

# Ranger Paula's WILD At-home Adventures: BIRDS!



Hi Kids! I'm Ranger Paula, official mule deer and naturalist for Open Space & Mountain Parks. Like many of you, I'm doing my best to stay safe at home right now. Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the opportunity to explore all the nature I can find near my home!

Did you know spring is one of my favorite times of the year? Every day something new and exciting emerges in the plant and animal world. I just love the delicious smell of fresh grass, watching the trees grow buds, keeping an eye out for tasty wildflowers, and of course listening and watching for my bird friends!

Spring is such a great time for birding because migrants are arriving from near and far, birds are pair bonding, and they're establishing their territories and building nests all around our communities. Since it's such a great time to observe birds and we're all staying close to home, I thought I'd let you in on a little secret...*you can be a birder too!* Birds flit through most neighborhoods and they are available for all of us to see. All you have to do is slow down and pay attention to who is showing up.

**Check out the activities below to get started on your birding adventure!**

## Storytime Adventure - Spring Birds!

This video features my friend Debbie reading a story about some of her favorite birds! She even has a couple of activity ideas for you to do just outside your door. Follow this link to watch her reading a story: [Spring Birds Storytime](#)

## Build a Bird Feeder!

[Click here](#) for fun and easy ideas for building a bird feeder with items you already have at home. Please just remember that my buddy the Black Bear has finally woken up from her long nap, so it's important to hang your bird feeder where she won't be able to reach it. Read Colorado Parks & Wildlife's information on [How to Feed Birds and Not the Bears](#).



## Be a Naturalist!

Have you ever watched an insect crawl across the grass or wondered what the squirrels are saying to each other? If so, you are already a naturalist!

Keep on building those brainy scientist skills with these birding activities:

- Use your senses to observe the birds in your neighborhood
  - Watch and listen for birds from your window, yard, or while exploring your neighborhood.
  - What colors are their feathers?
  - What shapes are their beaks?
  - How big are they?
  - What do they sound like?
  - What are they doing? (Perching, soaring, hovering, eating, drinking?)



- If you have binoculars, you can use those to get a closer look.
  - For younger naturalists, begin developing the skill of focusing on birds by making your own binoculars out of items you have at home. [Here's How](#)
  - Record your observations. Write down as many details as you can about the birds you see and hear. I really like [Cornell's All About Birds](#) website for discovering more information on the birds I see. For more nature journaling ideas, see below.

- Try to identify your birds!
  - Use [Ranger Paula's Common Bird Practice Sheet](#)
  - See what birds live in [Boulder County on the Audubon website](#) – nice photos!
  - Use a guidebook. If you do not already have one, you can buy one from a local bookstore. Some stores sell secondhand guides, and you can pick one that suits you best (like a lightweight one for your backpack).
  - Use an identification app. I especially like the [Merlin app](#) by Cornell School of Ornithology (Ornithology means the study of birds!)
- Ranger Paula's Top Three Tips: Birding
  - Enjoy yourself.
  - Take your time.
  - Be patient.

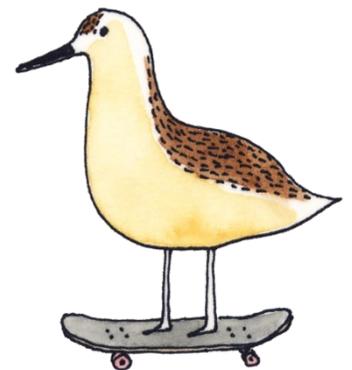
All animals have fascinating life stories and superpowers that are fun to learn about. Take your time and research the birds you observe and identify. I really like to record important and interesting bird facts I discover on flashcards and quiz myself.

## Nature Journaling!

My nature journal is my most prized possession. It's where I record my curiosities, observations, and sometimes I even sketch and write poetry.

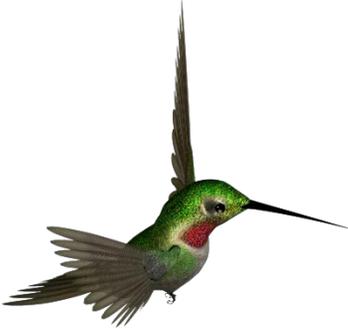
- To get started, you can learn how to [Make Your Own Nature Journal](#) from my friends Jeff & Paige and Miguel from Thorne Nature Experience.

