

Balmandir
Bhavnagar, 13 April, 1936

Dear Children,

It is 3 o'clock in the afternoon. There are no clouds in the sky. The sun is burning hot.

The sparrows, doves and sunbirds have started working in pairs as they prepare to make their nests. Some of the birds have already made their nests. In some of the nests, the eggs have hatched. The parent birds are busy feeding the chicks with different kinds of insects and other things.



In our courtyard also, there is a baby dove. There is another egg in the nest but it has not hatched yet.

For the teacher: Gijubhai Badheka lived in Gujarat. He wrote many stories for children. In this letter you will read about some of the birds that you see all around. After reading this letter children should be encouraged to observe birds around them. Discuss about them in your class.

On the way to Gopalbhai's house, there are many stones along the roadside. In the space between these stones, an Indian Robin has laid its eggs. Bachubhai showed it to me. I looked through the binoculars. I saw that the nest was made of grass. On top there were soft twigs, roots, wool, hair and cottonwool. This is how the robin makes its nest. What a soft and cozy home for its chicks! The robin is not like the crow. A crow's nest is made of all kinds of things – even pieces of wire and wood.



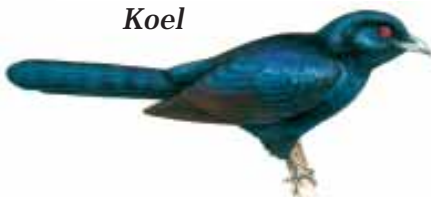
Indian Robin



Crow

I saw a baby bird in the robin's nest. It was sitting with its beak wide open. The mouth was red from inside. In a little while the robin flew to the nest and put something in the chick's open beak – may be a few small insects. By then it was evening. The robin settled down with its chick.

Koel



You know that the Koel sings sweetly. Do you know that this bird does not make its own nest? It lays its eggs in a crow's nest. The crow hatches them along with its own eggs.



Barbet

There is a small tree nearby. It has a nest hanging from its branch. Birds are so wonderfully different. The crow builds its nest high up on a tree. The dove makes its nest among the thorns of a cactus plant or a *mehendi* hedge. The sparrow can be found in and around our own house. It makes its nest

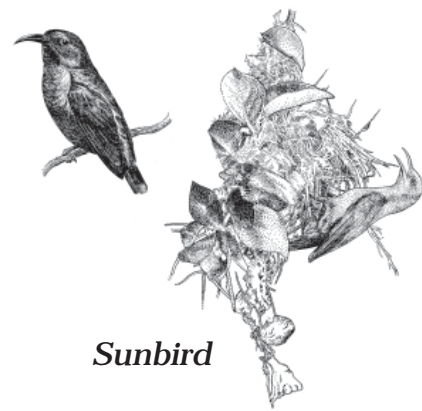
A Busy Month



Tailor bird

anywhere – on top of a cupboard, behind a mirror, on a ledge. Pigeons also make their nest like this. Often they make nests in old or deserted buildings. The barbet or coppersmith bird can be heard in the summer with its ‘tuk, tuk, tuk’ call. It makes its nest in a hole, in a tree trunk. And the tailor bird uses its sharp beak to stitch together two leaves on a bush. It lays its eggs in the fold of the leaf that it has made. This is its nest.

The sunbird makes



Sunbird

a nest that hangs from the branch of a small tree or a bush. The same evening, we saw a sunbird’s nest. Can you guess what its nest is made of? The nest has hair, grass, thin twigs, dry leaves, cottonwool, bits of tree bark, pieces of cloth rags and even spider’s cobwebs.



Weaverbird

When I looked through the binoculars, I could see a chick in the nest. It was sitting near the small opening in the nest. It was waiting for its mother to bring some food. What else can it do – just eat and sleep!

Do you know about the weaver bird? The male weaver bird make beautifully woven nests. The female looks at all the nests and chooses the one that she likes the best and decides in which to lay her eggs.

All the birds are so busy these days. Making a nest and laying the eggs is only the first step. It is a difficult task to raise the young ones in the nest which had been made with so much effort.

Birds have many enemies – humans and other animals too. Crows and squirrels, cats and rats – all of them wait for a chance to steal the eggs. Many times they even break the nest.

To keep oneself safe from danger, to find food, make a nest, hatch the eggs and raise the chicks safely – all these are tests for every bird.

And see – how the birds still sing with joy and spread their wings and fly freely.

So that is all for now, Salaam
Blessings from your
Gijubhai

- How many years ago did Gijubhai write this letter?

- Find out how old your grandfather and grandmother were at that time.

- This letter talks about many different birds. How many of these birds have you seen?

- How many other birds have you seen? Which ones?

- Have you seen a bird's nest? Where did you see it?

A Busy Month

- Which is your favourite bird? Can you show your friends in the class how it flies, and what sound it makes?
- Guess what this bird is –

'A crown on the head and coins on the tail,
So many shades of blue from top to tail.'

