

18. Bird identification: more than just pretty feathers

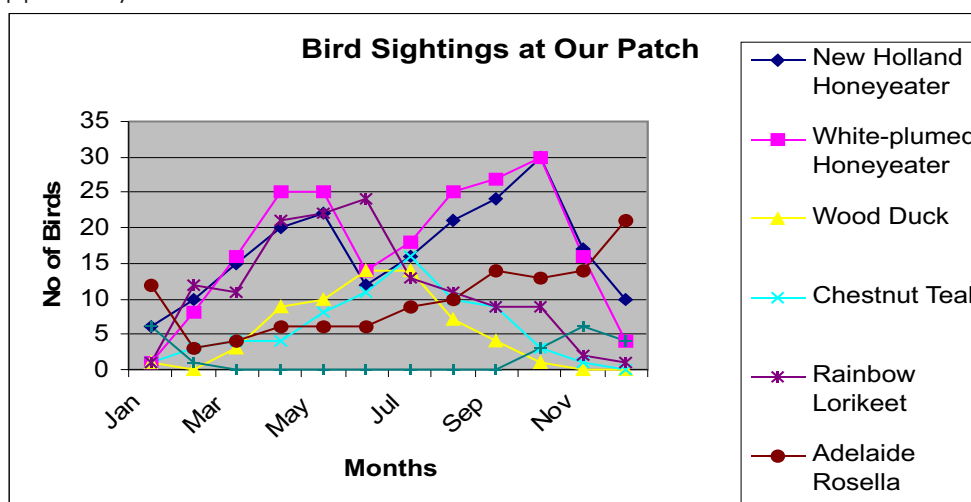
Discussion topics and information

The information sheet 'more than just pretty feathers' included with this activity can be a teacher or student resource and outlines most of the information required to perform competent bird observation.

Lesson ideas

- Issue and discuss information sheet 'More than just pretty feathers' included with this activity and use it as the front cover of a bird surveying booklet. Bird surveying booklets consist of plenty of sketch paper and lines for writing down bird features, names, dates and locations.
- Take students equipped with bird monitoring charts (located at the back of this folder) and/or bird surveying booklets, to a natural area to survey the birds present. Split them into groups of three or four and have them sit quietly for ten minutes and watch and listen to the area around them. Encourage students to employ bird identification techniques outlined on the information sheet.
- Encourage extreme quietness and minimal movements, so that the opportunity to also identify birds by their calls is available. Allow students to change stations once for an opportunity to see different birds.

- For an extra challenge, consider not taking out bird charts so that students use more thorough observation skills. Look up the birds based on descriptions and sketches after returning to the classroom.
- As identification and monitoring skills improve, try to count the number of birds appearing in an area, the number of feral birds or the number of smaller birds over time.
- This type of data will provide some meaningful, visual patterns over time.
- Bird surveying lessons could be accompanied by a plant monitoring activity, (see *Native vegetation* activities). Similarly any outdoor activity can be accompanied by a bird survey whereby birds are ticked off the chart checklist after they have been sighted.
- Results of the birds and plant survey can be ticked on a large wall chart with the months and seasons on one axis and the individual birds and plants on the other. Perform surveys monthly.
- Over time students may observe changes in the patch and will be able to link the changes to months and seasons via the classroom wall chart. Other details may also be recorded such as presence of water in the creek (flowing or pools), weather, frogs, insects, etc.



The wall chart results may be used in other subjects such as maths (graphs), see example.

