

Wrap Your Mind around Raptors

THEME

Raptors have powerful tools for survival that make them the champions of the sky.

SUB THEMES

1. Raptors are predators at the top of their game.
2. Raptors are like vehicles; they come in many shapes and sizes.
3. These carnivorous birds have some disgusting habits.

VOCABULARY

Raptor, predator, prey, talons, adaptations, owl pellets

ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Beak nose, large glasses, goggles, 2 forks, 2 towels, big ears, prop cue cards for guide, beak and talon artifacts, 5 toy vehicles, 5 silhouettes & ID cards, 50+ popsicle sticks, rope, markers, brown bags, string, cotton balls

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and state the title of the activity. Preview the main points of the activity and give students an idea of what they will be doing. Conversationally state the theme and sub themes. Without showing the students any of the artifacts and materials from the lesson, ask: **What comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘raptor’?** Explain that the word raptor means ‘to grasp or to seize’ and it is a word used for predatory birds. These birds of prey hunt other birds, rodents, other small mammals, and some invertebrates for food.

ACTIVITY

Ask for a volunteer to stand up. Ask the students in the group to name some of the characteristics common in raptors (hooked beak, excellent vision, sharp talons, great hearing, strong wings, and eye membranes). As each characteristic is named, dress up the volunteer with the corresponding prop and describe its attributes using the cue card. Have the volunteer sit down and put the materials away. Next, bring out the beak and talon artifacts and allow the students to examine them. Ask: **How do you think these help them eat** (relate it to using a fork and a knife)? Stress the strength that these birds have and that these tools are special adaptations to hunt prey.

Next, pass out the toy cars and trucks to the group. Have each student describe to the group the characteristics of the vehicle they are holding. Using the cue cards and silhouettes, make comparisons

Teacher’s Corner

Grade Level(s)

3rd, 4th and 5th

State Performance Indicators

SPI 0307

-2.2: Determine how plants and animals compete for resources such as food, space, water, air, and shelter.

-3.1: Identify the basic needs of plants and animals.

-3.2: Recognize that animals obtain their food by eating plants and other animals.

-5.1: Investigate an organism’s characteristics and evaluate how these features enable it to survive in a particular environment.

SPI 0407

-2.1: Recognize the impact of predation and competition on an ecosystem.

-3.1: Determine how different organisms function within an environment in terms of their location on an energy pyramid.

-5.1: Determine how a physical or behavioral adaptation can enhance the chances of survival.

SPI 0507

-2.1: Describe the different types of nutritional relationships that exist among organisms.

-5.1: Identify physical and behavioral adaptations that enable animals such as, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals to survive in a particular environment.

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ACTIVITY (cont.)

to the corresponding raptor (eagle, hawk, falcon, vulture, and owl). Break the group up into three smaller groups. Explain that the students are going to test out their raptor skills at different stations. Take the whole group over to each station and explain how it works. Be sure to time each station at five minutes and to blow the whistle when time has been reached.

Station #1: Students are going to test out their raptor vision by collecting as many Popsicle sticks (camouflaged mice) as they can from within the grassy area before the whistle blows. Explain that they need at least 10 “mice” to survive. This is a good way to demonstrate how good a raptor’s eyesight is for finding tiny mice that blend in with their habitat.

Station #2: Students are going to test their raptor identification skills by looking at several different silhouettes and determining which type of raptor they see. Students work as a team to match up the identification card with the corresponding raptor silhouette.

Station #3: Students are going to test out their raptor wings. Explain that not all raptor wings are created equal. Using the plain side of the rope, swing as hard as you can to make a whirling noise. Now swing the side that is covered in foam. The foam covered side is like an owl’s wings. They have special wings that allow them to fly silently at night. Allow each student to try.

Bring the group back together for the discussion.

DISCUSSION

Explain that even though these birds are beautiful and graceful, they have some pretty disgusting habits that would make your skin crawl. Vultures have bald heads because they stick them inside of dead carcasses while eating and it is no fun when your feathers are gooey. Owls and some other raptors throw up, but it is not because they are sick. In fact, it is similar to a cat throwing up a hairball. They throw up the indigestible parts of their prey such as hair and bones. If there is time remaining, have the students make their own “throwing up” owl out of paper bags, string and cotton balls.

WRAP-UP

Let the group know that the activity is coming to an end. Conversationally review the theme and sub themes. Collect the data sheets. Give the teachers any of the materials that students are able to take home with them. Encourage students to look for raptors in the sky and in the tree tops along roads with a sense of pride.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Information about conservation issues concerning birds of prey is readily available on the internet. Discuss issues such as pollution, competition, and habitat loss. Encourage students to think how this might impact rodent populations and subsequently our food supply from farmers (milk, grain, etc.). Have students put together posters depicting this top predator’s role in the ecosystem.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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