



The BLUES Go Birding Across America

Outside Game: “I Am Aware Of..”

(adapted from *A Teacher's Guide to How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate*)

Just like the BLUES, children love to see wild birds. Prepare for a bird-watching outing by playing a game that practices careful observation. It’s a quiet game that involves very little talking. It doesn’t require any materials. The only prep is to choose an area that has a diversity of plants and animals, such as bushes and trees as well as birds, bugs, or butterflies.

Directions for playing:

1. It’s important that children can easily hear each other during the game, so arrange your group close to one another. If you have a large group, children may stand in a circle or you may have them sit in two or three lines. Alternately, you can divide them into smaller groups. (The smaller the group, the easier it may be for the children to stay engaged. If you use small groups, be sure to move among them to make sure they stay focused on making observations.)
2. Have children sit quietly and look around the area. Ask them to use one of their senses to become aware of something in the area. Explain that each person will take a turn completing the phrase, “I am aware of . . .” Give an example such as, “I am aware of the clouds in the sky,” or “I am aware of the pattern of shadows under the tree,” or, “I am aware of the wind blowing on my face.”
3. After each sharing, have children silently take a moment to appreciate each other’s awareness. They may need to turn around to see what’s been identified.
4. Remind children that the only person who talks is the one who is sharing an awareness. Sitting quietly and looking around the environment is good practice for bird watching. Often the quieter you are, the more you will see.
5. Keep the activity fun by doing it only as long as children are engaged.

Below is one teacher’s experience playing the game:

We were sitting on a hill in two rows with about six in each row. We were facing a pond. I explained the activity. Usually with a large group I would have each person share one awareness. But with this group of children I decided to try an experiment to see how long they could continue sharing. We went up and down each row. After each sharing there was a pause as we all tuned in to what was said. After awhile it was taking more time for the children to come up with new awarenesses. As it came to one boy I remember him starting, “I am aware of . . .,” and then he paused. Time passed as he searched for something new to say. We were all looking around and wondering what he would come up with. He began again, “I am aware of . . .,” pause. Suddenly, a large dragonfly buzzed by, just inches from the faces of those sitting in the front row. Everyone burst out laughing. We had all become so focused together we knew exactly what the boy was going to say. It was a very special moment of group sharing.

Note: Another way to prepare for a bird-watching outing is to read and discuss *Eggbert’s Birding Tips*.