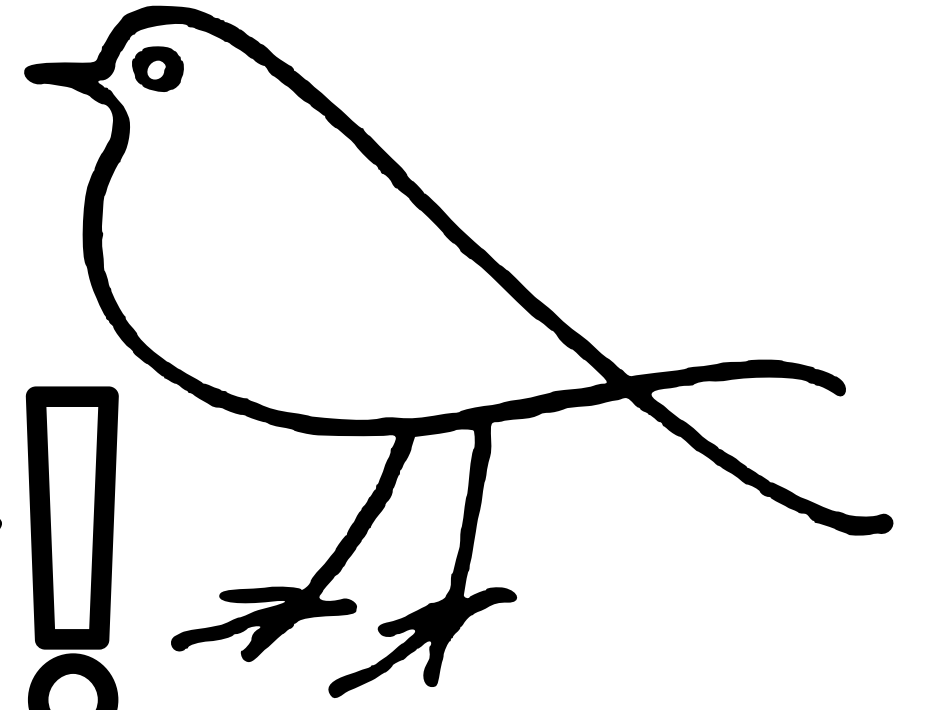


Bird Talk!



Objectives:

- Students recognize that birds communicate continually with their flock, their family and other wildlife.
- Students compare human communication with animal communication.
- Students observe and draw inferences from birds communicating in their backyard, or local park or nature area.

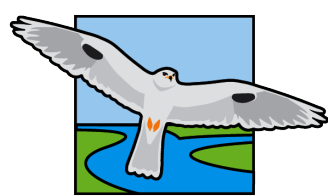
Honk! Trill! Squeak! Tweet! Hoot!

Everyone loves a beautiful bird song! But what is that bird saying? Is he just singing to sing, or is he sending a message in bird talk?

Every day, birds--just like humans--need to connect to others for a variety of reasons. Birds communicate constantly with their flock, their family and even other wildlife. Birds, big and little, communicate in three ways: 1) singing, 2) calls and 3) body language.

Birds love to sing complex songs to announce their territory, courtship and mating. But most of the sounds they make are calls that give specific messages to others. Birds also use body language, often together with song or calls, to further highlight what they are trying to communicate.

For example, male wild turkeys gobble loudly to attract females. Once attracted, the male puffs his tail out and up proudly. He coos as he struts slowly around the ladies, displaying his finely kept and healthy feathers. He is telling the females that he is a fine choice for a mate. "Pick me!" he is saying.

