Pheasant: Take Aim, Focus, Draw

Pheasants are South Dakota's favorite non-native species. They were introduced in the 1800's and thrived.

There were only about 100,000 birds when South Dakota's first state-regulated pheasant season began in 1919. Now the birds number in the millions. Over the years, the number of hunters - especially non-resident hunters - has increased as well.

This South Dakota Department of Tourism Film from the early 1960s offers a glimpse of both familiar and somewhat vintage views of the annual pheasant hunt. (More)

During this activity your students will learn about the sport of bird watching, which is one of America’s favorite pastimes with more than 50 million birders enjoying the activity in the United States. Your students will learn basic bird watching technics, like the best time during the day to view birds and how to select the correct location. Then your students will draw a picture of a bird they viewed and/or make a digital photo album for their computer desktop.

Process:

- Introduce the activity by showing the “Pheasant Hunting - 1950s & 60s” video (Formats: DLL (View in Explorer)/ Watch PBS) and by going over the information/watching the additional video on the following website. Discuss the introduction of the nonnative ring-necked pheasant in South Dakota. Discuss how some nonnative species like the Asian carp (More: Wildlife Management) are considered a nuisance while others like the pheasant are an asset. Discus the sport of hunting pheasants and its economic importance in South Dakota.

- The observing of wildlife in nature (including birds) also provides millions of dollars in revenue for South Dakota. During this activity your students will acquire bird watching technics that will enhance basic understanding of animals in their natural environment. Your students will also learn an enjoyable lifelong activity. South Dakota is the perfect location for bird

Contact EdServices@sdpb.org for more information about SDPB’s educational resources
watching. “South Dakota’s diverse terrain, from rolling hills to sky-piercing granite peaks to lush mountain meadows and prairie marshes and lakes, is home to nearly 400 species of birds. Our unique combination of landscapes and diversity of bird species is stunning – perfect for the bird watching enthusiast... South Dakota is truly a birder’s paradise.” (SD Department of Tourism)

- Use the resources below to help your students learn basic bird watching techniques, like the best time during the day to bird watch, how to select a location and how to identifying the correct species.
  - Resources: Below you will find links to free birding booklets, checklists, best practices, binoculars buying guide and more.
    - Birding Guides
      - Bird Watching in SD State Parks
      - Breeding Bird Atlas/ Breeding Bird Atlas II
      - Birding Trails
      - Black Hills and Badlands (booklet)
      - Glacial Lakes Bird Watching Guide (booklet)
      - Great Lakes Bird Trail (brochure)
      - Southeast South Dakota Bird Watching Guide (booklet)
    - Birding In South Dakota
    - Online Bird Guide (Search: food, bird calls, size, habit and more)
    - All About Birds (Birds 1,2,3) – Cornell Lab of Ornithology
    - Choosing Binoculars
    - Guides to North American Birds

- Have your students draw a detailed picture of a bird they viewed. They should include the following information.
  - The name of the bird
  - The type of habitat it prefers
  - Food preference
  - Nesting
  - Where the species is found in South Dakota

Taking it to the Next Level:
- Images
  - Have your students photograph the birds they observe.
  - Combine the photos to make a photo album for Flickr/desktop.
- Bird watch throughout the different seasons to observe changes in habitat and behavior and to detect changes in species due to migration.