



# Our Feathered Friends Brownie Try-It

Girl Scouts of Wisconsin – Badgerland Council



Pick four of the six activities on this list to earn the Girl Scout Brownie 'Our Feathered Friends' Try-it.

## Beaks and Feet and Feathers, Oh My!

Birds have distinct features that make them different from other animals. Using pictures of birds and of other animals make a list of things birds have in common that make them different from other animals. How might these special features help birds survive?

## Can You Tell Them Apart?

Birds come in many colors, shapes, and sizes. Many birds have colors and markings on their bodies that help identify them. The shape of their body, tail, wings, and beaks can also help you tell them apart. Look at pictures of birds in books, on the Internet, or go bird watching. Look for parts of their bodies such as rings around their eyes, stripes on their wings, colors on their breasts, tails that are very long, very short, or stand up that help you identify them. How many different birds can you recognize using these special features?

## Bird Calls

Bird calls are another great way to identify birds. One kind of bird might make many different calls. However, more often, each species has one call that it makes frequently which is different from other birds. Using a bird call cd, tape, or on the internet listen to bird calls. Which ones seem similar to other birds? Which ones are easy to recognize? How many different bird calls can you learn to recognize?

## I Spy

Birds can be very difficult to see. They often move quickly, are small, and are afraid of people. Binoculars can be very helpful for observing birds. Follow the steps below to help you practice using binoculars. Then, use binoculars to go bird watching.

- 1) Put the binoculars around your neck and adjust the eye width to match your own.
- 2) Take them away from your face.
- 3) Locate the object you want to view.\*
- 4) While looking at the object, bring the binoculars up to your eyes.
- 5) Adjust the focus until the object in the binoculars is clear.

The idea is to look at the object and bring the binoculars up to view the object, not to put the binoculars up to your face and then search for an object.

### **Bird Habitats**

All living things need food, water, shelter, and space to survive. A habitat is the space an animal lives where it gets its food, water, and shelter. Birds live in many different kinds of habitats. Some live in the desert. Some live in the rainforest. Birds live in wetlands, fields, prairies, and even in the arctic. Pick a specific kind of bird. Find out what it needs to survive; what kind of shelter it makes, what it eats, and how it gets water. Make a picture of your bird in its habitat. Include its food, water, and shelter.

### **Help Our Feathered Friends**

Think about how a bird's habitat could change. What could happen in nature that would make it hard for a bird to live? What might humans do to the bird's habitat that makes it difficult to survive? Many birds are losing their habitat. They are having a hard time finding food, water, or shelter suitable for them to live. Do a service project to help improve bird habitat. You might put up a bird house, bird bath, or bird feeder. Or, help improve natural bird habitat by planting trees or shrubs to give birds shelter. Or, plant flowers that might provide seeds or berries for birds to eat.

**To order badges and patches from Badgerland Council Contact the Madison Girl Scout  
Center Trefoil Shop at 608.237.1173.**

# Girl Scouts of Wisconsin – Badgerland Council Our Feathered Friends Try-It Booklet



Information and activities to help Girl Scout Brownie troops complete the  
Our Feathered Friends Try-It

The following information and activities are designed to give troop leaders and other adults the information they need to help girls complete the requirements for Girl Scouts of Wisconsin – Badgerland Council’s Girl Scout Brownie **Our Feathered Friends Try-It**. Each section corresponds to the Try-It requirements.

## **Beaks and Feet and Feathers, Oh My!**

*Birds have distinct features that make them different from other animals. Look at pictures of birds and of other animals. Make a list of things birds have in common that make them different from other animals. How might these special features help birds survive?*

You may want to have a general discussion on “what makes a bird a bird” before passing out the pictures of birds and other animals. You can present it in a fun way such as suggesting the girls pretend an alien from another world has come to visit Earth. The girls want to describe the different kinds of animals that live here. How would they describe a bird? Common things on the list will be beaks, wings, and feathers. Other things to consider include that birds are warm blooded, lay eggs, have scales on their legs, and walk on two limbs instead of four or more. After passing around pictures of birds and other animals, you may want to prompt them to look at specific bird features they mentioned to see HOW they are different from the other creatures in the photos. Then, get them to try to see new differences that haven’t been discussed yet. Talk about how these special features help them survive. Here are a few examples:

- Flying helps them escape predators and move to areas with more food and better shelter (migration).
- Feathers give warmth while making the bird EXTREMELY light. Goose down is used in coats and sleeping bags to give lots of warmth because it traps air in between the feathers, yet is very light.
- Standing upright on two legs can make it easier to spot predators, reach food, carry items in your mouth, etc.
- Being warm blooded allows birds to regulate their body temperature in cold environments so they can survive without having to hibernate.

