



Can I Have This Dance?

Audience

Activity designed for ages 6 and up.

Goal

Students' will increase their understanding of the courtship rituals of different bird species and how these dances are necessary for species survival.

Objective

- To imitate bird courtship dances.
- To be active and get some exercise.

Conservation Message

Birds are an important piece of the ecosystem. They need to survive and reproduce so that they can take part in maintaining a healthy and functional environment. In order to do so they have very specific courtship rituals that help the males attract the females (males are boys and females are girls).

Background Information

There are thousands of species of birds around the world. Each bird needs to be able to find a mate with whom they can reproduce; this is important for species survival. But, how do birds find a mate? There are several different dances or moves that the male birds perform to attract females. For example, Trumpeter Swans participate in synchronized swimming, singing and a series of head bobbing. If the male Trumpeter Swan performs these tasks correctly the female swan will accept him as her mate. Birds have many different courtship rituals ranging from singing, preening, dancing, displaying, feeding and building. It is very important that birds are not interrupted during their courtship displays, otherwise the mate could become uninterested and choose a less suitable mate or not even mate at all. While there are exceptions, male birds tend to be showier and more colorful than their female counterparts. This difference is called sexual dimorphism.

Materials Needed

- Courtship Dance Sheet
- Internet w/ computer to watch different bird dances (optional)
- String or pliable wire (optional)
- Pom poms (optional)
- Blankets (optional)
- Umbrella (optional)

Length of Activity

30 minutes

Procedure

- Read the background information and be ready to get moving!
- Find a good spot in the house, or outside, and get ready to mimic these crazy birds' dances.
- Using the Courtship Dance Sheet below, follow the dance steps provided.
- You can also add a partner and see if they can guess what species of bird you are mimicking.

Courtship Dance Sheet



King Bird-of-Paradise

These birds wobble back and forth while moving forward and backward on a branch. They hold their unusual tail feathers upright behind them while they are dancing.

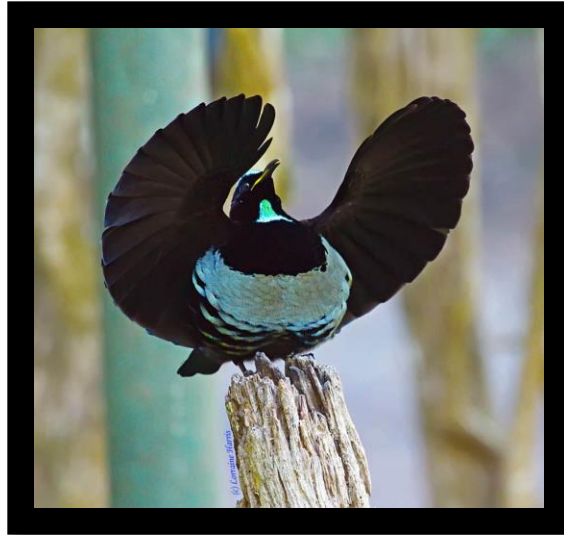
- ❖ Do the King Bird-of-Paradise Tango! To make the tail feathers you can use string or flexible wire and decorate the end with pom poms or cotton balls.



Emperor Penguin

These penguins waddle many miles to find their mate. Males will waddle around the crowd until they find their female and then take a bow.

- ❖ Waddle around until you find someone special and then take a bow.



Victoria's Riflebird

This spectacular bird dance includes swinging its head back and forth into the bend of their wing and moving up and down.

- ❖ Grab a dark-colored blanket and hang it over your shoulders while you move your head back and forth into the bend of your elbow.



Andean Flamingo

These pink birds take months of near non-stop grooving to find their mates. Andean Flamingos take several synchronized footsteps and move their heads side to side, this is called flagging.

- ❖ Turn on some tunes and stomp your feet just like the flamingos.



Superb Bird-of-Paradise

These birds like to create a half-disc shaped crest using their wings. They also have a florescent blue front and florescent blue "eyes."

- ❖ Open an umbrella and bounce back and forth.



Downy Woodpecker

The male Downy woodpeckers like to call their mates by making drumming noises using their beaks and hollow tree branches.

- ❖ Using your index finger tap on different hollow objects around the house and listen to the differences in the sounds



Parotia

This is the most complex dance of all the birds-of-paradise courtship dances. They fan out their feathers to look like a tutu and have a brightly colored neck.

- ❖ This dance has four phases: Bow, walk, pause, and wiggle.



Red-Capped Manakin

This male bird likes to rapidly jump up and down while moving side to side on a branch

- ❖ Turn on some good tunes and do the same!



Hooded Merganser

The Hooded merganser flashes his handsome black and white crest while swimming around the females. He will even leap into the air and do a somersault before landing back in the water.

- ❖ Run around in a circle and do a tumble!



Sandhill Cranes

Sandhill cranes ditch the colorful feathers and play "lords a leaping." Rather than focus on fancy plumage, sandhill cranes court in athletic jumps, sometimes grabbing bits of vegetation to toss in the air for added effect.

- ❖ Show off your best sandhill leap, for extra pizzazz toss some vegetation in the air as you leap.



Peacock

Male peafowl, known as Peacocks, have long, elaborate tail feathers that can be erected into a spectacular display of color and pattern.

- ❖ Shake your tail feathers like a peacock!



Ruffed Grouse

The ruffed grouse flaps his wings rapidly to make a muffled drumming sound. This is often done while stand on a log or large rock.

- ❖ Stand on something off the ground (with adult supervision) and tap your legs with your arms to make a drumming sound!