

Robins: What's my life?

Learning about the life cycle of robins, a common neighborhood bird, helps students to build a connection to, and comfort with, the urban wildlife in their community and the larger world. Becoming knowledgeable of the robin's life cycle and learning how to watch the birds nesting, living, and thriving in areas populated with people, students will be empowered to learn about local wildlife, natural history, and about the interactions between people and their environments while being inspired to consider STEM careers, the importance of outdoor recreation, environmental conservation and more. Additionally, by working with their peers to create a functional nest, students gain new perspectives on themselves and their peers, their relationship to the world around them, and the importance of wildlife in their lives.

GRADES: 3rd

INTENDED OUTCOMES: Head, Heart, Feet, Hands

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:

- [Robins! How They Grow Up](#) by Eileen Christelow
- Shoeboxes (4 or 5) containing a bunch of sticks, a small bag of mud, a few pieces of trash, some random pieces of string and other naturally occurring debris such as leaves, pine needles, etc.
- Photographs of a robin's nest
- Reproduction of 3-4 robin's eggs - use large marbles, or candy robin's eggs available around Easter time

VOCABULARY:

- predators
- brood patch
- regurgitated
- preen
- gizzard
- camouflaged
- roost
- hatchling
- nestling
- fledgling
- sub-adult
- adult

SUGGESTED STEPS:

- Begin a conversation with students about life cycles. Have they learned of any other life cycles before? Do people begin as adults? What are the stages of human growth (infants, toddlers, childhood, teenagers, adulthood)? Do you think animals and people have similar patterns of development? What are some problems robins may have which people do not (such as cats, fledgling on the ground, hawks, storms, and etc.)?
- While sharing the story with students, have students help you match the stages of a robin's growth with the stages of a person's growth (hatchling=infant, nestling=toddler, fledgling=childhood, sub-adult= teenager, adult=adult).
- Notice new vocabulary in the text and point it out. Check for understanding throughout.
- Notice the accelerated timeline for robin development and speculate about why their life cycle seems so fast compared to people.
- Break students into small groups and give each group one of the prepared shoeboxes.
- Ask students to attempt to build a nest for robin's eggs using only the supplies in the box, give students about 20 minutes to work.
- While students are working, wander between groups offering tips or ideas to their struggles.
- Re-group students to debrief the task and show off their shoebox nests.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- The story gets a little long, get familiar with it before hand and skip over areas not relevant to your group of students.
- Before the lesson, take students for a short walk around the school looking for possible wildlife nests in the school environment. Where are they located? Is the nest located in a safe place? Why or why not?
- If it is possible to work on nest building outside, take students out. You could have each group build their own shoebox of supplies to make a nest from. Compare and contrast different nesting materials.

Thanks to [Greenwood Wildlife Rehabilitation Center](#) for providing this activity.