Survey of Species Composition at BIRDLINK – Local and Migrating Birds

Background: Native plants rely on wildlife for pollination and reproduction, but wildlife like birds also rely on native plants. Native plants provide the basic needs of food as well as shelter for birds. Local birds that live in a region all year long benefit from native plants for their nectar and the insects they attract. Millions of birds that fly long distances for more food or to reproduce make these journeys twice a year. These migrating birds need places to rest and refuel along the way. To survive and thrive, local and migrating birds need sites with native plants in different landscapes. BIRDLINK is exactly one of those sites that offers food and shelter to birds. Learn more about how native plants attract birds in this fun survey!

Some questions that could come up from this survey of BIRDLINK are what birds visit the site or which birds at the site are migrating, residents or of conservation concern?

The purpose of this survey is to learn how important native plants are in supporting a variety of bird species. The time frame of this survey could be a one-time visit for data collection or long-term over months to observe seasonal changes of bird visitation at the structure.

Materials: bird field guides, bird dichotomous keys, ethograms to collect animal behavior data, bird call recorder, computer with bioacoustic analysis programs, binoculars, smartphone with wildlife identifying apps, sketch books, paper, color pencils, pen/pencil

Procedure:

1. Look at the birds visiting BIRDLINK structure and work to identify them. Take pictures of birds before they fly away! Then use field guides, dichotomous key or phone apps like iNaturalist or PlantNet to identify as best you can.
2. For each bird that you identify, write down the common name, scientific name (*Genus species*), whether the bird is local to your area or migrating, the way that you identified the bird, a sketch, and if the bird is of conservation concern.

Now that you have identified some birds at BIRDLINK, what is the most interesting fact you have learned so far?

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Data Collection:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Is this bird native to the area? If not, is it migrating?	How did you identify the bird?	Sketch the bird here	Is the bird of conservation concern?

After you have collected data for this survey, draw a figure that would display the data in a visual way. It could be a pie chart, bar graph, etc.

Conclusion

a. What trends did you find in your data? Refer to the figure you created above.

Additional discussion questions could be: how many native insects did you identify vs. non-native? Where are the non-native insects originally from? Are some of the insects you identified considered pollinators? Why are pollinators important/why should we provide habitat for pollinators?

b. Why do you think it is important to study the bird make-up at BIRDLINK? Why do you think we should focus on insect biodiversity and conservation in spaces like these?

Supplemental Activity

After observing the structure and the bird life visiting it, fill out this chart to gather your thoughts:

I notice...	I wonder....
It reminds me of....	Drawing of your favorite bird at BIRDLINK