


















River Detectives at a Distance

Theme: Fauna (birds, platypus, fish, turtles)



Objective: To learn about the animals that rely on our waterways, get actively involved in citizen science and understand how we can help our native fauna survive and thrive.

Please adhere to all current COVID-19 advice and ensure you have teacher/parent permission before heading out near waterways to do fauna surveys / investigations.

Ways to be Smart	Knowing	Understanding	Applying	Analysing	Creating	Evaluating
 Word Smart I learn best by reading, writing & speaking	Borrow the picture story book 'Rivertime' from your school or local library. Enjoy the story of Clancy and his Uncle as they slow down to the pace of the Glenelg river and open their eyes to the life that abounds there.	Birds have evolved to possess bodies that are perfect for eating their favourite foods. Listen to the picture story book 'Best Beak In Boonaroo Bay' and then complete the 'Feathery Friends' activity to learn more about bird adaptations.	 Use the Fauna Field Guide app , Birds In Backyards bird finder or Backyard Buddies website to research a chosen bird. Present your project in the format you like best: poster, slideshow. . .	 Learn about carp – an introduced fish species in our waterways. Watch this video then do some critical thinking by completing a PMI to list the positives/minuses of carp and the interesting strategies being used to deal with them.	 Research the birds and/or fish that make your local waterway home. Use these bird and fish posters to inspire your own poster. Include a map of your waterway, fact files on species, images and sketches.	Wetlands are often seen as wasteland and since settlement many have been filled in and built upon in our urban areas. Watch video 1 and 2 that present an opposite viewpoint. Argue your opinion in a class debate.
 Number Smart I learn best by working with numbers/science	Print and complete the platypus maze and read a platypus fact sheet to get to know more about this unique creature. Add any new facts you learn to your brainstorm at the bottom of this column.	Watch this video to understand how waterbirds avoid getting wet and cold then conduct experiments with a variety of different natural and man-made objects to test for their water absorbing / repelling qualities.	Platypus eat 25% of their body weight in water bugs each day! How many bugs do you estimate this might be? What would 25% of your body weight be? How many bananas/sandwiches/biscuits would you need to eat each day?	 Get stuck into statistics by browsing the data on the Birddata website . Have a play and filter by a variety of parameters. There are lots of nifty numbers and graphs galore to interest every maths fanatic.	Watch this video about an innovative project saving our native fish. Analyse the many benefits of fish screens. Use science and maths facts from the video and your own text/diagrams to create a community flyer/brochure.	Watch this video from the Wimmera CMA (for younger students) and/or this central Victorian video (for older students) to evaluate the way innovative eDNA testing can streamline the process of platypus surveying.
 Picture Smart I learn best by drawing and visualising	 Tune into the topic by chilling out to a watery soundtrack and enjoying some mindful colouring time with this beautiful platypus graphic .	 Use the sketching style of Rivertime author and illustrator Trace Balla as inspiration to make little fact files about the birds around your place.	Birds have physical attributes to help them hunt for their favourite foods: insects, nectar, fish, meat, seeds and waterbugs. Find images of a variety of birds and make a picture chart to display birds in each of the dietary categories.	Watch this video about wetland animals . After visiting your local waterway and observing the life there, illustrate a food web and make as many connections as you can between each species of plant and animal.	 Birds can be thought of as 'nature's flying rainbows'. Use these colouring sheets and/or do your own drawings to make a bird mobile or bird bunting to decorate your classroom, bedroom or garden.	 Watch two videos to learn the impact environmental water flows can have on native wildlife . Brainstorm the pros and cons of e-water for waterways, plants, animals, recreation and communities.
 Body Smart I learn best by being active and hands on	Make a model platypus from clay or playdough. Watch this video to learn about platypus features then add captions to toothpicks to your model to label/define how the parts of a platypus help it survive.	Head out into your backyard, school yard, local bushland or waterway with this sketched ID sheet or this ID sheet with photos and see what you can find. What are the birds eating, what do they sound like, how are they behaving?	 Watch this video then make a list of all the things you can DO to make a difference to platypus. Check out PlatypusSpot or download the free app, spend some time at your local waterway and report any sightings.	 Birdwatching is like a treasure hunt every time you are outdoors! Get involved by completing seasonal 20 minute bird surveys online or with the Birddata App . In October, join the rest of the nation in the Great Aussie Backyard Bird Count!	Help native wildlife by creating habitat in your garden , making and installing a nest box or getting involved in a planting day to add habitat to a waterway near you. Ask your local Landcare Group what current projects they have.	 Undertake macroinvertebrate sampling of your local waterway with your class and use the results to evaluate water quality, health of aquatic habitats and consequences for the food chain (both aquatic and terrestrial).
 People Smart I learn best by working with others	 Print out Backyard Bird Bingo sheets for friends/family and head outside. See who can find all the birds, plants and other creatures on the sheet first!	Challenge family/friends to a game of Bird Call Bingo . Play respective bird calls from the Victorian Fauna Field Guide App in random order and see who can match them to the pictures. Make your own bingo sheet of favourite local birds.	Have a dress up day at home or school! If you were a bird, which one would you be? Why? Choose your favourite bird, study it's colours and find items with matching colours in your wardrobe to represent colourful plumage.	 Check out the Backyard Buddies website and work with friends to create habitats for birds, insects, reptiles, mammals and frogs in your school or backyard.	 Design a simple board game to play with others that educates about the unique fauna that call our waterways home, the things that threaten their survival and the positive things we can all do to help.	Watch this video about one of the oldest aquaculture systems in the world on Gunditjmarra Country in south-west Victoria. Use this evidence to convince others that Aboriginal people used advanced methods to trap fish and eels.
 Self Smart I learn best by myself	 Brainstorm and list/sketch the native animals that live in or near your local waterway. Write any facts that you know about them. Circle the animals you would like to know more about.	Understand more about the birds of your area by choosing one of the four Wing Thing booklets to print. Enjoy the stories, information, activities, games, colourings and craft to learn more about shore, woodland, mallee and beach birds.	 Spend time sitting at your local waterway in different seasons and at different times of the day. Journal what creatures you see and hear with sound recordings, photographs, videos, sketches and notes.	Aboriginal people traditionally lived by seasonal calendars. Use this example from Museum Victoria or this agricultural example to start making observations of the natural world around you and design your own seasonal calendar.	Learn about the amazing artistry and ingenuity of bird nests in this video and watch nest building up close . Now choose a nest design, collect materials and have a try at making your own (don't worry you don't need to use your mouth!)	Join researchers in the field as they trap and study freshwater turtles. Use your mouse to view all angles of this immersive video . Is this a job you would like to do one day? Write a job application to convince others that this is the job for you.

Send your efforts to your teacher and it may be shared in the school newsletter or on the Billabong Banter tab of www.riverdetectives.net.au Make sure you have permission from parents first.