



Program Guidelines for the 2010-2011 School Year

Bridging the Americas is a flexible program in that teachers are encouraged to adapt it to fit their particular situation. There is no set curriculum. Instead, the teacher's manual contains a variety of background information and lesson plans to facilitate integrating the study of birds, migration and your partner class' country into your classroom.

There are however some requirements of all participants in the program, particularly with regards to the materials to prepare to send to your partner class. Below are the basic program guidelines and requirements, followed by a list of some of the creative projects past participants have done that go beyond the basics.

1. **Read through the “Timeline and Requirements for the 2010-2011 School Year”.**

2. Have your students **complete the pre-evaluation survey** before introducing them to the program. Mail completed surveys to the SMBC by October 22. Continued funding for this program depends on an evaluation of what children learn as a result of participating, so your help with this is very important! **All teachers who return pre and post evaluation surveys to us will be entered to win a free pair of binoculars!**

3. **Engage your students in learning about birds and migration.**

Introduce your students to birds in general and Neotropical migratory birds in particular using the materials provided in your manual and on the Migratory Bird Center's web site. See your manual's table of contents for instructions on how to access the online resources. You may also want to borrow a “Songbird Kit” from the Migratory Bird Center. The kit contains a variety of books, videos, maps, puppets, and a teacher's guide—please see the web site for details.

For a short primer on long distance bird migration, read the fact sheet in your manual on page 67 entitled “Neotropical Migratory Bird Basics”.

Here are some key points to convey to your students:

- Our class has been partnered with a class in a Latin American country where many of our birds go for the winter. Through this partnership, we will learn about some of the birds we have in common and about what life is like in our partner class' country.
- There are many species of birds that nest and raise their young in the United States and Canada during our spring and summer and then travel to our partner class' country and other parts of Latin America for the winter. As a group, these birds are called Neotropical migratory birds.
- Migration is risky. Hazards that birds are likely to encounter along the way include bad weather, predators, and difficulty finding safe and suitable places to rest and refuel along the way.

- Birds that are able to survive the perilous journey are potentially able to raise more young than they could if they remained in the tropics. This is because summer in the temperate zone offers a great abundance of protein-rich food (primarily insects and other invertebrates), longer days, more space, and relatively lower levels of competition and predation.
- Food becomes scarce during the winter in the temperate zone, so the birds must return to the tropics in the late summer and fall.
- Because migratory birds spend part of the year in our country and part of the year in our partner class' country, these birds need healthy habitats in both regions in order to survive.
- Effective conservation of these world travelers depends on the goodwill of people throughout our hemisphere. The birds depend on us, on the people in our partner class' country, and on people who live in the countries in between to protect the habitats they need throughout the year (breeding, wintering, and stopover habitats).
- There are actions we can all take to help protect migratory birds and their habitats. (See the "I'm for the Birds" pledge card in your manual on page 147 for ideas.)

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 :: If you would like to have an educator from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird ::
 :: Center come to your classroom to give a presentation on birds, ::
 :: please contact Susan Bradfield at bradfiels@si.edu; 202-633-4206. ::
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4. Engage your students in learning about your partner class' country.

Have your students locate where they live and where their partner class is located on a map. Review the fact that at different times of the year we see some of the very same birds that our partner class does, and that these birds depend on people taking good care of the habitats they need in both places.

Use the materials and ideas provided in section V of your manual and on the Migratory Bird Center's web site to explore the geography, culture, climate, etc. of your partner class' country. See your manual's table of contents for details on how to access the online resources, including a PowerPoint presentation on your partner class' country and a list of books and DVD's you may borrow for free through our lending library.

5. Prepare a packet of materials to send to your partner class. Mail these materials to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center by November 23, 2010.

Your packet must include each of the following six components:

- **A letter of introduction from you and your class as a whole (1 letter per class)**
 Together with your students, write a letter to your partner class to accompany the other items you are sending. This very important component establishes the context for all that you send to the partner class. We suggest that the letter convey your greetings, your thoughts about the project, and information about what your students have enjoyed

learning most about migratory birds. If you had the opportunity to go bird watching or do another bird-related project, describe this experience to your partner class.

Important!!

- ❖ Our partner classes in Latin America are all Spanish speaking and therefore all correspondence must be in Spanish. We encourage you to work with a Spanish-speaking volunteer from your school or community or with a high school Spanish class to have your letter translated. If you are not able to have your letter translated, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) will translate it for you, although we ask that in this case you ***please keep the length of the letter to one page***. If you can arrange your own translation, the class letter can be as long as you wish and you are welcome also to include translated letters from individual students in addition to the letter from the class as a whole.

- ❖ Correspondence between you and your partner class is intended to be on a class to class basis, not student to student. Please avoid setting up the expectation that each of your students will receive an individual letter from a student in the partner class. Rarely are partnered classes composed of exactly the same number of students.

□ **“Tell Your Partner Class about Yourselves” form (1 form per class)**

This form is meant to supplement the letter written by you and your class. We recommend that you read the questions aloud and record as many of the responses from your students as is practical given the allotted space. If needed, we will translate your students’ responses for you. Your partner class will complete and return the same form.