## Can You Tell Them Apart?

*Birds come in many colors, shapes, and sizes. Many birds have colors and markings on their bodies that help identify them. The shape of their body, tail, wings, and beaks can also help you tell them apart. Look at pictures of birds in books, on the Internet, or go bird watching. Look for parts of their bodies such as rings around their eyes, stripes on their wings, colors on their breasts, tails that are very long, very short, or stand up that help you identify them. How many different birds can you recognize using these special features?*

Here are several different activities to help girls identify birds.

### Body shape and size

Body shape and size can be very important in identifying birds both in flight and perching. Look at the attached bird silhouette poster. Compare the size and shape of their body, tail, wings, feet, and beaks. Look for special shapes like crests on heads, long tails, pointed or round wings, or the number of toes on their feet to help identify them. Try to guess the identity of some of the birds in the poster. Find at least 3 birds in the poster that have unique features and learn their name and how you will remember what they look like.

### Coloration and body markings

In the following activities, look for these colors and markings:

- Bright colors on their bodies especially on their breast, head, tail or rump
- Eye rings - does the bird have a light or dark circle around its eye?
- Eye colors – most birds have dark eyes, but some have colored eyes such as red or yellow.
- Wing bars – light or dark stripes on their Wings
- Any other distinctive markings you notice

Pass out pictures of birds that live in your area. Have the girls look for the identifiable markings noted above. Show pictures of similar female birds and do the same. Use Audubon stuffed bird toys (available in Badgerland Council's "**Birding Trunk**") to match them to the pictures of the birds they've been looking at based on the distinctive colorations and markings. Now identify the stuffed birds using field guides or the Internet or someone in the group who knows what they are. Try to have the girls learn the names of some of the birds and their markings.

Introduce the "Using Binoculars" section and allow the girls to practice before doing this activity. Hang pictures of birds on trees and plants in the woods so you can see them all from one location – about 10-30 meters away. Have the girls look at the bird photos through binoculars. Have them identify the birds using a field guide or the stuffed toys. Be sure to emphasize the special features they should be looking for.

## Bird Calls

*Bird calls are another great way to identify birds. One kind of bird might make many different calls. However, more often, each species has one call that it makes frequently which is different from other birds. Using a bird call cd, tape or other means, listen to bird calls. Which ones seem similar to other birds? Which ones are easy to recognize? How many different bird calls can you learn to recognize?*

Here's a few options:

### Stuffed toy bird activity

Split the girls into groups of 2-4. Give each group two or three stuffed birds. Be sure the girls know the names of the birds you give them. Have the girls listen to the calls of the birds and try to learn them. Then collect all the birds and have everyone sit in a circle. One by one introduce the stuffed bird and play its call. Have the girls talk about the different sounds each makes and try to imitate the call. Once you've gone over all the birds and reviewed them, blindfold the girls and have them identify each bird by sound. You can make it a game by choosing teams and keeping points for correct ID.

Another variation would be to give each girl her own stuffed bird and give her a few minutes to learn its sound. Then blindfold all the girls and play the bird calls one by one. When the girls hear the call from their bird, they identify it. At the end, each girl should have her original bird back.

You can do similar ideas with bird whistles or a bird call cd. Blindfolding the girls helps them concentrate on the sound. Having them attempt to make the sound or vocalize (using words) what they think the call sounds like is one of the best ways to help them memorize the call.

