

Do We Have More American Robins Outside than Other Birds?

by Grade 4 student

Purpose

The purpose of this experiment is to see if I see more Robins than other birds outside at school. I want to know if American Robins are the most birds outside.

Introduction

I always see Robins in the grass outside my window at home. The Robins keep eating something in the yard. I saw a Robin with a worm once. I asked my teacher, Ms Solchenberger, "What birds are the most outside? I think Robins."

Hypothesis

I predict I will see mostly Robins outside. I believe this because I see lots of Robins at my house. There was a digger machine in the yard at my house when we were planting seeds. The digger machine dug up the grass. We saw some worms and the Robins ate the worms. We have a berry tree at my house, too. Robins don't eat many berries, but they sit in the tree sometimes.

Methods

I had to make my experiment. At first I thought we would get all the birds together in one place and count them. Ms S. said, "But we can't do that, so what else?" I said, "I mean in Madison. All the birds in Madison. We could count all the birds each at a time, like first all the Robins then let them go, then count the other birds and let him go." Ms S. said, "But we can't really do that either, right?" I said, "No." Ms S. said, "What CAN we really do?" I said, "We can go outside and sit and watch for birds. Put some seeds out, some worms."

Then I made my prediction: I think I will see more Robins than other birds outside school. I sorted the BirdSleuth bird cards into three piles: 1) Yes, we'll see these; 2) Maybe we'll see these; 3) Nope, we won't see these. Then I put back Chimney Swift, Northern Cardinal, European Starling, Grackle, Dark-eyed Junco, and Brown-headed Cowbird because I had too many cards in the "yes" pile. I think I might see: Black-Capped Chickadee, House Sparrow, Peregrine Falcon, House Wren, American Crow, American Goldfinch, Barn Swallow, American Robin, Red-Winged Blackbird, Mourning Dove, and Rock Dove (pigeon). Ms S. helped me make a chart to collect data. It has all the bird names we might see on it. It has "other" in case we see a bird we do not know.

Next I had to plan when to watch birds. We decided Thursday, Friday, and Monday. Then I had to decide what time to watch birds. We decided to try for three morning times. After we collect data, we will look at it, add it up, talk about it, and type about it.

Materials

I need a clipboard, 5 pieces of paper (in case someone runs out), pencil, seeds, binoculars, bird flashcards.

Results

On Day 1, we saw more Robins than any other species of bird. My data shows: 2 Black-capped Chickadees, 2 House Sparrows, 1 Crow, 1 American Goldfinch, 3 American Robins, 1 Mourning Dove, 2 Unknown Birds.

On Day 2, we saw more House Sparrows than any other species of bird. My data shows: 1 Black-capped Chickadee, 3 House Sparrows, 2 Crows, 2 American Robins.

On Day 3, we saw more House Sparrows again than any other species of bird. My data shows: 2 Black-capped Chickadees, 10 House Sparrows, 1 Crow, 2 Barn Swallows, 1 American Goldfinch, 4 American Robins.

Discussion

Day 1: The first day of observations, 5/28/15, Ivan, Trinity, Ms Kornell, and I went outside. I put seeds at a place, then we went to a shady spot and sat down. Trinity, Ivan, and Ms Kornell sat on a beach carpet (blanket). I sat on a bucket of seeds. I was sitting at the best part - it was really cool-soft. Some of us were looking at the same direction. We were quiet with binoculars, stayed still, and looked for birds. If one or two of us saw a bird, then we all checked it down. We worked together and put a check on the data page by the bird's name. We used the BirdSleuth cards to find out what kind of bird are they. Today we used the cards to identify a male American Goldfinch, a female House Sparrow, and a Black-capped Chickadee. We do not know if the Black-capped Chickadee was a girl or a boy because it's hard to tell. We watched birds from 9:45am-10:15am.

Day 2: The second day of observations, 6/4/15, Ms Kornell and I went outside. I put the seeds out in a circle around us. We stood back to back so instead of looking at each other we could see other places. We were more quiet today, stayed still, and looked for birds. If we saw a bird, we checked it down. If we saw an unknown bird, we put down "unknown bird". We used the BirdSleuth cards to find out what kind of bird are they. Today we used the cards to identify a female House Sparrow. We knew the rest of them. We watched birds from 10:30am-10:46am.

Day 3: The third day of observations, 6/5/15, Kimberly, Ms Kornell, and I went outside. We sat on yoga mats in the shade. We did not put bird seed out this time because we were doing a test subject - whether or not they come for food. We watched for birds again. At first we thought it was no birds, but then we found out there was a lot of birds. This time it was better because there was more birds outside. This time, a lot of House Sparrows came. We watched birds from 10:05am-10:20am.

Comparing/Contrasting My Observation Days

Things that stayed the same all three days: we sat in the same place in the grass, we watched birds about the same time of day, Ms Kornell and I were always the birding team, we used about 3 handfuls of seeds each time, the birds did not eat the seeds while we watched, we sat next to each other, and we used binoculars and looked for birds.

Things that were different between the days: it was quiet outside one day but noisy two days, we sat back to back on two days to watch birds, and we had 3 other people join our birding team on two days.

Conclusion

My data shows House Sparrows are usually the most birds outside. That's the weird thing: there are more House Sparrows and I only see Robins a lot, but all the Robins disappeared. I usually see all the Robins at my house. I did this experiment at school. I think it would be different if I did this experiment at my house. I think I would see more Robins. Robins go into my garden a lot to eat stuff and fight. I think maybe the Robins do not like the playground as much as my garden.

Questions I Still Have

There were more kids outside the second observation than the first and last time, so the second time was hardest. Kids were running around playing soccer and the birds did not really want to come in the grass. Birds kept flying in the air, so it was harder to find birds. The good thing is we did it about the same time as the other observations.

I wonder why there were less birds our second day? Maybe the birds were scared of the kids running around. My cockatoo is nervous of people. He puts his crest up when he is nervous or scared, too.

I wonder will birds be in their home more because it's a windy day? I learned they were not in their homes more when it's windy, because on Day 3 there were lots of birds outside and it was windy!

I wonder how many different species of birds there are in the world.