



# Backyard Birding & Bird Art

THIS LESSON ENCOURAGES YOUTH IN 1ST-6TH GRADE TO OBSERVE THE WILDLIFE IN THEIR BACKYARD AND EXPLORE DIFFERENT STYLES OF ART.

## BACKYARD BIRDING

**More than 500 bird species have been observed in Washington State.** 189 of these species are threatened by our changing climate. Birds are important parts of healthy natural systems, serving as pollinators, predators, scavengers, seed dispersers, and engineers. Birds tell us a lot about the function of natural systems and environmental health because they respond quickly to changes and are fairly easy to see and to study.

Birds are more likely to frequent areas with bountiful food and habitat. What do birds like to eat and where do they live? Most birds prefer to eat small seeds and berries and build nests in trees. People can attract birds to their yards by building birdhouses or hanging bird feeders.

**Conduct a 1 hour birding study.** Find a comfortable place to sit with a pad of paper and a writing utensil in either your yard or a public park. Write a description of each bird you see and even draw a quick sketch if you have time. Record how many of each bird type you see. What are the birds doing? Are they feeding or making nests?

**After your 1 hour study, try to name the species you saw.** To help identify which birds you are seeing, consider using an online resource such as BirdWeb. Use your memory, notes, and sketches to help you.

**How many different species did you see?**

**What were the birds doing?**

**How could the space you observed be more welcoming to birds?**

**What does the bird activity you observed tell you about the health of your nature space?**

## BIRD ART STUDY

**Two famous artists who both loved to paint birds are Charley Harper and James Audubon.**

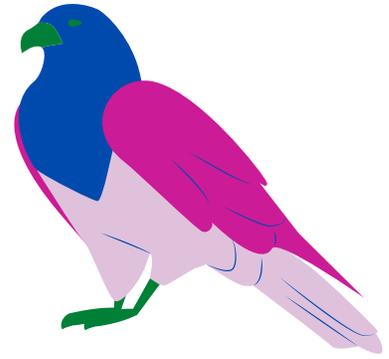
Although they both painted birds, their styles were very different. Look up examples of their art online and compare and contrast their work.

**In what ways are Audubon's and Harper's work similar?**

**In what ways are they different?**

**What do you think each of their goals was for their art?**

**Is there one style you connect with more than the other?**



**Audubon made realistic detailed paintings about the birds he saw.** This is because he lived before cameras were around, so art was the one way to communicate visually over long distances. People used his art to identify birds.

**Harper, on the other hand, only painted a bird's most general details.** He liked to use bright colors and patterns in his art. He painted after the camera was popular, so people could look at a photo if they wanted a scientific image of a bird. Harper painted to convey his impressions of the bird.

## CREATE YOUR OWN BIRD ART

**Now it's time to create your own art!** Choose one of the birds you saw in your birding study as the subject of your art. Next, choose whether you would like to render your bird realistically like James Audubon, or more abstractly like Charley Harper.

If you want to create art like James Audubon, consider using watercolor, acrylic, oil, or tempera paint, colored pencils, or markers to create your masterpiece. Spend a lot of time on the details of your work. Sometimes it helps to draw a grid on your reference photo and then focus on recreating one square of your grid at a time.

If you want to create art like Charley Harper, try making a construction paper collage. Use scissors to cut out pieces of paper in the shape of the bird's wings, body, head, neck, feet, beak, and tail. Add details such as eyes, sticks, or a nest using more pieces of paper. Use craft glue to paste it all together on a sheet of paper!



INSPIRED BY JAMES  
AUDUBON



INSPIRED BY  
CHARLEY HARPER

