

North and South



Teacher-led Classroom Activity
Science/Research Skills/Social Studies/
Writing/Art

What are characteristics and habitat requirements of neotropical migratory birds?

Objective

Students learn about birds that migrate between North America and Central and South America and create a large-size field guide of selected species.



Students Will Need:

- Reference materials on North American migratory species (online resources, field guides and other reference books)
- Art materials: paper, colored pens/pencils/markers

Suggested Time:

Three or more class periods plus homework time to research species and create a page for a class book; other sessions as necessary to correspond with contacts.

What to Do

1. In advance, compile a list of neotropical migrants for students to research by visiting the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's list of neotropical migrants (<https://www.fws.gov/birdhabitat/grants/nmbca/birdlist.shtm>) or the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's migratory bird list (<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/news/neotropical-migratory-bird-basics>).
2. Discuss the term "neotropical" with students using a map. The prefix "neo" means "new," and refers to what is known as the New World—North, Central, and South America. In geography, "tropical" refers to regions around the center of the Earth, above and below the equator. In the New World, the region from central Mexico south to central South America is considered to be the tropics.
3. Tell students they will be creating large-sized pages about neotropical birds that will be compiled to create a "big book" class field guide. The pages will be based on their research and include their artwork. You can identify migratory birds that spend time in your region for students to research, or you can let students make their own choices.
4. Have students work individually or in pairs to prepare pages for the "big book." The pages should include one or more images of the bird, either created by students or found online. Students should also write a physical description of the bird, what it eats, its habitat requirements, its migratory range, and other interesting information about the species.
5. Once the pages are done, set aside class time for students to present their pages to the group before assembling them into a book. Make the book part of your class library. You might also arrange to display it in the library or other public area of the school.