Clue: It is our national bird.

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- Do you know of any other bird that makes its nest in a tree trunk like the barbet does?

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- If there is a nest inside or around your house, look carefully at it. Remember, do not go too near the nest, and do not touch it. If you do, then the bird will not come to the nest again.

Observe the nest for some days and note down the following things:

- Where is the nest made?

- What is the nest made of?

- Is the nest ready or are the birds still making it?



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- Can you recognise which bird has made the nest?

 - What things does the bird bring to the nest?

 - Is there any bird sitting in the nest?

- Do you think there are any eggs in the nest?

- Can you hear any sound like 'chee chee' from the nest?

- If there are chicks in the nest, what do the parent birds bring for them to eat?

- How many times in one hour do the birds come to the nest?

- After how many days did the chicks leave the nest?

- Make a picture of the nest in your notebook.
- You have seen how birds use many different things to make their nests. Use some of these things and make a nest. Make a small paper bird to put in your nest.

Birds use the nest only to lay their eggs. After the eggs have hatched and the chicks have grown, they leave the nest. Imagine, how it would be if we also had to leave our homes as soon as we learnt how to walk and talk!

After they leave their nest, different kind of birds live at different places – some on trees, some near or on water, and some on land.

Other animals also have different places where they live – on land, under the ground, in water, on trees.



- Make three groups in the class. Each child must draw a picture of an animal and colour it. They should then cut each picture out.



A Busy Month

- Children in one group will take the cut-outs of the pictures of animals that live on land. They should then draw soil, grass and some trees on a chart paper. Stick the pictures of the land animals at the correct places on the chart.
- The second group will take the cut-outs of the pictures of animals that live in water. They should then colour a chart paper blue to show water. Then also draw water-plants, stones etc. They should then stick the pictures of the animals that live in water on the chart.
- The third group will take the cut-outs of the pictures of animals that live on trees. One child in the group will draw a big tree on a chart paper and colour it. Then all the children in the group must stick their cut-outs of the pictures on the chart paper of their group.
- Put up all the three charts in your class and discuss about them.

Bird Feet – Different Kind for Different Needs



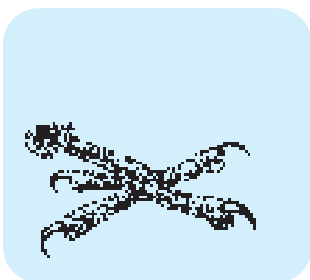
To swim in water



To hold the tree branches



To catch the prey (what it hunts)



To climb the tree



To walk on the land

Bird Beaks – According to the Food



**To tear and eat
meat**



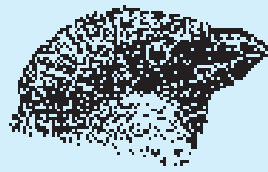
**To make holes in
wood and tree
trunks**



**To suck nectar
from flowers**



**To find insects and
worms from mud
and shallow water**



**To break and crush
seeds**



**To cut and eat
many kinds of
food**

Animal Teeth

You have seen that animals have different types of teeth.



Cows have short front teeth for snipping grass. The teeth on the sides are large and flat for chewing the grass.

Cats have sharp teeth for tearing and cutting meat.

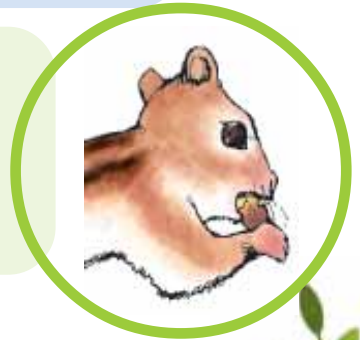


A Busy Month



Snakes have sharp curved teeth, but they do not chew their prey. Snakes always swallow their food whole.

Squirrel's front teeth keep growing throughout their life. They have to keep gnawing on things to keep their teeth from becoming too long.



Find out about Your Own Teeth and Write.

- Your age:
- How many teeth do you have?
- Have any of your teeth fallen or broken? How many?
- How many new teeth do you have?
- How many of your milk teeth have fallen, but no new teeth have come in their place?



Look at your friend's teeth. Are there different kinds of teeth? Draw one front tooth and one back tooth in your notebook. Can you see any difference between these teeth?

Courtesy : Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, for all the pictures used in this chapter.





- If you did not have front teeth (both top and bottom) how would you eat a guava? Act and show how.
- You have your front teeth, but no teeth at the back. Someone gives you a *roti*. Show how would you eat it.
- You do not have any teeth in your mouth. What kind of things would you be able to eat?
- Draw a picture in your notebook – How would you look if you had no teeth?
- Find out from old people who do not have teeth – what are the kind of things that they can not eat?

Draw a picture of a bird commonly seen in your area. Label its body parts also.

