

Wing It!

This activity does not require any materials and gets us “flapping our wings.” We’ll be diving into some of the incredible capabilities birds have!



Background

Oftentimes we can observe many different types of birds outdoors. We also can observe them flying - but not all birds fly the same. Some birds can soar, some can't, and some can even fly backwards! They have many unique qualities and when we look at their average wing beats per second, we see a wide set of numbers!

Key Terms

Wingspan - the maximum extent across the wings of an aircraft or of a bird or other flying animal, measured from tip to tip

Procedure

- Before starting, make an educated guess on how many times you think you can flap your “wings” in ten seconds!
- Extend your “wings” (make sure you have plenty of space!) and count how many times you can flap your “wings” in ten seconds. Remember - a full flap is putting your arms up high and then back to your sides.
- Compare your results to the birds listed below. Was your guess accurate?

| Bird | Wing Beats/10 Seconds |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| American Crow | 20 |
| American Robin | 23 |
| Rock Pigeon | 30 |
| European Starling | 45 |
| Black-Capped Chickadee | 270 |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 700 |

Extra Activities

Drawing Conclusions: Can you think of reasons there are wide differences between the wing beats birds have? Think of things such as size, lifestyle, or behaviors.

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Math: Using the comparison chart above, try to figure out the following problems!

1. How many times does a Rock Pigeon flap its wings in 30 seconds?
2. How many times does an American Crow flap its wings in a minute?
3. How many times does a Black-Capped Chickadee flap its wings in 2 minutes?

Art: Design your own bird - but focus on the wings! Be as creative as you like, but think about where your bird will live and what kind of wings it would need to be successful!

