

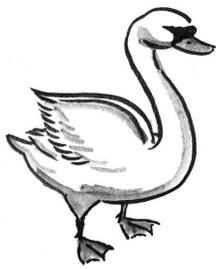
Keying in on birds



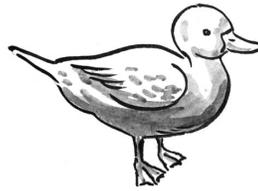
Background knowledge

Dichotomous keys work best when they are divided into groups and then further divided into smaller groups. When putting birds into groups, you could first divide them into wading birds (those with webbed feet) and non-wading birds, then think of some subsets, such as size, shape, or color of the beak. Charles Darwin, who developed the present-day theory of evolution, studied the many types of beaks found on the finch, each adapted to eating different types of food.

Science activity



Swan



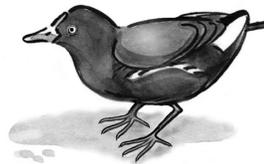
Duck



Magpie



Blackbird

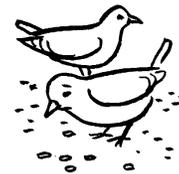


Moorhen

On another piece of paper, make your own dichotomous key for the birds pictured above. Make sure the questions are based on clear differences. For example, “Does the bird have webbed feet?” A poor question would be, “Does the bird have large wings?”

Science investigation

Identify birds in your yard, nearby park, or school. Create a booklet of birds in your area. Include their names and the types of bird feeder that should be used to attract them.



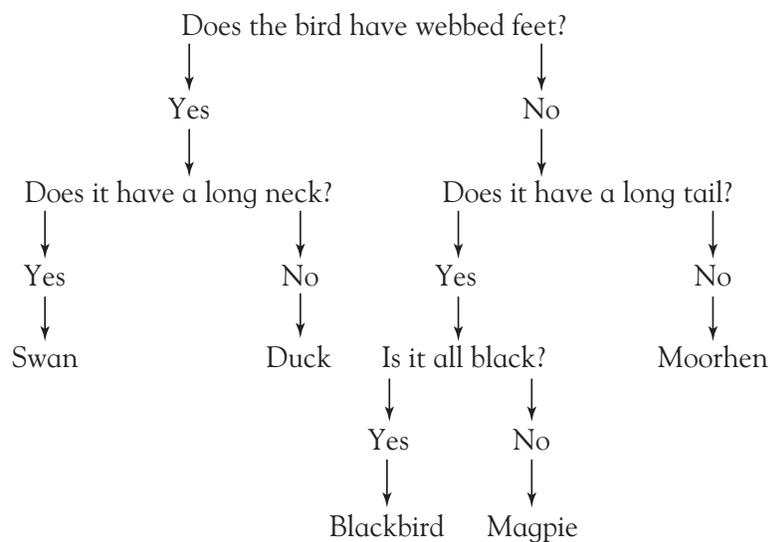
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Sample dichotomous key



Answers may vary

Science investigation

This is a great way for the young investigator to learn how to recycle materials to support wildlife. As the bird feeder is built, the child should also learn a lot about the bird.

