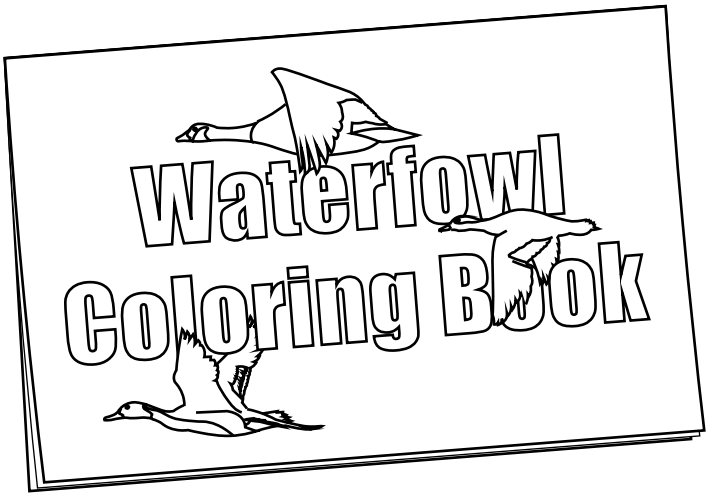
Feathered Field Guides



Activity details

Grade level: 2-6

Subjects: Science, biology, observing, art

Skills: Observation, identification, communication, field journaling

Duration: 10–15 minutes daily for 1–2 weeks + wetland field trip

Setting: Indoors or outdoors

Vocabulary: See Waterfowl Coloring Book

Objectives

Students create their own waterfowl identification guide and field journal to help identify species and record observations during a spring migration (April–May) field trip to a wetland.

Materials

IN ADVANCE: Download and print a Waterfowl Coloring Book for each student. Choose the booklet print layout so pages appear in the correct order, then staple to create a field-ready booklet.

IN THE CLASSROOM: Coloring or painting supplies, projector, and Waterfowl Coloring Books.

IN THE MARSH: Partially completed Waterfowl Coloring Books for journaling, clipboards, pencils or pens, and binoculars (if available).

Classroom procedure

1. Introduce waterfowl concepts

Share basic information about what students will observe and color (review pages 2–3 of the coloring book and in Waterfowl - Alaska's Wild Wonders (2026)):

- What are waterfowl? (ducks, geese, swans).
- Dabbling vs. diving ducks (sea ducks fall into the latter category).
- Key field marks and vocabulary: speculum, bill shape, tail shape, lobed toe, vermicula, etc.

2. Daily coloring & investigation

Each day, students color or paint one bird, gradually building their own illustrated identification booklet.

- The coloring book is paint-by-number: students match each numbered section to the correct color.
- Label key features such as speculum color and bill shape for each species based on readings from the Duck Details and Goose Guides in the coloring book, or by researching additional information at www.allaboutbirds.org.

3. Identification practice

Once students have completed their booklets, practice identifying unknown waterfowl:

- Show images or videos of waterfowl (available at www.allaboutbirds.org along with waterfowl sounds) on a projector and have students use their guide to identify each species.
- If you have duck or goose decoys, pass them around and have students match each to the corresponding coloring book species.

Field trip procedure

4. Visit a wetlands with waterfowl

Take a field trip to Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks, Alaska, or another wetland area during spring migration (April–May).

- Students bring their colored Waterfowl Coloring Books so they can complete the field journal sections for any species they see.
- Using binoculars (if available), students observe wild waterfowl and attempt to identify species using their guide (the Merlin Bird ID app works well to confirm identifications).
- Students fill out the journal page for each species they identify, including:
    - Sketch or describe the scene (habitat, behavior, conditions, etc.).
    - Record number of each species observed, along with the date and location.
    - Revise any species coloring page by adding notes that highlight the field marks that stood out or helped with identification during the field trip.

5. Back in the classroom

Have students share the coloring and journaling page for their favorite waterfowl species. Present what makes their duck, goose, swan or crane unique and identifiable, with an option to compare and contrast it to another species.

Science Standards for Alaska

3-LS2-1 — Group behaviors support survival

3-LS4-2 — Variation provides survival advantages

4-LS1-1 — Internal/external structures support survival

5-ESS3-1 — Communities use science to protect environments

Alaska Art Standards

VA:CR2 3-5 — Generatge and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

VA: CR3 3-5 — Refine and complete artistic work

VA:CN10 3-5 — Relate, synthesize, and express knowledge and personal experiences in art

Resources

Waterfowl Coloring Book

Waterfowl - Alaska's Wild Wonders (2026)

Who are we?

This educator guide and associated Waterfowl Coloring Book were created by Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation. Visit the refuge to see waterfowl and cranes at 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.

Contact Heather McFarland, Refuge Educator

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https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=creamersfield.access

adfg.creamersrefuge ADF&G - Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game complies with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. This summary is available in alternative communication formats. If you need assistance, please contact the Department ADA Coordinator at (907) 465-6078.

Hunters founded the modern wildlife conservation movement. They, along with trappers and sport shooters, provided funding for this publication through payment of federal taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and through state hunting license and tag fees.

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