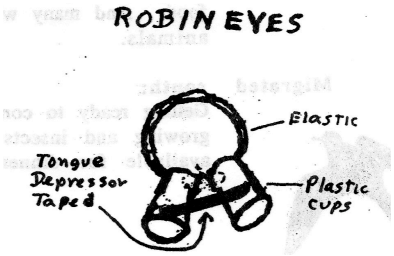
GRADE 1 SPRING NATURE WALK
Animals and What They Need to Survive

OBJECTIVES:

- Observe seasonal changes in schoolyard, woods and meadow since winter.
- Discover how seasonal changes affect animals.
- Learn about robins and other birds.
- Discover food sources and compare with other seasons.
- Explore the schoolyard, woods, and meadow for animals and signs of animals.

PREPARATION:

- Schedule this walk for mid- to late May, early in the morning.
- Walk should last about 45 minutes.
- Classroom organizers: Remind teachers to notify the school nurse one week ahead of the walk so the nurse can check for allergies in the classroom.
- Gather materials before walk. Check to see that there are enough "Robin Eyes" so each child in your group has one.



MATERIALS:

- Tongue depressors labeled: *food, water, warmth, shelter, air.*
- "Robin Eyes" and yarn "worms."
- Clipboard and pencil, Spring Observation Report, Nature Walk Evaluation.
- Common Bird and Bird Silhouettes ID sheets.
- Bug boxes and hand lenses – approximately one for every 2 children.

ACTIVITIES:

- Observe birds and look for bird nests.
- Watch robins hunting worms; use "Robin Eyes;" discover worm castings.
- Explore changes in the schoolyard, woods, and the meadow.
- Explore and record animals, animal signs, water and food sources, and shelter.
- Walk leader fills out Spring Walk Observation Report during walk.

AFTER THE WALK:

- Leave Spring Observation Report with the teacher.
- Fill out Nature Walk Evaluation and leave in BBY room.
- Return all materials to BBY room.

Map: Spring walk

PRE-WALK ACTIVITIES: TO BE LED BY THE TEACHER

1. **Curriculum Connection: Science—Organisms.**
   Ask: *What season is it now? Are you happy to see spring and warmer weather? Why or why not? What changes does spring bring for the animals in our schoolyard?* Review the four ways animals survive winter. Ask: *What do you think is happening to animals in each group?*

   - **Hibernate:** They have woken up with the warm weather and are HUNGRY.
   - **Stay active:** They don't have to work so hard to find food and shelter, and to get different kinds of food in their diet.
   - **Die and leave eggs or larvas:** The eggs are hatching into new larvas and the larvas are emerging from their cocoons or pupas as adults, all looking for food. Many of these will be food themselves for other animals.
   - **Migrate south:** They are coming back now that plants are growing and insects and other mini-creatures are available for dinner.

   Ask: *How do you think the schoolyard, woods, and meadow will have changed? Will there be birds or other animals there you didn't see in the winter? What animals? Why? Do changes in weather affect animals and plants? How?*

2. **Curriculum Connection: Science--Organisms.**
   Review what all animals need to live and grow. A habitat is a place where organisms find all these things.

   Ask: *Is spring a better time to find things that animals need to live and grow than winter? Think about today's weather. How has the weather changed since winter and early spring?* (More sunlight, warmer air, rain instead of snow.) *How have habitats for birds and other animals in the schoolyard, woods, and meadow changed in springtime? Are there more food sources? Is there better shelter both for protection from storms and from predators?* (Trees have leaves, many wildflowers are growing.)

   - **Water:** The snow and ice have melted, there is more liquid water to drink.
   - **Warmth:** Longer hours of sunlight means warmer temperatures in the soil and air.
   - **Air:** The air is warmer.
   - **Food:** More food sources as plants begin to grow, and insects and worms become active.
   - **Shelter:** Shelter will be better when more leaves grow.

