

Photo Description



This is an American robin, a common bird with a dark gray head and back, and a reddish-orange chest and belly. The robin is standing on a gray rock in a natural outdoor area. Robins are medium-sized birds with thin legs, small feet, and a pointed yellow beak they use to find food.

Scientific Phenomena

Anchoring Phenomenon: Why does this bird stand on rocks and look at the ground?

American robins exhibit a natural foraging behavior where they perch on elevated surfaces like rocks, logs, and branches to scan their environment for food sources such as earthworms, insects, and berries. This behavior is an adaptation that allows robins to:

- Gain a better vantage point to spot movement in soil and grass
- Conserve energy by watching from a stationary position
- Quickly access food sources while maintaining vigilance against predators

This is an example of animal behavior driven by survival needs—the robin must find food to survive, grow, and reproduce.

Core Science Concepts

- Animal Adaptations: The robin's pointed beak, thin legs, and keen eyesight are physical features that help it catch and eat food from the ground.
- Animal Habitats & Environments: Robins live in places with rocks, soil, grass, and trees where they can find food and shelter. They need outdoor spaces with these features to survive.
- Needs of Living Things: Like all animals, robins need food (earthworms and insects), water, and shelter to stay alive and healthy.
- Animal Behavior & Movement: Birds move in different ways—walking, hopping, and flying—to find food, escape danger, and explore their environment.

Pedagogical Tip:

For Kindergarteners, use concrete, observable language rather than abstract concepts. Instead of saying "foraging behavior," say "the bird is looking for food" or "the bird hops around to find bugs." Encourage students to act out the robin's movements (hopping, looking down) to make the learning kinesthetic and memorable.

UDL Suggestions:

Multiple Means of Representation: Show students the image AND a live video or recording of a robin moving around outdoors so they can see the behavior in action. Some students may benefit from a simplified illustration showing the robin's body parts labeled.

Multiple Means of Action & Expression: Allow students to show understanding by drawing a robin, acting out robin movements, or using manipulatives (toy birds, toy rocks) to recreate the scene rather than requiring only verbal responses.

Multiple Means of Engagement: Connect to students' real-world observations by asking if they've seen robins in their own yards or neighborhoods, making the learning personally relevant.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think the robin is looking for on the ground? (Bloom's: Understand | DOK: 1)
2. Why does the robin stand on a rock instead of staying on the ground to find food? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
3. What body parts does the robin use to find and eat food? How does each part help? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
4. If this robin couldn't find any earthworms or bugs in this spot, what do you think it would do next? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)

Extension Activities

1. Robin Movement Exploration: Play "Robin, Robin, Find the Worm!" (similar to Duck, Duck, Goose). Students hop around the playground like robins, looking for small objects hidden in grass or sand. This helps them understand how robins move and search for food while building gross motor skills.
2. Rock Perch Observation Station: Set up a pretend "robin perch" in the classroom using a large painted rock or a sturdy low stool. Students take turns standing on the perch and describing what they can see from that higher viewpoint. Connect this to why the robin in the photo stood on the rock.
3. Robin Beak Exploration: Give students different "beaks" (tweezers, clothespins, spoons) and have them try to pick up small food items (cheerios, raisins, pom-poms) from a tray of sand or dirt. This tactile activity helps them understand how a bird's beak shape affects what it can eat.

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 Animals have body parts that help them sense the world, move, and obtain food.
- K-LS1.B All animals need food, water, and shelter to grow and survive.

Crosscutting Concepts:

- Patterns The robin's behavior of standing on rocks and looking down shows a pattern of how this animal searches for food.
- Structure and Function The robin's beak, eyes, and legs work together to help it find and eat food.

Science Vocabulary

- Beak: The hard, pointed mouth part of a bird that it uses to pick up food.
- Perch: To land and rest on something, like a branch, rock, or fence.
- Adapt/Adaptation: A body part or behavior that helps an animal survive in its environment.
- Forage: To search and look for food in nature.
- Habitat: The place where an animal lives that has everything it needs, like food, water, and shelter.

External Resources

Children's Books:

- Robin by Ruth Heller (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science)
- Little Robin's Big Wish by Carol Endacott

- The Robins in Your Backyard by National Geographic Kids

YouTube Videos:

- "American Robin - Birds of North America" by All About Birds

A short, visually clear video showing robin behavior, nesting, and foraging in natural settings.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKsCL-MJNyc>

- "Why Do Robins Hop?" by Audubon Society

A brief, engaging explanation of robin movement and foraging behavior with real footage.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ> (Verify current URL; search "Why Do Robins Hop Audubon")

Teacher Note: This image is an excellent anchor for a unit on "Animals in My Neighborhood" or "What Animals Need to Survive." Encourage families to observe robins in their own yards and bring back observations to share with the class.