### **I Spy**

*Birds can be very difficult to see. They often move quickly, are small, and are afraid of people. Binoculars can be very helpful for observing birds. Follow the steps below to help you practice using binoculars. Then, use binoculars to go bird watching.*

- 1) *Put the binoculars around your neck and adjust the eye width to match your own.*
- 2) *Take them away from your face.*
- 3) *Locate the object you want to view.\**
- 4) *While looking at the object, bring the binoculars up to your eyes.*
- 5) *Adjust the focus until the object in the binoculars is clear.*

*The idea is to look at the object and bring the binoculars up to view the object, not to put the binoculars up to your face and then search for an object.*

With Brownie Girl Scouts in particular, you'll need to reemphasize the concept of spotting the object first, then bringing the binoculars up to their eyes to see it instead of searching an area with binoculars already up to their face. It just seems unnatural to do it the correct way, but it is virtually impossible to spot smaller objects such as birds without sighting them first. After you explain the proper use of binoculars to the girls, have them practice using one of the following activities.

Split the girls into two groups and give binoculars to one group and pieces of paper with large letters of the alphabet to the other. Have the girls stand in two rows about 15 – 20 yards apart so each girl with some letters stands 15 yards away from a girl with binoculars. If it is too easy to see the letters from this distance, have the girls stand further apart. Each girl should hold up a letter and the girl using binoculars should identify the letter by looking through her binoculars. To practice adjusting the focus, have the person holding the letters get closer or move further away or use pictures of letters of different sizes.

Do the activity listed under "Can You Tell Them Apart- Coloration and body markings where the girls look for bird pictures using their binoculars.

For a fun birding hike, take the stuffed bird toys or pictures of birds and hide them in trees and on the ground in the woods along a hiking path. Take the girls bird watching, but don't tell them about the birds you've hidden. The girls will be surprised by the stuffed toys and will still get to work on their bird identification and practice with the binoculars if they don't see any live birds on their hike.

## **Bird Habitats**

*All living things need food, water, shelter, and space to survive. A habitat is the space an animal lives where it gets its food, water, and shelter. Birds live in many different kinds of habitats. Some live in the desert. Some live in the rainforest. Birds live in wetlands, fields, prairies, and even in the arctic. Pick a specific kind of bird. Find out what it needs to survive; what kind of shelter it makes, what it eats, and how it gets water. Make a picture of your bird in its habitat. Include its food, water, and shelter.*

You can do this activity as individuals where each girl chooses her own bird and looks it up on the Internet or you can have all the girls learn about same bird by reading a story about a specific kind of bird to the entire group and then letting them each make their own picture. Another idea is to brainstorm with the girls about birds they already know. Have them list several different kinds of birds that live in different places. Pick 5 or 6 of the birds they list and discuss where each one lives, what kind of shelter they live in (nest, hole in tree, cliff, mud house), and what they eat. Most birds don't have to worry about drinking water. They get enough moisture through the food they eat. Water usually isn't a factor but it's good to discuss it.

## **Help Our Feathered Friends**

*Think about how a bird's habitat could change. What could happen in nature that would make it hard for a bird to live. What might humans do to the bird's habitat that makes it difficult to survive. Many birds are losing their habitat. They are having a hard time finding food, water, or shelter suitable for them to live. Do a service project to help improve bird habitat. You might put up a bird house, bird bath, or bird feeder. Or, help improve natural bird habitat by planting trees or shrubs to give birds shelter. Or, plant flowers that might provide seeds or berries for birds to eat.*

There are several options and many organizations in your local community who would love to have girls do a service project. Here's some project ideas followed by a list of organizations you can contact who would love to have your girls help with a service project.

- Donate bird seed. Girl Scouts of Wisconsin - Badgerland Council would greatly appreciate your seed donation to keep our feeders at Brandenburg, Echo Valley, Stetler, Oakwood Knoll, Ehawee, and Black Hawk. Simply drop off at the nearest Girl Scout office or any of our properties. Many nursing homes and parks also need birdseed to keep their feeders full.