NATURE WALK: TO BE LED BY BIG BACKYARD VOLUNTEER

1. **Observe changes since winter.**

   - Walk outside and look around. Ask the children: *How has the weather and the schoolyard changed since winter? Is it easier for birds and other animals in the schoolyard, woods, and wet meadow to "make a living"? Why?* Possible answers include:

     - Air: warmer—easier for animals to stay warm.
     - Water: rain instead of snow; there is water to drink.
     - Wildflowers (including grass): many are growing.
     - Trees: trees have leaves.
     - Sun: higher in sky, more hours of sunlight.
     - Ground: warmer, maybe muddy.
     - Food: more food sources as plants begin to grow and insects and worms become active.
     - Shelter: Better shelter, especially when more leaves grow.

2. **Look and listen for birds. Write observations on worksheet.**

   - Walk towards the woods and meadow and look for birds. Look for robins, red-winged blackbirds, chickadees, sparrows, blue jays, crows, tree swallows, and hawks overhead. Ask: *Some of these birds spent the winter in the south where is is warm. Why have they returned now?* (Warmer days bring better shelter and protection, more food sources, including insects as well as seeds, fruits, and nectar in flowers.)

   - Listen for birds. Ask: *Why are they singing? Do you hear these songs in winter? Can you tell the different calls?* (Some songs are to help them find a mate so they can have baby birds. Some calls warn of danger or to shoo away another bird from their territory.)

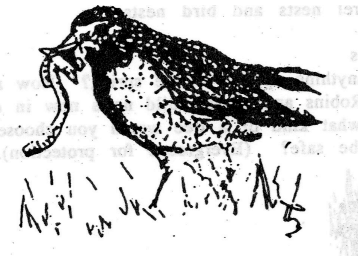
   - Ask: *Would you like to be a bird? Why or why not? What do you suppose the schoolyard or woods looks like from up in the sky? Can birds do things we can't do?* (Build a nest with their beak, see behind them, sing those beautiful songs, fly.)

3. **Observe robins.**

   - Observe robins hopping around in the grass, looking for worms. (If there aren't any robins, encourage children to talk about their observations of robins.) Ask: *What are they doing? Why do they tip their heads to the side? What are they looking for? Where are their eyes? Where are people's eyes?* (Robins are often seen looking for food. Robin eyes are on the side of the head, human eyes are in the front. A robin tips its head so that it can see better. Food might be worms and insects.)

- Use the tongue depressors to remind the children what robins need to survive. (Warmth, food, water, shelter, air.)

- Look for worm castings/worm poop (little piles of dirt in the grass).

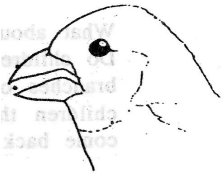


4. **Use "Robin Eyes."** Say: *Pretend you are a robin.* Introduce robin eyes.

   - Show the children how to put on the "Robin Eyes." Let children just have fun looking with them for a few minutes.

   - Scatter the yarn worms on the ground. Let children pick up worms with their hands, then ask: *Do birds have hands?*

   - Discuss where a bird's beak is located (right between its eyes!). Discuss the advantages of having eyes on the side of your head like a robin. (Early warning for danger, seeing behind and above better than we do with eyes in the front.) Ask*: What other animals have eyes on the side of their heads*? (Rabbits and deer among others.)



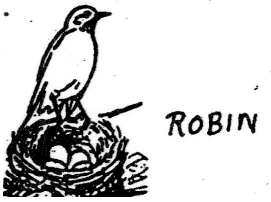
   - Have children hunt for their dinner using their fingers like a beak in front of their nose. Ask them to notice whether they need to tip their head to see the yarn worms.

   - Collect the eyes and yarn worms. 

