



Lay My Egg

This activity is part of the **Water Conservation** theme

What's the purpose of this activity?

This activity will help students become more aware of the diversity of birds that depend on water and the different habitats they require for their lifecycle, such as nesting. Students will be introduced to identification skills through bird profiles, photos and eggs as they make visual associations with their preferred nesting habitat.

Key Messages:

- Water is home to much more than just ducks: mergansers, loons, waders, shorebirds and even some raptors depend on our water systems and their surrounding habitats.
- Although many bird species spend a majority of their time on or in the water, other types of habitats may be just a crucial for their survival.

Materials

- Laminated waterfowl poster
- Life Sized silhouette plywood cut outs of featured water birds with steel/magnetic egg placers
 1. Canada Goose (2)
 2. Mallard Duck (2)
 3. Osprey (2)
 4. Spotted Sandpiper (2)
 5. Belted Kingfisher (2)
 6. Common Loon (2)
 7. Hooded Merganser (2)
 8. Wood Duck (2)
 9. Great Blue Heron (1 – to be placed where both activities can share)
- Laminated "Lay My Egg" Bird Identifier (10 copies)

- Laminated "Lay My Egg!" cards (2 sets of 9 birds)
- Laminated eggs of featured birds with magnetic backing (2 sets of eggs attached to "Lay My Egg!" cards)
- Bag of extra magnetic eggs
- Laminated Activity Layout (2)
- Laminated "Lay My Egg" Master Facilitator Sheets (4 copies)
- "Activities in Progress, please wait here. Time started: _____" sign
- Dry erase markers and eraser

What will I be doing?

You will introduce and explain the activity and provide general supervision while the students are "laying" their eggs. At the end of the activity you will take up the activity with the students and correct any mistakes.

** Can do introduction with 2 groups. Walk both groups down to "Start" activity#1 then 2 volunteers continue to the beginning of activity#2.

*** Require at least 4 volunteers: 2 to lead each activity and rotate who does introduction.

***If extra volunteers, a 5th person could be a facilitator at the start who changes the time on the sign and informs/organizes waiting groups

**** Remember to write activity session start time on sign before every session!**

1. Introduction: (**~2 minutes**)
 - Ask students: "What types of wildlife use water habitats such as this lake?" (Answers: moose, beaver. fish, turtles (reptiles), frogs (amphibians), birds, etc.)
 - At this activity, we are going to focus on birds.

- Ask students “*What kinds of birds use water habitats?*” (Possible answers: ducks, herons, seagulls, loons, red winged blackbirds, etc.).
 - Most people think of ducks, and there are a lot of different types of ducks. (you can demonstrate with the Waterfowl Poster if)
2. Slowly walk students along the boardwalk to the “start” of “Activity Area #1”
 - Note bird profile cutouts along the way ... size, bills, location
 - Have second group continue onto the start of “Activity Area #2”
 3. Explain Activity (**~2-3 minutes**):
 - Once at the start point, explain how to use Clue cards & Bird Identifiers
 - Clue cards:
 - Clue Cards have brief descriptions of the bird, what they eat, what they look like and where they like to nest
 - Use these clues to think about what the birds would need to be successful ... long bills, sharp talons, long legs, etc
 - This will help you identify the bird silhouette (like we just past) that belongs to the clue card
 - Clue Cards have magnetic eggs attached to them
 - Your objective is to match the egg on your card with one of the bird silhouettes
 - Once you do, attach the magnetic egg to the egg placement piece (steel/magnet) on the silhouette bird
 - Congratulations, you have “Laid your egg!”
 - The Bird Identifiers:
 - These sheets are to show you what the bird looks like and give you an idea of size
 - Use this along with the clue cards to identify the bird silhouettes
 4. Pair up students or have them work in small groups. (**~ 5 minutes**)
 - Give each pair/group a “Lay My Egg” Clue Card (with magnetic egg attached) and Bird Identifier
 - There are 9 birds, so try to evenly divide up cards within the group
 - If have an extra card, could use as a demonstration and do as a whole group ... to get them started!
 - Ask teachers, parents to help read cards and “Lay the Eggs”
 5. Instruct students to re-group at the “start” once they have laid their eggs ... bring your clue card and bird identifier!
 6. As a group, walk back down the trail, stopping at each bird profile and asking “Who laid this egg?”, “How did you use your clues?” (**~5-10 minutes**)
 - Take the magnetic egg off the bird silhouette and re-attach to the Clue Card, take from pair/group as well as Bird Identifier
 - Make sure to praise the students!
 - Continue with all the silhouettes until all eggs collected and re-attached to cards
 - By the end, you should be ready to start with next group
 7. Say good bye to group and introduce yourself to next!
 8. Update time on “Activity in Progress” sign

WATCH THE TIME! This activity should take 15-20 minutes!

