

Dance Like an Attwater's Prairie Chicken

Background & Summary

Attwater's prairie chickens are beautiful prairie birds that love to sing and dance! They are only found in two places in Texas, and they face many challenges that have led to their endangerment. Students will learn about the Attwater's prairie chicken and how to help protect this amazing bird and its habitat.

Procedure

*The following lesson is based on the question: **What challenges does the Attwater's prairie chicken face?** It can easily be adapted by adjusting the categories and can be completed in an indoor or outdoor setting.*

Introduction

- 1. Presenters briefly introduce themselves and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service / National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System. Explain briefly what a NWR is, what they can do there, and where refuges are located.*
- 2. Before starting the lesson, ask students "Who is your favorite dancer?". They should take turns introducing themselves and answering the day's question, as well as showing off their favorite dance move.*
- 3. Once all students have had the chance to answer, begin the transition into the lesson below. Supplemental videos listed are fun viewing if time allows! Just copy the links into a search engine and it will direct you to the video.*

Supplemental Videos

<https://tinyurl.com/y54y2b92>



<https://tinyurl.com/53udm9cz>

"Houston's Rockstars"

"Wild Birds"

Grades:

K-5

Time:

45 minutes

Season:

All

Objective:

Students will be able to...

-Learn how to protect the Attwater's prairie chicken (APC)

-Know important information about the APC

Key Concepts:

-Adaptations

-Endangered

-Urbanization

-Prairies

Materials:

-Speaker, child friendly music

-Markers /

Crayon

-Pictures in color for visual aids

-Multiple sheets of "insects, leks, prairie" place markers

-APC Masks

LESSON

Engagement Questions

What Is Urbanization?

What is the difference between *native* and *non-native* species?

What does endangered mean?

We are going to talk about a fun little bird that likes to sing and dance. The APC. Technically it is not a chicken, but actually a grouse.

To attract a female, the male APC does a dance, which includes a loud “booming” sound. He has large, orange sacs on the side of his face, which he inflates, and he stomps around, spinning, turning and booming. All of this is to attract a girlfriend.

The male APCs need a stage on the prairie to perform for the females. These ‘stages’ are called leks. Leks are areas where the prairie grass is shorter and it allows the males to be seen, display their “booming” for females.

Leks are within the coastal prairie, the APCs home. Prairies are made up of native grasses and flowering plants. The prairie is where the APC raises its babies. They can hide from predators (like hawks) in the prairie vegetation. The prairie also provides a great food source. The adults eat the seeds and flowers of native plants, but the chicks eat insects, like grasshoppers, butterflies, and spiders. There is actually one insect that does a lot of harm to APC chicks by eating other insects, the chick’s food supply. Can you guess what it is? Fire Ants!

Fire ants are non-native species, which means they have been introduced from another area outside of their native range. They can cause a lot of damage because they have no natural predators like a native species. They don’t belong on the prairie.

Did you know the Houston area was once covered in coastal prairie? Due to urbanization and farming, a lot of the prairie has disappeared leaving less areas for the APC and other wildlife to live. For this reason, the APC is becoming very scarce. In fact, there are only two places left in the world where the bird exists! And both are in Texas near Houston, including the APC National Wildlife Refuge.

Unfortunately, the APC is considered an endangered species, which means there aren’t many left, and they are at risk of extinction.

ACTIVITY 1

High Grass Prairie APC Musical Chairs

1. Count the number of kids and place that number of place markers, or “chairs”(insect, LEK, prairie) out in the playing area.
2. The “chairs” include leks, insects, and prairie. The “chairs” are essential to the life and survival of the bird.
3. Begin the music and have the kids dance around like an APC in a circle. Ensure that there is always one less “chair” than the number of kids.
4. Once the music stops, the kids run to one of the “chairs”. Whoever does not make it is out.

ACTIVITY 2

Adaptations

1. Have students color their own male bird mask to match the colors of the APC.
2. Once they're complete, ask students to vote on their favorite, like a female bird would do!
3. Graph the results of the activity.

ACTIVITY 3

APC Dance-Off!

1. Ask for 3-4 volunteers and ask them to do their best impression of the APC for 30 seconds. This should include dancing and booming.
2. Have their peers vote by clapping the most/loudest for their favorite dance.

ACTIVITY 4

Insect Sweep

1. Using nets, sweep the grasses around your area to collect insects.
2. Put the insects in a small container and determine if there are enough bugs to sustain a population of birds at your school. For every 1 bird, you'd need 10 insects a day.

Vocabulary to Know

Adaptations—a change or the process of change by which an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment

Endangered – seriously at risk of extinction

Urbanization— process of making an area more urban

Prairie— a large area of grasslands

Follow-Up Questions

- What can we do for this special bird?
- What challenges do the Attwater's prairie chicken face?
- Why are the APC's endangered?
- What is one way a male APC attracts females?

VARIATIONS

Activity 1

Add "chairs" for times when refuge rangers:

- protect more habitat
- have successful captive breeding season causing gains in the population
- no pollution causing insect gains

Remove "chairs" for times when the community:

- freeway built causing loss of habitat
- hurricane causes loss of habitat
- runoff of pesticides into waterways causes loss of insects

Activity 4

- No nets? Allow children to look around freely.
- If there are not enough insects, let students brainstorm what to do around the area to increase the number of insects.

