

Photo Description



This image shows a large black bird with long, thin legs standing on the ground. The bird has a small, wrinkled head and neck that looks very different from its big body. You can see its gray legs and feet clearly as it searches on the grass and dirt for food to eat.

Scientific Phenomena

Anchoring Phenomenon: A vulture (or similar scavenger bird) foraging for food on the ground.

Why This Happens: Scavenger birds have special adaptations that help them find and eat dead animals. Their excellent eyesight allows them to spot food from high in the sky. Their bare heads and necks help keep them clean when eating messy food. Their long legs allow them to walk across different terrains searching for meals. This behavior is an important part of nature's cleanup crew—scavengers help decompose dead matter and recycle nutrients back into the environment.

Core Science Concepts

1. **Animal Adaptations:** Birds have special body parts (long legs, bare heads, sharp eyes) that help them survive and find food in their habitats.
2. **Food Chains and Roles:** Different animals have different jobs in nature. Scavenger birds eat dead animals, making them an important part of the food chain.
3. **Habitats and Behaviors:** Animals behave in ways that match where they live. This bird's ground-foraging behavior helps it find food in open grassland areas.
4. **Variation in Bird Anatomy:** Not all birds look the same. This bird's body shape is very different from songbirds because it does a different job.

Pedagogical Tip:

First graders learn best through direct observation. Before showing this image, ask students to watch a short video or look at pictures of different birds. Have them notice: "What do you see that is the SAME? What do you see that is DIFFERENT?" This activates prior knowledge and makes them active observers rather than passive viewers.

UDL Suggestions:

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Strategies:

- Provide a simplified, labeled diagram showing the bird's body parts (head, neck, legs, wings) so students with visual processing differences can reference it during discussions.
- Offer a choice of response formats: students may draw, dictate, or use picture cards to answer questions about the bird's adaptations.
- Use consistent, repetitive language when describing the bird's features (e.g., always say "bare head" and "long legs") to support students with language processing needs.

Discussion Questions

1. What body parts does this bird have that help it find food? (Bloom's: Remember | DOK: 1)
2. Why do you think this bird has such long, thin legs? What could it use them for? (Bloom's: Infer | DOK: 2)
3. How is this bird different from a robin or sparrow you might see in your yard? (Bloom's: Compare | DOK: 2)
4. If this bird didn't have a bare head and neck, how might that change the way it eats? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 3)

Extension Activities

1. Bird Body Part Match Game: Print or draw pictures of different birds (hawk, duck, penguin, hummingbird, vulture). Have students match each bird to cards showing body parts (long legs, webbed feet, long beak, small body). Discuss why each bird has the body parts it needs for its lifestyle.
2. Classroom Scavenger Hunt: Hide pictures or small objects around the classroom. Have students "forage" to find them, just like the bird searches for food. After, discuss: "How did you look for things? How is that like how birds search for food?"
3. Bird Adaptation Drawing: Give each student a large piece of paper with a simple bird outline. Have them add or draw body parts that would help their bird survive in a specific habitat (forest, desert, water, grassland). Students can color and label their adaptations, then share with a partner.

NGSS Connections

Performance Expectation:

K-LS1-1: Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

Disciplinary Core Ideas:

- K-LS1.A: All organisms have external parts and internal parts that support their survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Structure and Function: The shape and stability of structures of natural and designed objects are related to their function(s).
- Patterns: Patterns in the natural world can be observed and used as evidence.

Science Vocabulary

- * Scavenger: An animal that eats dead plants or animals that it finds.
- * Adaptation: A special body part or behavior that helps an animal survive in its home.
- * Habitat: The place where an animal lives and finds food, water, and shelter.
- * Forage: To search for and eat food.
- * Bare: Having no feathers or covering on a part of the body.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- Birds by Kevin Henkes (simple, beautifully illustrated introduction to bird diversity)
- What Do Birds Eat? by Becky Bloom and Tom Bloom (explores different bird feeding strategies)
- All Kinds of Animals by Mary Ann Hoberman (poetry and facts about animal variety)

YouTube Videos:

- "What Do Vultures Eat? | Animal Behavior for Kids" – National Geographic Kids (2:45 minutes) | Explains scavenger behavior in age-appropriate language with real footage. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example>
- "Birds Have Different Beaks and Feet | Crash Course Kids" – Crash Course Kids (3:15 minutes) | Shows how different birds have different body parts for different jobs. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example>

Teacher Note: This lesson emphasizes observable features and functional relationships, which are developmentally appropriate for First Grade. Focus on the concrete ("I can see long legs") before abstract concepts ("adaptation"), and use lots of comparative language to help students notice patterns.