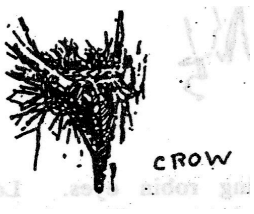
5. **Explore the meadow. Write observations on worksheet.**

   - Explore the meadow looking for evidence of animals and insects. Ask: *Why are birds and other animals drawn to this habitat?* (Plenty of food sources, water and shelter.) Make a list of food sources, water, warmth and shelter. Things children may find include:

     - Food or signs of eating:
       - Seeds and berries, nectar in flowers.
       - Small branches bitten off (rabbit or deer).
       - Insects or insect eggs (including ants and ant hills).
       - Galls.
       - Worm castings.
       - Holes dug in dirt made by skunks hunting grubs.
       - Scat: Rabbit, deer, fox, dog.
     - Shelter:
       - Meadow mouse tunnels.
       - Squirrel nests and bird nests.



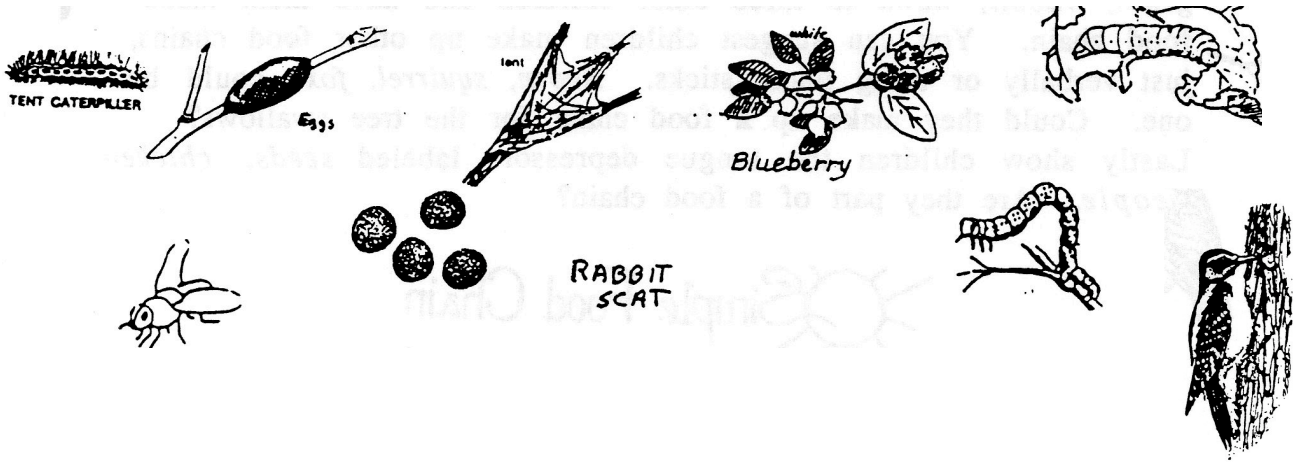
- **Look for bird nests.**
  Robins, red-winged blackbirds, and crows build nests in early spring. Some choose evergreens for protection. Robins use grasses and mud, with softer grasses in the center. Crows use grasses and twigs. Some birds use milkweed fluff or other soft plant material. Birds usually do not use a nest again, but build a new one each spring. Some birds build nests in low shrubs close to the ground, but only after the leaves have come out.



  Mention that baby birds can fall out of their nests. Well-meaning people sometimes take them home to "rescue" them. Scientists Drumlin Farm say that this is not a good idea. It is very hard to take care of baby birds. Birds feed their babies with worms and insects more than 100 times a day! Also babies often jump out of the nest just before they learn to fly. The best thing to do if you find a baby bird is to leave it where it is. The bird parent will most likely come to feed the baby. (If cats are in the neighborhood, it is also OK to place the baby in a box and put it up in a bush or tree for the parent to find—most birds can't smell, so they would not know that a human touched the baby. Don't forget to wash your hands with soap and water afterward.)

6. **Explore the woods. Write observations on worksheet.**

- What signs of animals, or sources of water, shelter, and food can children find in the woods?
  - Woodpecker holes.
  - Galls, tent caterpillar and other insect egg cases.
  - Chewed green leaves and acorns.
  - Many seeds and berries.
  - Deer, fox, and rabbit scat.
  - Animal tracks.



