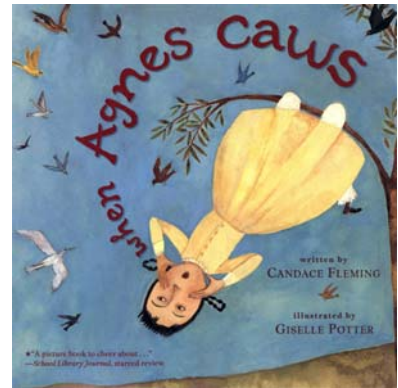


## Classroom Guide

### *When Agnes Caws*

written by Candace Fleming, illustrated by Giselle Potter  
published Atheneum Books for Young Readers  
(imprint of Simon and Schuster), 2002

*A note to the teacher: This book can be used in a variety of ways and contains activities appropriate for elementary and preschool students. There are also multiple web links throughout this guide to additional lesson plans and organizations connected with birding and youth.*



## Themes

- ◆ Birds, Birds, Birds
- ◆ Migration

## About the Book

Young Agnes Peregrine has a talent for making birdcalls. When the World Bird Society sends her on an expedition to find a very rare pink-headed duck, the evil Colonel Edward Pittsnap is quickly on her tail. He desperately wants a pink-headed duck for his collection and will stop at nothing to get it. Unfortunately for him, Agnes is smarter than he thinks. Bird facts are peppered throughout this lively picture book.

## About the Author

Candace Fleming is the author of numerous books for children, including *The Fabled Fourth Graders of Aesop Elementary School*, *Ben Franklin's Almanac*, an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, and *Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!* and *Gabriella's Song*, all ALA Notable Books.

## Things to think about before you read the book

- ◆ Do you have birds outside your window? Describe them. What do they look like? What do they sound like? Do you know what any of them are called?
- ◆ What kinds of animal sounds can you make? A donkey? An elephant? A monkey? Do you think different birds have different songs?
- ◆ Can you think of any sports that use birdcalls? (i.e., turkey, pheasant, or duck hunting).  
*Note to the teacher: if possible, bring in a birdcall so the students can hear what it sounds like.*
- ◆ Do birds stay in one place all year? What is it called when they move from place to place because of the weather or the season (migration)? Can you think of one common bird that migrates (ducks, swans, sparrows)?
- ◆ Do all birds fly? (The New Zealand Kiwi bird cannot fly).

- ◆ What do birds eat? (worms, grubs)
- ◆ Are specific birds only found in specific parts of the world? (yes)

## ***Birds, Birds, Birds***

### **A bit about birds: ornithology (the study of birds)**

The word *ornithology*, the study of birds, comes from two Greek words: “ornis” meaning “bird” and “logos” meaning “knowledge.” People have been interested in birds since the beginning of human history. Drawings of birds have been found on cave walls and bones of birds have been found in the ruins of ancient settlements. Ornithology as a specialized science began in the 1800s when the study of natural history became more widespread. Every culture in the world, no matter how primitive, has many different words for birds and the sounds they make. Over 9,000 species of birds are found throughout the world.

### **Some of the birds referred to in *When Agnes Caws***

- ◆ ***Blue-footed Booby*** – a large dark bird with white patches. It has blue legs and feet and lives mostly on islands in the Gulf of California.
- ◆ ***Great Hornbill*** – a large bird nearly 4 feet tall with a 60-inch wingspan, tail feathers reaching 36 inches and a weight of about 6 pounds. It can live up to 50 years in captivity and is found in India, the Malay Peninsula, and Sumatra, Indonesia.
- ◆ ***Grouse*** – a plump bird with feathered legs and feet that is often hunted for sport in fields and ditches. Many say it tastes like chicken.
- ◆ ***Pink Headed Duck*** – this bird has a long body, a long neck, and a slightly tufted head (the male’s is deep pink). It prefers lowland marshes and pools in tall grass. It lived in eastern India, Bangladesh and northern Myanmar, with the last confirmed sighting in 1935. It is probably now extinct.
- ◆ ***Ruby Throated Hummingbird*** – a tiny metallic green and white bird only about 3 ½ inches with a needle-like bill. The male has a bright red throat. This is the only hummingbird variety that breeds east of the Mississippi River and winters in the tropics. ([www.rubythroat.org](http://www.rubythroat.org))
- ◆ ***Snake Bird*** – a larger bird with an average body length of 25 inches and a wingspan of 45 inches. This fish-eater has a long flexible neck and a sharp-pointed bill. When it swims it often only sticks its neck out of the water, making it look like a snake. Sometimes called a Darter, American Darter or Water Turkey, this bird lives in the warmer areas of North and South America.
- ◆ ***Sulfur Crested Cockatoo*** – a large white parrot with a dark grey-black bill, a yellow crest, and a yellow wash on the underside of its wings. It is noisy, with a call that sounds like a loud screech. It lives in Australia.
- ◆ ***Yellow Bellied Sapsucker*** – this bird is small, about 8 ½” and is a member of the woodpecker family. A dull yellow color with a red crown (the male also has a red throat),

it makes a quiet mewing sound. This bird is found all over North America and winters in the southern states.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What are unique characteristics about each of these birds? What do you find interesting or unusual about them?
2. Do their names describe what they look or sound like?
3. Have you ever heard of any of these birds before?
4. Which one would you most like to see in person?

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: BIRD PICTURES**

1. Draw a picture of one of the birds from *When Agnes Caws*. Refer to the descriptions above for ideas. The following websites have step-by-step instructions on how to draw simple birds:

[www.billybear4kids.com/Learn2Draw/bird/page1.html](http://www.billybear4kids.com/Learn2Draw/bird/page1.html)

[www.drawingnow.com/how-to-draw-a-bird.html](http://www.drawingnow.com/how-to-draw-a-bird.html)



2. Draw and color your own bird. Be creative. It does not have to look like a real bird. Think about the colors you choose. Why does your bird have them? The Norman Bird Sanctuary ([www.normanbirdsantuary.org/creatabird.shtml](http://www.normanbirdsantuary.org/creatabird.shtml)) has a questionnaire to help you create a new bird species by answering a series of questions.
3. Research other birds and come up with a list of real bird names. Divide your paper into two columns. Label one "Real Bird Names" and the other "Made-up Bird Names." Fill in names in both columns.

Some good resources to get you started:

- ◆ [www.normanbirdsantuary.org](http://www.normanbirdsantuary.org) (many puzzles and quizzes about birds)
  - ◆ [www.learner.org/jnorth](http://www.learner.org/jnorth) (students studying global bird migration)
  - ◆ [www.pitt.edu/~poole/ledscienceBioBirds.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~poole/ledscienceBioBirds.html) (web links for all ages)
  - ◆ [www.english-zone.com/vocab/birds/birdies.html](http://www.english-zone.com/vocab/birds/birdies.html) (Animated pictures and names of common birds)
4. Play T or F. Divide the class into groups of 4 to 6. Have them form smaller teams of 2-3 to play against each other. Each team takes turns sharing their bird names from one of their two columns and the other team has to decide if it is a "Real Bird Name" or a "Made-up Bird Name." Points are given for each correct guess. The team with the most points wins.

**Materials:**

Coloring pencils/crayons/paint, paper and pencil, possible bird images to color.

**Curriculum connections:**

Research, geography, science, teamwork, creative writing, art

**TAKING IT FURTHER: BIRD “FOR SALE”**

1. Create a description and name for the bird image created in the above exercise. Each student works in a pet shop and wants to sell their bird. Answer the following questions:
  - a. How much is the bird worth?
  - b. What are its special qualities?
  - c. Describe in detail what it looks like.
  - d. Where did it come from?
  - e. What does it sound like?
  - f. Is it rare?
  - g. How did you get it?
2. Have each student make a poster with a picture of the bird they are trying to sell. Include a description.
3. Study want ads from the newspaper. Write a want ad (or a for sale ad) about this new bird species.

**Materials:**

Poster paper, crayons/colored pencils/paints, paper, pencil

**Curriculum Connections:**

Creative writing, journalism, science

**TAKING IT FURTHER: BIRD PUPPETS**

For younger children:

1. Have the students cut out pictures of birds from old magazines. Give them a time limit.
2. Have each student select one bird image and glue it onto stiff paper – tag board or old manila folders work well.
3. Cut out the bird image.
4. Glue or tape the bird image onto a Popsicle stick.
5. Act out the story of *When Agnes Caws*. Children can play Agnes, Professor Octavia Peregrine, and Colonel Edwin Pittsnap. The bird puppets can play the rest of the “parts.”

6. Act out *Two Little Blackbirds*.

*Two little blackbirds sitting on a hill.*

*One named Jack, one named Jill.*

*Fly away, Jack, fly away, Jill.*

*Come back, Jack, come back, Jill.*

**Materials:**

Old magazines, scissors, Popsicle® sticks, glue, stiff paper

**Curriculum connections:**

Art, science, literature

***Bird Sounds as Communication***

What sound does a chicken make? Many of us assume that chickens all over the world sound the same, but that is not the case. Different languages have different animal sounds. Here are a few examples.

LANGUAGE	BIRD <i>(and the sound it makes)</i>	CHICKEN <i>(and the sound it makes)</i>	ROOSTER <i>(and the sound it makes)</i>
English	Bird <i>(Tweet)</i>	Chicken <i>(Bowk Bowk)</i>	Rooster <i>(Cock-a-doodle-do)</i>
Norwegian	en Fugl <i>(Kvitre)</i>	en Høne <i>(KlukkKlukk)</i>	et Hane <i>(Kykkeli-ky)</i>
German	ein Vogel <i>(Tschülp, Tschülp)</i>	ein Huhn <i>(Bawk, Bawk)</i>	ein Hahn <i>(Kikerikiiii)</i>
Hungarian	Madár <i>(ChipChip)</i>	Csirke <i>(Kotkotkot)</i>	Kakas <i>(Kukuku)</i>
Polish	Ptak <i>(PeePee)</i>	Kura <i>(KoKoKo)</i>	Kogut <i>(Kokorekoo)</i>
KeSwahili (Tanzania)	Ndenge <i>(CheweChewe)</i>	KuKu <i>(Kokokoko)</i>	Jogoo <i>(Korikiho000)</i>
Thai	Nok <i>(JebJeb)</i>	Kai <i>(Kok, Kok)</i>	Kai <i>(Kai)</i>
Somalian	Shimbir <i>(Crrrrr)</i>	Dooro <i>(CooCoo)</i>	Diiq <i>(CooCoo CookaDoo)</i>
Amharic (Ethiopia)	Wef <i>(ChickChick)</i>	Dero <b><i>(Kakkaka)</i></b>	Dero <i>(CooCoo)</i>
Arabic (Iraq)	Tayr <i>(BisBis)</i>	Dagag <i>(Oeiu)</i>	Deek <i>(Oeiu)</i>

What other languages are spoken in your school? In your neighborhood? See if you can add more languages and bird sounds to this list.

## **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: A BIRD CALLING CONTEST**

See if you can get access to a microphone hooked up to a sound system. If not, mark an “x” on the floor at the front of the classroom so the students know where to stand when it is their turn.

Before you start, have them make up the name of a bird. Write it down on a piece of paper.

Each student gets a turn making a bird sound. It can only last one or two seconds. Remind them that birds make very different sounds: some are loud, some are soft, some are high, some are low. Challenge them to be creative with their sounds. They must say their name and their bird’s name before they make their bird sound. For example: “My name is Mark and I am going to make the sound of the rare Yellow-Bellied Bottle Sniffer.” Have another teacher, a parent, or the principal be the judge.

### **Curriculum connections:**

Public speaking, creative writing, classroom participation, teamwork, listening skills

## **TAKING IT FURTHER: THE SPORT OF BIRDING – A NATIONAL BIRD WATCHING CONTEST**

All you need to be a bird spotter is a set of binoculars and the ability to be quiet and observe. Each bird has a different call, and once you recognize what a bird sounds like you can identify it even when you can’t actually see it.

The **National Schoolyard Birding Challenge** is a monthly bird watching contest open to students in all public and private schools in the contiguous United States. Student participants in the NSBC work together to observe, identify, and record various bird species found on their school grounds. Go to: [www.fledgingbirders.org/challenge.html](http://www.fledgingbirders.org/challenge.html) for details.

## ***Migration – comparing bird migration to human migration***

### **BIRD MIGRATION**

Every spring and fall millions of birds all over the world travel from one place to another. In North America birds generally head south in the fall and north in the spring. This is called “migration.” Some birds, like Golden Plovers, fly over eight thousand miles from Alaska to Argentina crossing two thousand miles of ocean in the process. The Arctic Tern flies even farther. During the summer they breed in the northern parts of Canada, Europe and Asia. In the fall, they fly 11,000 miles to the southern tips of African and South America.

Why do birds migrate? No one knows for sure, although more than one-third of the world’s birds do so. Migration is an instinct, something the birds are born with and not something they learn. What other animals migrate? Discuss this with your class.

Use *Project UltraSwan* by Elinor Osborne as background for discussing bird migration. This book in Houghton Mifflin’s *Scientists in the Field* series features a project in which Gavin Shire and Bill Lishman (Father Goose) worked to teach swans and geese, who must be taught their migration paths because it is *not* instinctual, to migrate using ultralight aircraft.

Go to: [www.pitt.edu/~poole/eledscienceBioBirds.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~poole/eledscienceBioBirds.html) for a lesson plan on bird migration.

## **HUMAN MIGRATION**

Humans migrate too. Many leave their countries of origin because of war, famine or a desire for a better life. Some seek adventure, marry someone from another country or want to live in a different climate. Discuss the following questions with your class: Do you know anyone who has moved recently? Have you ever moved? Why did you leave? What does it feel like to move from a place you know to a place you don't know?

How many different cultures/countries are represented in your classroom? Have your students find all the countries on a map. What do those countries have in common with the one you are in now? What things are different?

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: INTERNATIONAL BIRD DAY**

The Environment for the Americas hosts International Bird Day as an attempt to heighten awareness of birds and their conservations throughout the Western Hemisphere.

International Bird Day is officially celebrated on the second Saturday in May in the United States and Canada. Go to their website for details and many additional materials and ideas for teachers. [www.birdday.org](http://www.birdday.org) The 2008 theme is "Tropics to Tundra: Connecting Birds, Habitat and People." The theme for 2009 will be "Birds in Culture."

### **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: BUILDING A BIRDHOUSE OR A BIRDFEEDER**

Why do birds behave like they do? The best way to find out is to watch them, and one way to do that is to build a birdhouse or a birdfeeder. Many building stores (i.e. Home Depot) provide free or low cost kits for building birdhouses. You can also check with your High School woodworking class to see if the older students could mentor younger students for a class project.

The following websites have simple and inexpensive birdfeeder or birdhouse patterns.

[www.daniellesplace.com/HTML/birdcrafts.html](http://www.daniellesplace.com/HTML/birdcrafts.html) (birdfeeder from a Pringles can & plastic plate)

[www.ezbirdfeeders.com](http://www.ezbirdfeeders.com)

[www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/birdfeeders/pineconefeeders.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/birdfeeders/pineconefeeders.shtml) (pine cone birdfeeders)

[www.freeww.com/birdhouses.html](http://www.freeww.com/birdhouses.html) (free birdhouse plans)

[www.ezinearticles.com/?Birdhouses-For-Kids-To-Make&id=443861](http://www.ezinearticles.com/?Birdhouses-For-Kids-To-Make&id=443861) (birdhouses for kids to make)

### **Curriculum connections:**

Problem solving through construction/building, science/observation/hypothesis, geography and history (international bird day)

## **Companion Books**

*Between Heaven and Earth: Bird Tales from around the World* by Howard Norman, illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon, Gulliver Books, 2004

*Bird Talk* by Ann Jonas, Greenwillow, 1999

*Birdsong* by Betsy Franco, illus. by Steve Jenkins, Margaret K. McElderry, 2007

*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* by Mo Willems, Amazon Remainders Account, 2003

*El Loro hablador y otros cuentos/ The Talking Parrot and Other Stories: Las Mejores Historias De Aves Para Chicos/ The Best Bird Stories for Children (Cuentos Para Volar/ Stories to Fly)*, by Tito Narosky and Mirta Narosky, Albatros Ediciones, 2005

*If You Were a Parrot* by Katherine Rawson, illustrated by Sherry Rogers, Sylvan Dell Publishing, 2006

*Little Quack* by Lauren Thompson, illustrated by Derek Anderson, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2003

*Loon Chase* by Jean Heilprin Diehl and Kathryn Freeman, Sylvan Dell Publishing, 2006

*Only a Pigeon* by Jane Kurtz and Christopher Kurtz, illustrated by E.B. Lewis, Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1997

*Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr, Scholastic, Inc, 1988

*Project UltraSwan* by Elinor Osborne, Houghton Mifflin, 2002

*Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* by Gerald McDermott, Voyager Books, 2001

*Red Knot: A Shorebird's Incredible Journey* by Nancy Carol Willis, Birdsong Books, 2006

*The Paper Crane* by Molly Bang, HarperTrophy, 1987

## **NONFICTION**

*Everything Bird: What Kids Really Want to Know about Birds* by Cherie Winner, NorthWord Books for Young Readers, 2007

*Draw 50 birds: [the step-by-step way to draw flamingos, swans, woodpeckers, peacocks and many more...]* by Lee J. Ames with Tony D'Adamo, Kingfisher, 1998

*How to Draw Cartoon Birds* by Curt Visca and Kelley Visca, PowerKids Press, 2003

*Super Simple Birdhouses You Can Make* by Charles Self, Sterling, 1995

*The Burgess Bird Book for Children* by Thornton W. Burgess, Dover Publications, 2003



## **PUPPETS**

[www.acornnaturalists.com/store/Bird-Puppets-C87.aspx](http://www.acornnaturalists.com/store/Bird-Puppets-C87.aspx) (a wide selection of creative, durable, anatomically accurate bird puppets)

[www.puppetjungle.com/birds.htm](http://www.puppetjungle.com/birds.htm) (includes many bird puppets including Folkmanis)

[www.daniellesplace.com/HTML/birdcrafts.html](http://www.daniellesplace.com/HTML/birdcrafts.html) (paper plate, paper bag, and feather puppets)

## **WEBSITES**

**Website references were current at the time this curriculum guide was prepared but may no longer be available. If you find a page missing, please let us know so we may remove it from the guide.**

[www.wildclassroom.net/AstoriaPark/birds/ornithology.html](http://www.wildclassroom.net/AstoriaPark/birds/ornithology.html) (Ornithology for Kids from Astoria Park Elementary School in Tallahassee Florida – includes an extensive list of excellent web links, on-line field guides and resources for teachers)

[www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds) (A valuable resource for birders of all levels. This Cornell Lab of Ornithology site provide even includes a online bird guide)

[www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/projects/mar04/pg1.html](http://www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/projects/mar04/pg1.html) (great projects with hummingbirds)

[www.birdday.org](http://www.birdday.org) (A great source for books, videos and maps about birds)

## **ON-LINE FIELD GUIDES**

[www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/ident.html](http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/ident.html) (Tools for learning about birds including pictures and definitions of birds common to North America and Songs of North American birds)

[www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide) (Type in the name of the bird and it will connect you to more information)

## **ON-LINE LESSON PLANS**

[www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/pub/virtualbird/teacher/lespl1.html](http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/pub/virtualbird/teacher/lespl1.html) (lesson plan on what makes a bird a bird)

[www.col-ed.org/cur/sci/sci200.txt](http://www.col-ed.org/cur/sci/sci200.txt) (lesson plan for younger students using simple bird feeders and observation skills)