- Make suet feeders or peanut butter pinecone feeders and hang them at one of Badgerland Council's properties or a nursing home or park or other outdoor facility. A suet recipe is attached at the end of this booklet.
- Make bird houses or bird feeders, particularly bluebird boxes, to put up at a park (with permission) many organizations would love to have your bird houses.
- Create brush piles in the woods to provide woodland birds with natural shelter and safe hiding from predators. Badgerland Council encourages this at our properties and many parks would also be amenable.
- Plant a wildflower garden or some kind of fruiting tree or shrub. Many nursing homes would love to have girls work on creating an area to attract birds. Many other organizations would be happy to work with your troop on this kind of project as well.

For other project ideas or for a place to do your project contact your local, county or a state park, or agencies like these:

**Governor Nelson State Park** is located in Waunakee. Contact the Park Superintendent at 608-831-3005.

**The Nature Conservancy** has land all over our council, especially in the Baraboo area. Contact Katie King for areas close to you at 608-251-8140.

**The Ice Age Trail** Contact Don Ferber at 608-222-9376 for specific locations.

**The UW-Madison Arboretum** is located in Madison. Call 608-263-7888 for more information.

**The International Crane Foundation** in Baraboo also has project options. Call 608.356.9462, extension 142 or email [jgarland@savingcranes.org](mailto:jgarland@savingcranes.org).

## Suet Feeders

One batch will fill five 8oz cups

1 cup lard (Crisco works okay)  
1 cup crunchy peanut butter

2 cups birdseed or quaker oats  
2 cups cornmeal  
1 cup flour  
½ cup sugar

Melt lard and peanut butter together  
Mix dry ingredients and add melted peanut butter/lard mixture and stir.

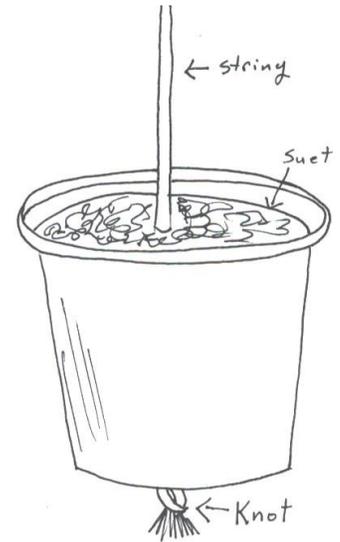
You can also add things like dried fruits such as cranberries and cherries or unsalted nuts

Explain the process to the girls then split them into groups of 5 or 6. Give each group their own large bowl to mix their own batch of suet.

Melt the lard and peanut butter together on a low setting so as not to burn the peanut butter. Each small group will need a recipe and can mix the dry ingredients in their large bowl. When they are done, come around and add the melted lard/peanut butter mixture. (Don't heat it too much and have all the girls stand back so it doesn't burn anyone.) Have the girls stir it all together

Give each girl a paper cup, have an adult help poke a tiny hole in the bottom with a pencil or scissors. Then put a string through the hole and tie a big knot so the string stays in the cup like a candle wick. Have each girl spoon the suet mixture into the cup and pack it tightly around the wick. Fill the cup and have the girls put their name on it. (They can also squish the suet mixture around the string, forming a ball rather than using the cups.) Put the suet in the freezer overnight. The next day they can peel off the paper cup and tie the suet to a tree branch for the birds.

*Don't let the girls carry the feeders by the strings or they will probably pull out of the cups. Once they have been frozen, they can be hung by the strings but not before.*



# Roadside Silhouettes

- 1 MOURNING DOVE
- 2 HOUSE SPARROW
- 3 GRACKLE
- 4 STARLING
- 5 COWBIRD
- 6 RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD
- 7 KINGFISHER
- 8 BLUE JAY
- 9 MOCKINGBIRD
- 10 SONG SPARROW
- 11 SHRIKE
- 12 FLICKER
- 13 BLUEBIRD
- 14 NIGHTHAWK
- 15 ROBIN
- 16 KILLDEER
- 17 PHEASANT
- 18 PURPLE MARTIN
- 19 BARN SWALLOW
- 20 CLIFF SWALLOW
- 21 KESTREL
- 22 CARDINAL
- 23 MEADOWLARK
- 24 KINGBIRD
- 25 HORNED LARK
- 26 PHOEBE
- 27 BOBWHITE
- 28 CROW