The best thing about a nature journal is that there are NO RULES! You can put whatever you like in there. You can draw in it, make a list, or even press flowers and colorful



leaves you find. Just remember, plants and flowers you see on Open Space are food and habitat for me and my wild friends, so please only pick flowers that are right outside your door and leave enough for the rest of us.

- If you need ideas for what to write in your journal, here are a few suggestions to get started:



- Write a story from the perspective of a bird that can see the entire world from above.
- What is your favorite season? Why?
- Choose something in nature you can see through your window. Describe how it looks and moves and sounds (if you can hear it) or imagine how it might sound, feel, and smell.
- If you could have any bird superpower, what would it be? Write or draw a story about that.

### Challenge yourself!

- Use your nature journal to keep a bird count. Record the date that each species arrives and next spring you can see if it is the same. Share your neighborhood bird sightings with Cornell's [Project FeederWatch](#) and help scientists track long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Here's what my bird count journal looks like:

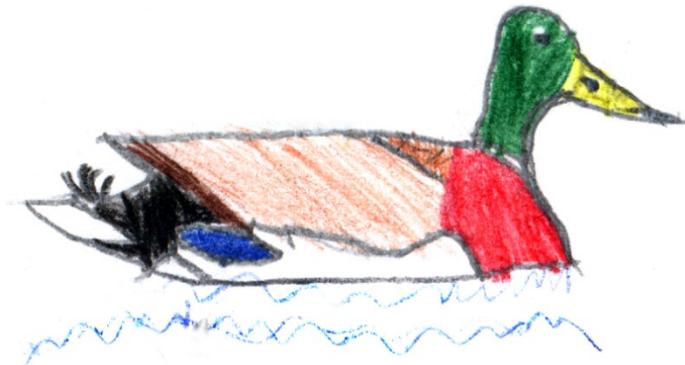
- *Black-capped Chickadee (3/12 – pairs)*
- *Dark Eyed-junco (3/12 – small flock)*
- *House Finch (3/12 lots of pairs)*
- *Song Sparrow (4/1 – single individual)*
- *Cassin's Finch (4/13 – a flock of 50!)*

- Listen and practice identifying birds by their songs too. I know the song of the Canadian Goose.

### Make Nature Art!

Sometimes creating art helps me better understand and connect to the natural world. . Here are some ideas for bird art projects!

- Go on a photo hunt to capture the birds on your checklist.
- Take a video of birds on your daily adventures.
- Draw or paint one of the birds you saw today. You can use crayons, colored pencils, watercolors, or anything else you can find around your house.



## Keep Exploring!

Now that you have some ideas for getting started with birding, keep looking for activities and resources to help deepen your understanding of the nature around you. Here are some of my favorite links:

[Bird Feeders: How to protect songbirds from predators](#)

[Be a Habitat Hero](#) - Boulder County Audubon Society

[National Geographic Kids - Birds](#)

Learn Bird Songs – Kids and adults can play Cornell Lab's [Bird Song Hero](#) online game

[K-12 Bird Sleuth activities](#) from Cornell Lab to hook young birders.



## Learn More with a Ranger Paula Passport to Wild Adventure!

You can pick up a Passport booklet at the [Chautauqua Ranger Cottage](#) or [download a copy here to print at home](#). Participants are asked to go on four hikes on OSMP, join two [free educational nature programs](#), eat some locally grown food and sit quietly on a rock. Once completed, the Passport booklet can be redeemed for a stylish Ranger Paula sew-on patch.

## Ask Coyote Bob!

Do you have questions about what you see? Or do you want to know about the plants, animals, rocks, or history of Open Space and Mountain Parks? [Follow this link to Ask Coyote Bob!](#) He is a one-coyote encyclopedia of far-out facts, intriguing information and detailed data about the Boulder Valley.

**¡Y Coyote Bob habla español también!** ¿Tienen preguntas acerca de lo que ven? O ¿quieren saber sobre las plantas, animales, rocas, o historia de los Espacios Abiertos y Parques de Montaña (OSMP)? [Envíen sus preguntas al Coyote Bob.](#) El es un “coyote-enciclopedia” poseedor de hechos hermosos, información intrigante y datos detallados del Valle de Boulder.



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