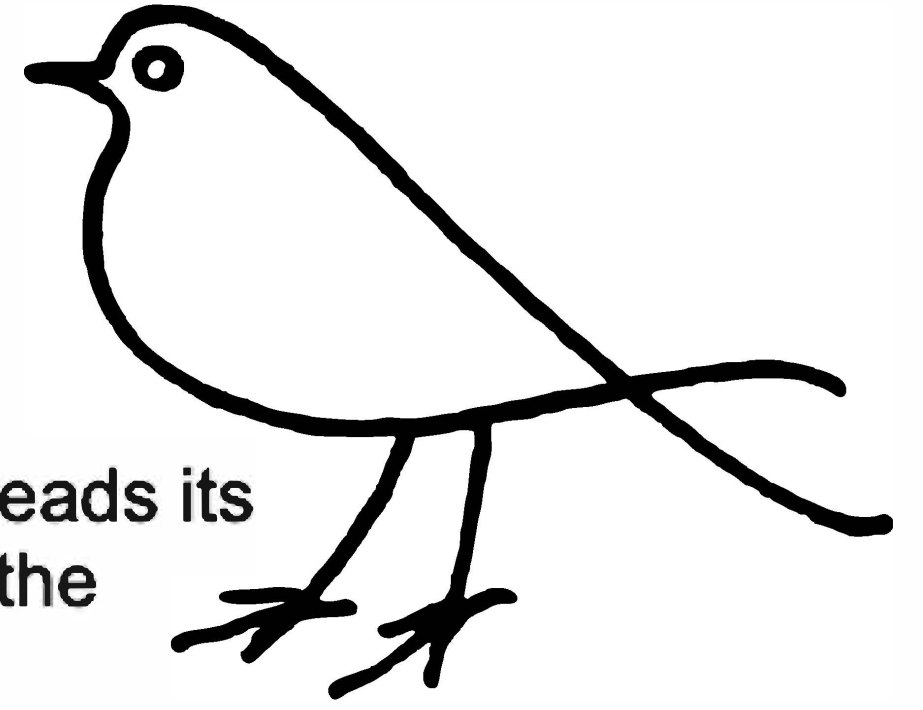


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Let's Bird Talk!

Here are some examples of bird talk. Pick the best choice:

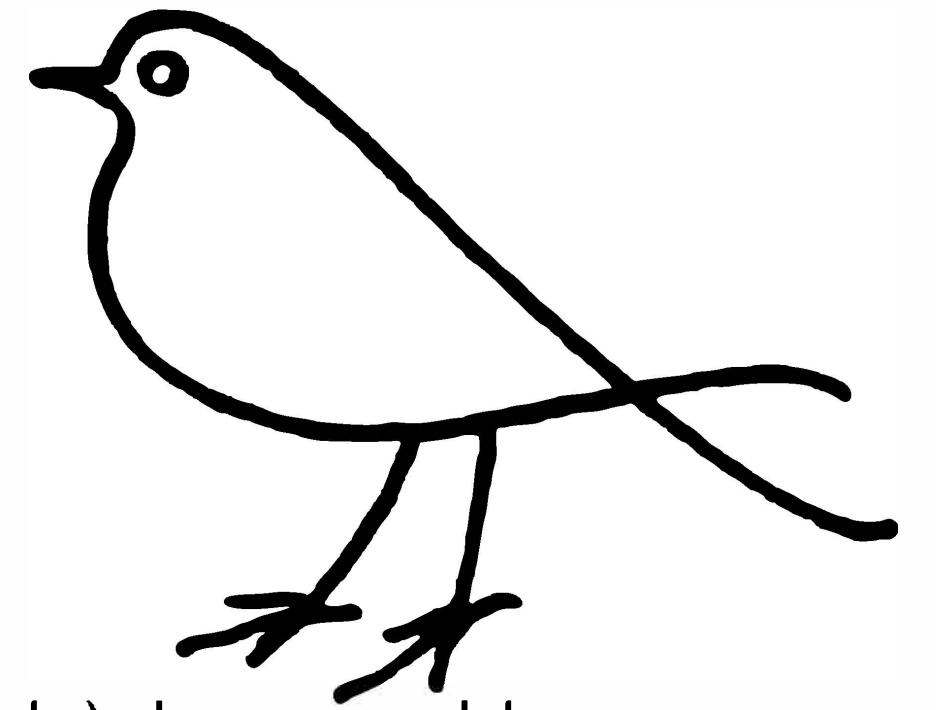


1. A goose is approached by another goose. The goose spreads its wings out, stretches its neck long and low, and hisses at the approaching goose. What is the goose saying?
A. Get away from my nest
B. Howdy friend
C. Let's go get food
D. I like you
2. There's a male mockingbird perched in a tree with his feathers fluffed, singing complex songs, all day and all night. What is he saying?
A. I can't sleep
B. I like waking up the neighbor
C. I'm lost
D. I'm happy because my babies have hatched
3. A young blackbird sits on the tree limb. As its parents fly by, the young bird hollers and flutters its wings. What is the bird saying?
A. I'm hungry
B. Look at me
C. I need you mom and dad
D. All of the above
4. A flock of crows is flying by. They stop abruptly near a large tree and start cawing loudly. Then, in turn, they fly up, swooping down and dive bombing a certain part of the tree. What are they saying?
A. Check out my flying skills
B. I like to be noisy and noticeable
C. Watch out! There's a predator hiding in the tree
D. I want to live here
5. A single sandhill crane flies over the wetland. He calls to those cranes below who have landed. They call back. Back and forth the calls go. What are they saying?
A. Come on down, it's safe
B. Where are you? I am here
C. I can't find my family group
D. All of the above