Activity Signs

Cut into half, gathering 2 signs per page

LEKS

LEKS

Activity Signs

Cut into half, gathering 2 signs per page

INSECTS

INSECTS

Activity Signs

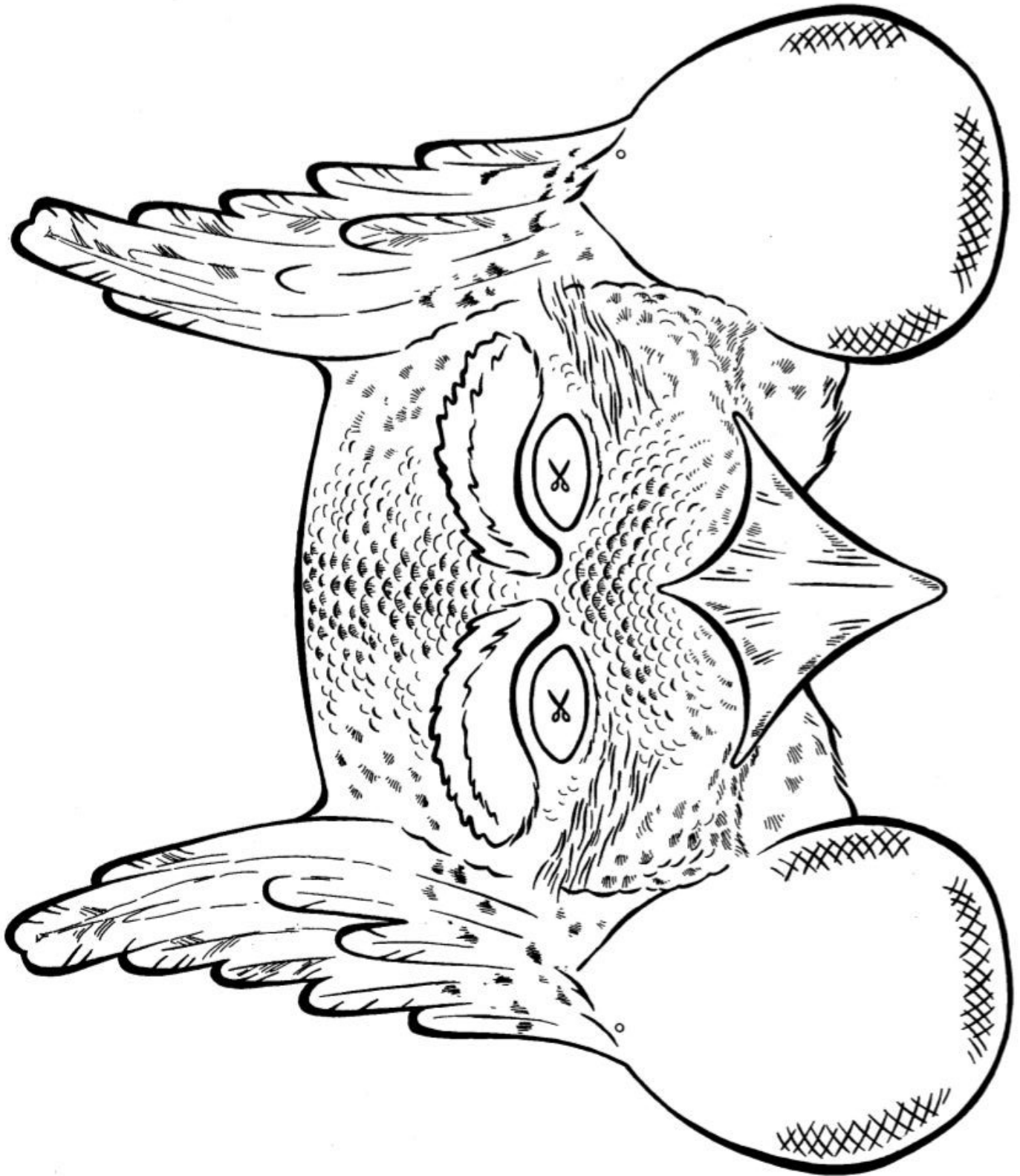
Cut into half, gathering 2 signs per page

PRAIRIE

PRAIRIE

APC Mask

Print out and hand out to students, allowing them to color and cut to use as masks



TEKS

Science

3.12 - Organisms and environments. The student describes patterns, cycles, systems, and relationships within environments. The student is expected to:

(C) describe how natural changes to the environment such as floods and droughts cause some organisms to thrive and others to perish or move to new locations

4.11 - Earth and space. The student understands how natural resources are important and can be managed. The student is expected to:

(B) explain the critical role of energy resources to modern life and how conservation, disposal, and recycling of natural resources impact the environment

5.12 - Organisms and environments. The student describes patterns, cycles, systems, and relationships within environments. The student is expected to:

(A) observe and describe how a variety of organisms survive by interacting with biotic and abiotic factors in a healthy ecosystem

(C) describe a healthy ecosystem and how human activities can be beneficial or harmful to an ecosystem.

5.13 - Organisms and environments. The student knows that organisms undergo similar life processes and have structures and behaviors that help them survive within their environments. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze the structures and functions of different species to identify how organisms survive in the same environment; and

(B) explain how instinctual behavioral traits such as turtle hatchlings returning to the sea and learned behavioral traits such as orcas hunting in packs increase chances of survival.