wear a "belt" across the chest and are the "kings" at fishing.

FUN FACTS:

- Kingfishers hunt by hovering over the water or looking for fish from a perch. When they see a fish, they dive down to catch it.
- Kingfishers nest in tunnels they excavate in creek banks.
- Female kingfishers are more brightly colored than males, which is rare in the bird world.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON

Black-crowned night herons also live up to their name. They have a black crown and are active mainly at night.

FUN FACTS:

- They nest in groups with other herons and egrets. A communal nesting site is called a rookery.
- During the day they can be seen roosting or resting in trees, often in large groups.

THE ART OF NEST BUILDING

Birds build nests, sometimes very elaborate, without the use of hands! Nests come in all sizes, shapes and materials.

CAN YOU FIND AN EXAMPLE OF EACH OF THESE TYPES OF NESTS ON THE NEXT PAGE?

HOW ABOUT IN THE WILD?

Check off the type of nest you find:

- STICK NESTS**
- WOVEN NESTS**
- MUD NESTS**
- BURROWS**
- CAVITIES IN TREES**
- NESTS ON THE GROUND**
- FLOATING NESTS**



- Answers:
1 - Stick nest
2 - Burrow
3 - Nest on the ground
4 - Woven nest
5 - Mud nest
6 - Cavity in tree
7 - Floating nest

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The shape of a bird's beak and feet give some clues to how birds make a living and where you might find them.

DRAW A LINE TO CONNECT EACH FOOT WITH ONE OF THE USES:



- **WADING IN SOFT MUD**
- **PADDLING IN THE WATER**
- **SEMI-AQUATIC FOR BOTH LAND & WATER**
- **PERCHING IN A TREE**
- **SCRATCHING IN THE SOIL**
- **GRASPING PREY**

DRAW A LINE TO CONNECT EACH BEAK WITH ONE OF THE USES:



1



2



3



4



5



6

- CRACKING SEEDS
- DIP NETTING FISH
- TEARING FLESH
- CHISELING INTO A TREE
- PROBING IN THE MUD
- TWEEZING INSECTS

Beaks Answers:
 2 - Cracking seeds
 4 - Dip netting fish
 6 - Tearing flesh
 1 - Chiseling into a tree
 5 - Probing in the mud
 3 - Tweezing insects
 Feet Answers:
 3 - Wading in soft mud
 4 - Paddling in the water
 1 - Semi-aquatic for both land & water
 2 - Foraging in a tree
 5 - Scratching in the soil
 6 - Grasping prey

We mostly use our eyes.
Try using other senses while you visit a creek...

SMELL!

Take a deep breath. Put a check by smells you found on
the creek:

- FLOWERS**
- TREES**
- WATER**
- DOG POOP**
- CAR EXHAUST**
- CRUSHED LEAVES**
- SOIL**

DESCRIBE ANY OTHER SMELLS

WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE?

CREEK PROTECTOR

FIELD GUIDE #2 BIRDS OF THE CREEKS

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

I _____

promise to help protect storm drains, creeks, and rivers to help preserve nature and fun activities we enjoy on the water. I will show others how small changes can make a big impact and will keep having fun exploring the outdoors.

Creeks and rivers are ours to protect!

Display your completed field guide to the local agency where you live to receive your prize while supplies last. Visit www.streetstocreeks.org/get-involved/youth-creek-stewardship for complete details on participating agencies.