Background Information

Some general facts on common water birds of Haliburton:

1. Canada Goose

- Surface dips
 - Takes food from the water’s surface or from just below while floating or swimming on the surface
- Eats shoots, roots, seeds of grass and sedges, bulbs, grain, berries, insects, crustaceans and mollusks
- Nests usually near water in upland
 - Dry grass, forbs, moss, sticks, aquatic vegetation

- Usually lays 4-7 eggs

2. **Mallard Duck**

- Dabbler or “puddle duck” - Floating on surface in shallow water, pivots headfirst downward while raising hindquarters above water to reach food on or near substrate (feeds by tipping tail-up)
- Feed on aquatic plants, seeds, aquatic insects and snails
- Do not require a running start to take off from water but spring directly into flight
- Nests in uplands near water in the concealment of grass, cattails or other vegetation, Nest is a scrape
- Usually lays 7-10 eggs

3. **Osprey**

- Raptor, bird of prey - The only raptor in area which plunges into water for food
- High dives drops from height into water to catch fish
- Hovers at 30' to 100' and dives for fish but will also eat rodents, birds, small vertebrates, and crustaceans
- nests in trees - breeds along rivers and lakes, platform nest of sticks
- usually lays 3 eggs

4. **Spotted Sandpiper**

- Shorebird
 - Long legs and feeds on the shore
- Ground Gleaning
 - Picks up items from the surface of soil, turf, and sand
 - Includes scavenging from shorelines.
- Eats flying insects, worms, fish, crustacean, molluscs, carion
 - Also picks insects from waters' surface
- Nests in elevated sites in grass, among rocks, within moss, forbs and shrubs
- Usually lays 4 eggs in a scrape

5. **Belted Kingfisher**

- High dives - drops from height into water to catch fish
- eats fish, amphibians, reptiles, insects, young birds, mice and aquatic invertebrates
- breeds along watercourses

- nests in a borrow in vertical bank near water, prefers sandy soil
- usually lays 6-7 eggs
- eggs are a white colour

6. **Common Loon**

- Surface dives - Floats and then dives, swims underwater using feet and/or wings, Legs set far back and far apart therefore walking is difficult. Heavy bodies and require a running start on water for take off
- Eats fish and some aquatic invertebrates and crustaceans
- Territorial displays - Bill dipping, splash-diving, “penguin dancing” (vertical position with wings outspread). Yodel call
- Nest on aquatic vegetation at edge of shallow water (platform nest)
- Usually lays 1-2 eggs

7. **Great Blue Heron**

- Wader - long legs, neck and bills for stalking food in shallow water
- Stalk & Strike - Stands motionless on bank or in water and spears fish, frogs, etc nests in trees
- Breeds in marshes, swamps, lakes, river
- Nests in trees - Platform nest
- Eats mostly fish but will also eat small mammals, nestlings, frogs
- Usually lays 3-5 eggs

8. **Hooded Merganser**

- Surface dives - Floats and then dives, swims underwater using feet and/or wings
- Eats mainly fish and some crustaceans, insects, molluscs and inverts
- Breeds in forested habitats near water
- Nests in tree cavities near water, lines cavity with grass, leaves and down
- Usually lays 10-12 eggs

9. **Wood Duck**

- Perching duck - equipped with sharp claws and can be seen perching on snags, stumps or branches
- Dabbles - Floating on surface in shallow water, pivots headfirst downward while raising hindquarters above water to reach submerged plants or animals on or near substrate

- Eats seeds, acorns, berries, grain, aquatic and terrestrial insects and other invertebrates
- Breeds in wooded swamp, flooded forest, pond, marsh
- Nest in tree cavity - Lines nest with wood chips and down
- Usually lays 10-15 eggs

General egg characteristics

- *White to pale blue eggs* - usually laid by birds that nest in holes or covered nests
 - It is thought that the light colouring enables the parent to see their eggs more clearly in a dark environment.
 - Also laid by birds which cover their eggs with vegetation when leaving the nest, such as ducks and grebes, or those birds that rarely leave their eggs unattended because they do not need colour or patterned shells to hide their eggs from predators
- *Strongly coloured (ranges of colours from yellow to red to brown to olive green) and patterned eggs*
 - Usually laid by birds that nest in exposed sites on the ground (like waders). The colour and pattern is camouflage.
 - Birds which nest in large colonies lay eggs with individual patterns which may help the parent to recognize their own eggs
- Although eggs can be irregular shape in some cases birds rely on egg shape to help lead to a successful hatching - conical eggs can be packed closely together in the nest so that they all receive maximum warmth from the parent bird
 - Triangular, or pear shaped, eggs roll around in circles thereby avoiding rolling off of rock ledges or cliffs

Clean Up procedures

- Bird cut-outs can stay in place for the 2 days if they have been secured (ask your marshal)
- Count and place all laminated "Lay My Egg" Bird identifiers into waterproof container provided (10 copies)
- Count and ensure proper attachment/placement of magnetic laminated

eggs to "Lay My Egg!" cards (2 sets of 9 laminated magnetic eggs)

- Count and place laminated "Lay My Egg!" cards with magnetic eggs attached into waterproof container provided (2 sets of the following 9 birds):
 1. Canada Goose
 2. Mallard Duck
 3. Osprey
 4. Spotted Sandpiper
 5. Belted Kingfisher
 6. Common Loon
 7. Great Blue Heron
 8. Hooded Merganser
 9. Wood Duck
- Place both Laminated Activity Layout Sheets into waterproof container provided (2)
- Place laminated "Lay My Egg" Master Facilitator Sheets into waterproof container provided(4 copies)
- Place dry erase markers into waterproof container provided
- Place "Activities in Progress please wait here. Time started: _____" sign into waterproof container provided.
- If sheets are wet, take to volunteer sign-in area to be laid out and dried
- If sign is wet, leave secured outside of bin to dry overnight.

Activity Station Layout