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Try to Bird Talk!

Using only bird calls and bird body language (no human words), how would you convey these messages to your parents and/or siblings?

Use these bird sounds and body language:

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|-------|---------------|
| Singing | whine | thump | wing flapping |
| squeak | click | caw | chasing |
| squawk | honk | chirp | diving |
| gurgle | croak | coo | puff feathers |
| trill | whistle | chip | strutting |
| rattle | howl | | |

A. I'm happy

B. I'm hungry

C. Watch out!

D. Get out of my room

E. Where are you family?

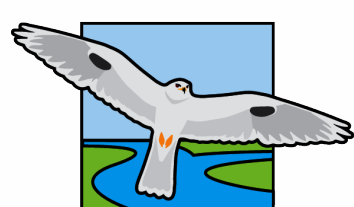
F. I'm in trouble!

G. I love you

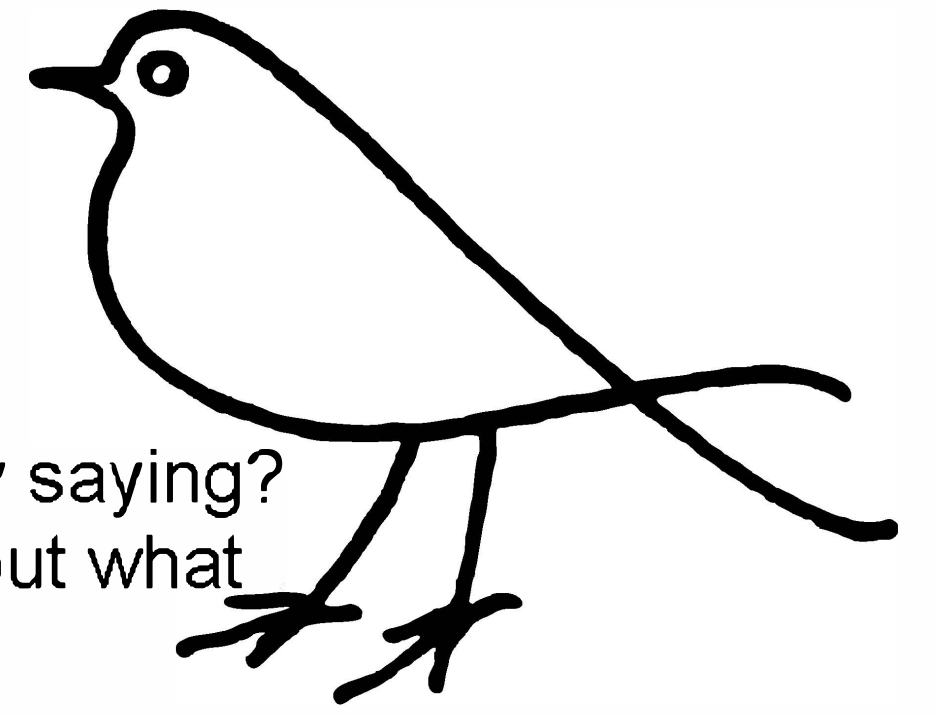
H. I'm gorgeous

I. Let's go!

Once you've decided how to convey each message as a bird, try them out with your parents or siblings. Did they understand you? Why or why not?



Look Who's Talking Investigation



What birds are talking in your neighborhood, and what are they saying? You do not need to know the name/species of a bird to figure out what they're talking about.

Go outside in your backyard, or to a local park or nature area. Sit quietly, look around and listen.

What do you hear?

_____)

What do you see?

What are the birds saying?

_____)

Extension: Pick a bird you observed. Find out its species name. Research the bird to find out about its life. Write a short story from a bird's point of view. Include songs, calls and body language.

