All about Birds

We began our bird unit by discussing the parts of a bird, what birds eat, where they live and that they hatch from eggs. We read “Life Cycle of a Bird” by Bobbie Kalman, “Bird Eggs” by Helen Frost, and “Beaks” by Sneed B. Collard III. The dramatic play center was turned into the Green Room Aviary, where children could take turns visiting birds, sketch birds and listen to a variety of bird songs by using the book “Bird Songs From Around the World” by Les Beletsky.

Owls

During the second week of our theme, we took a closer look at the owl. We compared and contrasted the different kinds of owls that exist. We learned that an owl’s egg is round and white like a golf ball. We also discussed where owls live and what they eat. We talked about how they are birds of prey and that they prefer to hunt at night. We read “The Littlest Owl” by Caroline Pitcher, “Owl’s First Flight” by Mitra Modaressi and “Owls” by Gail Gibbons during circle time. The dramatic play center was transformed into a bird sanctuary where owls and other birds live. The friends worked together cutting leaves for trees and adding flowers and wildlife by drawing on the brown paper that covered the walls of the dramatic play center.

Penguins

During week three, we switched our focus to penguins. We learned that these flightless birds can live in cold weather like the penguins in Antarctica or in warmer places like the penguins who call Australia or South Africa their home. “The Little Penguin” by A.J Wood and “If You Were a Penguin” by Wendell and Florence Minor were some of our favorite books to read during circle time. The dramatic play center became Antarctica. We covered the floors and dramatic play center walls with white “snow.” We colored penguins and used them to play in the scene.

Backyard Birds

Pittsburgh is home to a variety of birds. In our fourth week of our bird emphasis, we explored the birds that we might see in our own backyards. We also focused on our state bird the ruffed grouse. The friends had the opportunity to sketch the state bird and add it to our ruffed grouse booklet. We enjoyed “Have you Seen Birds?” by Joanne Oppenheim and Barbara Reid and “About Birds” by Cathryn Sill to lead our circle time discussions. The dramatic play center was transformed into a bird’s nest. The nest is a great place for the friends to sit together and play bird board games.

Flight

During our final week of the theme, we focused on flight and things that fly. We read “How Bird’s Fly” by Bobbie Kalman and “In the Air” by Samantha Berger. We used this week to make the connection between birds’ flight and how it has inspired air transportation for humans.
Birds and Flight Activities

Here is a closer look at some of our favorite activities and games that we have enjoyed during this theme.

Caring for birds

Throughout the bird theme, the friends have made it a priority to care for our feathered friends. We made bird feeders for our playground. We mixed Crisco, sunflower seeds, cornmeal, oatmeal and coconut. Then we placed the mixture in a container and in the freezer. Once frozen, we placed the mixture in a suet basket and hung it on the playground for the birds to enjoy! We also made individual bird feeders for the friends to take to their own backyards. We recycled small milk cartons by turning them into bird feeders. The friends decorated the bird feeders with buttons, foam pieces and wooden shape pieces. We also made a nest starter kit for birds. The friends worked together to compile yarn, fabric pieces, ribbon and strips of newspaper. We put them inside of a net material and hung it from a string on a tree so that the birds can fly by and take what they need to complete their nest.

Bird Beak Buffet

In this activity, the friends experimented with various utensils (spoons, toothpicks, tweezers, tongs) and pretended that the utensil was a beak. The children experimented with picking up various seeds and cooked pasta with the "beaks." They compared and discussed how each utensil was different in picking up the materials.

Owl Pellets

The friends were surprised to learn that owls swallow mice, rats, birds and other small creatures whole. Because owls cannot digest the bones and hair of these creatures, they regurgitate them in the form of an owl pellet. The friends had an opportunity to dissect owl pellets. We used tweezers and wooden picks to sort through the hair to find bones. We used diagrams of mice, rats, birds and shrews to see if we could recognize what the owl had eaten.
Bird Art

We enjoyed a variety of bird and flight related art activities during the last few weeks. Our favorites included: making collage birds with a variety of different colored and shaped paper, sketching birds with colored pencils, designing black and white pattern bead jewelry, ice cube painting and working together to paper mache and then paint an airplane.

Creative Writing: Bird Stories

After hearing stories, listening to songs and participating in bird themed activities, the friends were asked to tell the story about a bird. They dictated their stories as the teachers wrote their words. Then the friends illustrated their stories. It was wonderful to see that the children were using information that they have learned about birds and also being creative in their storytelling.

Bird Games

Count your Chickens, Hoot Owl Hoot, Seeds for Birds, and Orchard are the terrific cooperative bird games that we’ve been enjoying during the month of February. Count your Chickens is a game in which the friends try to get the chicks back to the hen house before the hen returns. Hoot Owl Hoot is a game where the friends try to get four owls back home before the sun rises. Seeds for Birds is a game where the friends try to collect as many seeds for the baby birds before the squirrel collects them. In Orchard, the friends are trying to collect all of the fruit from the trees before the crow puzzle is completed to signify that the crow has won.

The friends have also been enjoying math games like Tip Top Tally, a game in which friends are adding to get to the end of the game, and Owls in a Tree, a game where children take owls from a tree and count how many are left.
Ruby, Jane, Adeline, Simone and Lorelei are painting with ice cubes.

Sally and Joya are making penguin pattern bracelets.

Ruby, Jane and Emma are painting peacock feathers.

Sasha is exploring the owl pellet.

Elena is proud of her creative writing story about birds.

Broden is sketching the ruffed grouse.

Julia M. is enjoying the visit from the kindergarten parakeets.

Lola, Lynn and Sasha playing the flight memory tray game.

Vivian, Lola, Carlos, Julia and Lena are showing the birds that are in the aviary.
Special Guests and Birthdays

Sally’s Mom and her sister shared a story on Sally’s birthday.

Julia G’s Mom and grandmother shared a story for her birthday.

Milo’s Dad visited the Green Room to celebrate Milo’s half birthday.

Charlie A. was joined by his family to celebrate his half birthday.

Sam’s family came to celebrate Sam’s birthday.

Ben’s Mom visited for Ben’s Birthday.

Adeline’s grandmother joined Mrs. Opferman’s circle and shared a story.

Muriel’s Mom shared a book about Chinese New Year and did a folding envelope activity.

The Aviary educators visited the friends twice during our Birds and Flight theme. In the photo above, Jamie is showing the friends Barkley, a screech owl.

Ms. Debbie shared some bird stories with the friends during her visit.
Can You Believe We’ve Been In School 100 Days?
To celebrate the 100th day of school, the friends enjoyed a variety of special activities. Special 100th day of school crowns were made and worn throughout the day. Friends helped make a chain consisting of one hundred links and added one hundred items to a three dimensional banner. For a special snack, children enjoyed counting ten cheerios, ten teddy grahams, ten goldfish and other treats until they had one hundred pieces of snack.

Basil’s Mom helped the friends make a chain with 100 links in it.

Lola and Tayshawn are adding items to our 100th day of school banner!