All About Birds
Age: 4th - 7th grade

Objectives: After this hearing this talk, looking at the local bird sheet and filling out the “Name the flightless birds” activity, students will be able to identify some common birds, name some flightless birds worldwide, and name some bird traits.

Birds come in all shapes and sizes but they all have certain traits in common.

• They have feathers instead of hair or fur. They are the only animal group that has feathers.
• They have beaks or bills and no teeth.
• They have two feet and two wings.
• They are warmblooded.
• They do not have live young like mammals, but lay eggs.
• Most birds take care of their young, feeding them until they are old enough to find their own food.
• Most birds build some kind of nest.
• Birds have good eye sight and can see colors.
• Most birds can fly. They have hollow bones to make their skeleton lighter for flight. They have large developed chest muscles for flight.
• Birds can survive cold temperatures because they have an underlying layer of down feathers that act as thermal insulation, like wearing a down jacket!
• Male birds are often (but not always) much more brightly colored than females who can be dull colored to blend in (camouflage) while nesting.
• Some birds eat meat (rodents, fish, other birds or carrion), some are seed eaters and some eat plants.
• Many birds migrate to a cooler climate for reproducing and summer feeding, and then return to a warmer climate for the winter.
• Birds sing to attract a mate or mark a territory.
• Not all birds can fly!

Flightless birds include ostrich, emu, rhea, cassowary, kiwi, penquins, etc. They all nest on the ground. Flightless birds have developed other ways of defending themselves from predators. Some are fast runners. Some are fast swimmers. Some can kick! Some live on Islands where there are no predators, so they don’t need to fly.

Can you name one famous flightless bird that became extinct because predators invaded the islands where they lived? (the dodo)

Fill out the flightless bird sheet, by naming the flightless birds from around the world.
There are many different groups (Orders) of birds. The different orders are separated by different traits. See if you can tell how the following orders of birds are similar.

Struthioniformes — Cassowaries, Emus, Kiwis, Ostriches and Rheas
Galliformes — Grouse, Quails, Pheasants and Turkeys
Anseriformes — Ducks, Geese, and Swans
Psittaciformes — Mawcaws and Parrots
Strigiformes — Owls
Trochiliformes — Hummingbirds
Coraciiformes — Kingfishers
Falconiformes — Hawks, Eagles, and Vultures
Gaviiformes — Loons
Piciformes — Woodpeckers
Charadriformes — Sandpipers and Seagulls
Ciconiiformes — Herons
Columbriformes — Doves and Pigeons

Look at the Bird Groups on the sheet. Can you see what makes the birds in each group alike? Can you see how one group differs from another?
There are many orders of birds. To make identification easier we can group them. What birds can you see in your neighborhood?
Name these flightless birds from all over the world.

- 5-6 feet tall
  Australia

- 4 feet tall
  Antarctica

- 2 feet tall
  New Zealand

- 8 feet tall
  Africa

- 4-6 feet tall
  South America

- 6 feet tall
  Australia