7. **Wrap up.**

- Walk back to the school.
- Give the Spring Walk Observation Report to the teacher.
- Return all materials to the Big Backyard room.
- Fill out a Nature Walk Evaluation and leave it in the Big Backyard room.

POST-WALK CURRICULUM INTEGRATION OPPOPTUNITIES: TO BE CHOSEN AND LED BY THE TEACHER

1. **Curriculum Connection: Language Arts.**
   Have each child pretend to be an animal in their schoolyard and draw a picture of the schoolyard as it would look to that animal. They could choose to be a robin, a crow, a skunk, a grasshopper, an ant, a squirrel, a rabbit, or any other animal that lives in the meadow or woods near the school. They could be in their home or out looking for food. For example: If you are an ant, the blades of grass may look like trees, many times bigger than you are, but the door of your shelter will be just the right size. Or imagine that you are a hawk soaring over the schoolyard looking for a mouse.

   - After doing the drawing, have each child write several sentences about their animal and how it lives. Include the animal's shelter, food and water sources.

   - In small groups have children share their drawings and written sentences with their friends. Post all reports in the room.

2. **Curriculum Connection: Art/Language Arts.**
   Fold a piece of drawing paper in half twice, then open it up to make four sections. Label the sections Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. Have each child choose a bird or other animal and draw their choice with its shelter and food sources in each season.

   - Then have the children write a short story about how their animal lives in each season.

   - Share their drawings and story with a friend.

3. **Curriculum Connections: Library Research.**
   Ask children to choose a favorite schoolyard animal. Invite them to tell what is special about that animal. Challenge students to make a list of questions about their animal. Guide them in using library resources or the Internet to answer these questions. Tell students that this is another way scientists learn about the world. They wonder about things, ask questions, and try to find answers.

4. **Curriculum Connections: Science--Food chains.**
   Hand out tongue depressors labeled *leaves, caterpillar, robin* to three children and ask them to read their stick and then take the hand of what they eat. They've made a food chain! Give *grass, rabbit, hawk* to three other children and have them make a food chain. Suggest that children make up other food chains, just verbally or using blank sticks. *Acorn, squirrel, fox* could be one. Could they make up a food chain for the tree swallows or other birds that they observed on their walk? Lastly show children tongue depressors labeled *seeds, chicken, people*. Are they part of a food chain?

5. Reflections: **Thinking about animals living in the schoolyard and the Grade 1 Nature Walks.**
   Say: *We have made many discoveries about the animals in our Big Backyard this year. What did you like most about your Nature Walks this year? Were you surprised to learn how many birds and other animals live in the schoolyard, meadow, and woods near our school? Did you enjoy learning how these animals live? How can you learn more about animals near your home or the place where you go on vacation? What tips would you give someone who wants to do this?* (Look for food sources, walk quietly, observe closely, etc.)

Walk Leaders—Winter Walk Observation Report
(Please give to teacher after walk.)

ANIMALS SEEN (including birds and insects)/ACTIVITIES OF ANIMALS:

SIGNS OF BIRDS AND OTHER ANIMALS:

HABITAT: FOOD SOURCES:

HABITAT: SHELTER:

Things that interested the children and questions they asked:

NATURE WALK EVALUATION
(Please leave in Big Backyard Room)

Walk Leader:_____

Grade and Teacher:_____ **Date:**_____

Children in Group:_____

1. **What parts of the walk interested the children the most? (check all that apply)**

Identifying birds	Animal signs	The woods
Robin Eyes	Holes in ground or trees	The meadow
Nests	Seeing animals	Edge area
Food sources		

Other:_____

2. **What parts were not successful? (check all that apply)**

Identifying birds	Animal signs	The woods
Robin Eyes	Holes in ground or trees	The meadow
Nests	Seeing animals	Edge area
Food sources		

Other:_____

3. This walk was: (circle one) TOO LONG JUST RIGHT TOO SHORT

4. The children seemed adequately prepared: (circle one) YES NO

5. This was a good working group: (circle one) YES NO

6. I felt adequately prepared to lead this walk: (circle one) YES NO

Other comments or suggestions: