

"What's that Bird?"

an Analog Birding Simulation for kids and families"

By Mark W. Oswood - On behalf of the
North Central Washington Audubon Society

"What's that Bird?" has become our signature educational activity for elementary (and middle) school children and their families. Our venues are usually entire classrooms or grade levels for a school as well as environmental/bird festivals.

The core of our "What's that Bird?" is a set of wooden bird models: life-size, hand-carved, and painted with realistic field marks.

We have been surprised and gratified at the success of "What's that Bird?" Finding and identifying our "birds" seems to put children of all ages (and adults) on an equal footing (unlike games explicitly designed for young children). Often, entire families disappear into "the woods" - helping one another and racing back to our booth to check the "field guide."

"What's that Bird?" was featured on the BirdNote radio program (<http://www.birdnote.org/podcasts/birdnote-daily/oswood-whats-bird>).

How It's Done:

A habitat of grass and trees is used for the birders, providing safe footing and accessibility for mobility-limited participants.

We turn kids (and often entire families) loose with kid-sized binoculars and a modest checklist of bird possibilities. Kid-sized binoculars work well for parental units and other adults as well.

A field checklist of locally common birds, including the 8 species represented by the wooden models, is provided.

A laminated field guide made from field guide illustrations and taped to the table at the headquarters is used to identify the birds models seen.



Wooden bird model in place.

Field Checklist Common Birds of the Wenatchee Valley	
Great Blue Heron	
Canada Goose	
Mallard	
Common Merganser	
Turkey Vulture	
Osprey	
American Kestrel	
California Quail	
Great Horned Owl	
Rufous Hummingbird	
Belted Kingfisher	
Downy Woodpecker	
Steller's Jay	
American Crow	
Violet-green Swallow	
Black-capped Chickadee	

Field Checklist



Field Guide—Common Birds of the Wenatchee Valley.



Checking identifications at the field guide.