



Campbell Creek Science Center

The Five S's of Birding

Anyone can learn how to properly identify bird species. If you can remember some key characteristics of a bird, you can then use a field guide to identify it. Practice noticing the Five S's (shape, shade, size, sound, space) when you see a bird and you will be well on your way to quickly identifying it.

Directions

1. Familiarize yourself with the Five S's using the information at the top of page 2.
2. Head outside and practice using the Five S's to help focus your attention on the key features of birds you see. If you have binoculars, bring them along to get a closer look at each bird.
3. Use the table on page 2 to record information about each bird you see.
4. Use a field guide, website, or bird app to help you identify each bird based on your notes.

Materials

- 5 S's table (on page 2) and pencil or pen
- Bird field guide, app, or website
- Binoculars (optional)

Questions

- What notes helped you identify the bird? What additional notes would you take next time to distinguish the birds?
- What bird species live near you?



Hint: I am named after my bright colors. Answer on back.





The Five S's of Birding

1. Shape



What general shape does the bird have? Do any parts of the bird stand out as big or small? Is it tall with long legs? Round with a short tail? Oblong with a long neck?

2. Shade



What major colors and patterns do you see on the bird? Are there different colors on different parts of the bird (head, bill, legs, wings, etc.)? Are there stripes or spots on any part of the bird?

3. Size



How big is it? Compare its size to a bird you know. "Is it larger or smaller than a robin?"

4. Sound



What sounds is it making? Is it a long, complicated song or a single short note? Can you count any repeating notes in what you hear?

5. Space



What sort of habitat is the bird in? Is it perching high in a tree? Swimming and diving in the water? Walking on mud flats? Hopping on the ground?

Observe three birds using the 5 S's. Record the details you notice in the table below.

	Shape	Shade	Size	Sound	Space
Bird 1					
Bird 2					
Bird 3					

Answer: Who am I? I am a Yellow Warbler.



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