

KIDS' PAGE

DISCOVER NEW AND EXCITING STUFF FROM THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM

SONGBIRDS

There are more kinds of songbirds in British Columbia than any other bird. Two hundred species of songbirds can be found in this province. Most of the birds you see around your house are songbirds - robins, sparrows, swallows, starlings and crows are songbirds.

Songbirds are also known as perching birds because they have feet that are specialized for perching. Three of their toes face forward and one, the strongest, points backwards. This allows them to tightly grasp a branch or another kind of perch so that they won't fall.

Although not all songbirds are musical, they all have a very well developed vocal organ called the syrinx. The better a bird can control its syrinx, the sweeter and more precise its song.

A bird song and a bird call are quite different. Calls are usually short and simple and used to signal things such as danger or hunger. Birds of all ages and both sexes produce bird calls all year round. Bird songs are long, complicated and repetitive. Some birds sing for hours at a time. The male songbird is usually the singer and his song, which is heard during the breeding season, may have two functions. It may help to defend or advertise his nesting territory or it may attract potential mates.

Most songbirds migrate twice a year, spending spring and summer in one area, and fall and winter where the climate is warmer.

Make your own bird feeder

Most songbirds migrate south to spend the winter in warmer regions. Those that stay in this area for the winter (and those that have migrated here from the north) must keep warm and find enough food to survive. Songbirds eat mostly insects and seeds, things that are not very abundant in the winter, so sometimes they can use a little help, especially when there is snow on the ground.

You can make a bird-feeder using a 2 litre plastic pop bottle, some wire and a stick.

First rinse out the empty bottle and let it dry. Ask an adult to help you cut a hole in one side a little more than half way up the bottle. The hole should be about 10 cm tall and 7 cm wide.

Next use the scissors to punch a small hole about 2 cm below the bigger hole, and another on the opposite side of the bottle. These holes should be just big enough for the stick to slide through. Push a stick through the small holes so that it pokes out on both sides of the bottle. Birds will use it as a perch while feeding.

Wrap one end of a piece of wire around the neck of the bottle, and tie the other end to a tree branch so that the feeder hangs freely. Don't use string, or squirrels and raccoons can chew through it and cause the feeder to fall. Hang your feeder in a tree where you can see it from a window and where you can reach it to refill it. Leave the cap on the bottle so rain doesn't get in the top. Fill your feeder with bird seed and watch the birds come for a meal.

Empty and wash your feeder about once a week so that it's a healthy place for birds to eat.



The Cone Feeder

Take a large pine cone, cover it with peanut butter and roll it in wild bird seed. Attach a wire to the pine cone and hang it from a tree branch.

Ingredients
Peanut butter
Wild bird seed

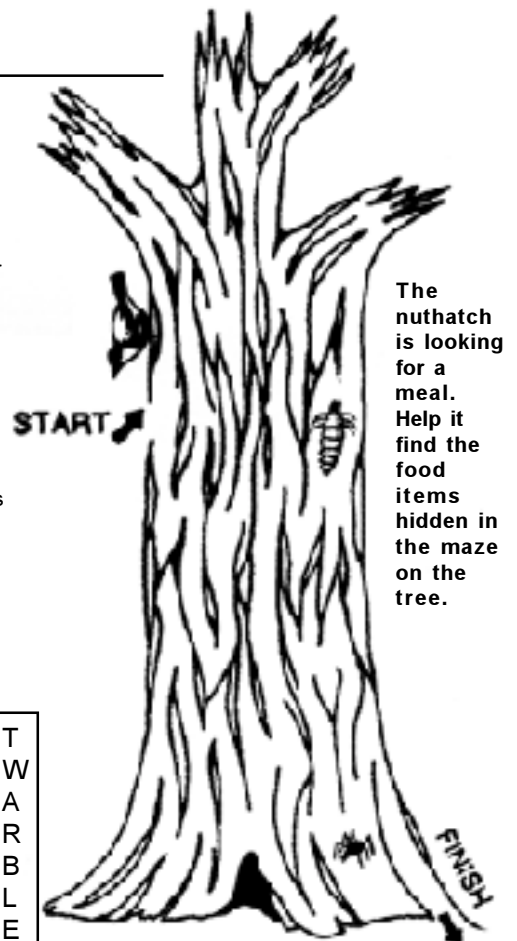


Did You Know?
Gray Catbirds meow like cats.

The Up-side-down Bird

Nuthatches are small birds known for their ability to walk up, down and around the trunk and branches of trees, gripping the bark with their strong claws. They are sometimes called "upside-down birds" because they walk down trees head first looking for insects, seeds and spiders. By walking down the tree the nuthatch finds food in bark crevices that other birds can't see when climbing up the tree. Sometimes it's good to look at things from a different angle!

Did You Know?
B.C.'s provincial bird is a songbird.
Unscramble the letters to reveal its name.
LTELRS'EAYJ



The nuthatch is looking for a meal. Help it find the food items hidden in the maze on the tree.

SONGBIRD WORD SEARCH

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| BIRD BATH | PURPLE MARTIN |
| BLUEBIRD | ROBIN |
| CHICKADEE | SPARROW |
| FEEDER | STARLING |
| HOUSE WREN | STELLER'S JAY |
| MEADOWLARK | SWALLOW |
| NEST | THRUSH |
| NUTHATCH | WARBLER |

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U	S	T	A	L	L	A	N	O	C	N	P	B	A	W	I	W
F	W	O	A	D	P	N	C	K	E	R	W	W	A	O	R	A
P	A	A	B	R	E	Y	J	E	P	I	S	D	R	D	E	R
O	L	E	H	J	L	F	E	O	I	F	E	S	I	B	A	B
B	L	L	P	U	R	P	L	E	M	A	R	T	I	N	L	L
I	O	F	W	M	T	H	R	U	S	H	Y	E	A	R	Y	E
R	W	E	O	K	R	M	E	A	D	O	W	L	A	R	K	R
D	I	E	D	U	O	W	L	O	L	T	H	L	S	B	W	E
B	S	D	P	I	B	I	L	T	I	C	H	E	W	O	O	P
A	T	A	E	T	I	H	N	E	T	H	U	R	O	W	D	A
T	A	K	A	H	N	U	N	A	O	S	A	S	L	R	E	Y
H	R	C	Y	A	R	N	H	T	C	F	E	J	P	E	R	G
A	L	I	T	M	C	T	A	N	I	E	Y	A	T	D	Y	R
B	I	H	H	O	U	S	E	W	R	E	N	Y	A	E	P	I
P	N	C	U	N	O	T	H	R	P	W	R	T	N	E	S	T
A	G	E	I	O	Y	H	M	S	U	H	S	W	G	F	D	O
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