□ **Artwork depicting migratory birds (1 per student)**

Assign or have each student select a species from the provided list of migratory birds that you share with your partner class. Laminated, color photos of these birds are included in your manual. Teachers of younger students may choose to have their class focus on one or a few species from the list.



Each student must create a picture of their migratory bird to send to their partner class. Pencils, crayons, marker, paints can be used...

be as creative as you wish but keep in mind that the artwork must fit into an 11” X 17” envelope. Illustrations can be done on the back of the range map (described below) or on separate paper.

Drawings can be done freehand, or students can color bird illustrations from the *Feathered Travelers* coloring book or *Winged Ambassadors* color-by-number book included with your manual. Additional bird outline drawings can be found on the Migratory Bird Center’s web site on the BTA Teacher Resources page.

If students prefer to keep their original artwork, it is fine to send photos of the artwork instead. Consider sending printed photos of the students holding up their artwork.

□ **A range map completed by each student showing where their bird breeds and winters.** Using the map of the western hemisphere provided in the manual as a worksheet, each student should show where their bird breeds and where it winters. If this is too advanced for the grade-level you teach, students can instead indicate where they live and the country where their partner class is located. Students should also fill in their name and the Spanish and English names of their bird (these names are found on the list of birds shared in common with your partner class). Please attach the range map to the bird illustration with a staple or paper clip.

To find out where each species of bird breeds and winters, go to: www.allaboutbirds.org. Enter the name of the species, and click on “find”. This web site is a great source for basic facts about the birds as well as maps showing the breeding and wintering ranges. The *Winged Ambassadors* booklet included with your manual is another source for breeding and wintering range maps for 30 species of migratory birds.

Tu nombre/ Your name: _____

Nombre del ave en español/
Name of bird in Spanish: _____

Nombre del ave en inglés/
Name of bird in English: _____

Pick a migratory bird. Show where it breeds (builds its nest and raises its young) and where it spends the winter. Also, find where your partner class is located on the map.

Escoje un ave migratoria. Indica en el mapa dónde se reproduce (construye su nido y cría a sus polluelos) y dónde pasa el resto del año. También, localiza dónde se encuentra ubicada la clase hermana.

Smithsonian National Zoological Park
Migratory Bird Center

Unidos por las Aves!
Bridging the Americas

□ **An “About My Bird/Sobre Mi Ave” form completed by each student.** Using bird field guides or the www.allaboutbirds.org web site, each student should research the bird they illustrated and answer the questions on this worksheet provided in your manual. Students may complete the form in either English or Spanish (see the BTA Teacher Resources web page for a list of helpful Spanish vocabulary).

□ **One or more printed photographs of you and your students.** These will personalize this exchange with your partner class better than anything else. Consider having students hold up their bird illustration in the photograph.

What’s optional to include in your packet:

- If your students want to send something that shares information about themselves individually, you may have them complete the optional form letter entitled “About Me/Sobre Mi” which is included in your manual. An English-Spanish vocabulary list is provided to help students who wish to complete the form in

Spanish. (Be aware that if written in English, the letter will most likely not be understood by the partner class.)

- You may send other items of your choosing, such as post cards or calendar photos of your area, but remember items must fit within an 11" X 17" envelope. Contact Mary Deinlein or Susan Bradfield if you have any questions about what is suitable for sending.

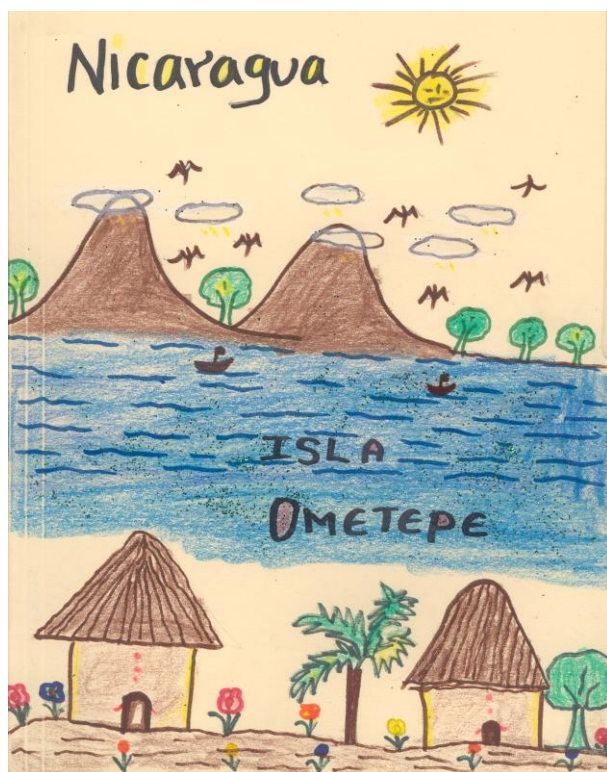
6. Mail all the required items along with any optional ones to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center. Send these items in the enclosed self-addressed envelope to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center **by November 23, 2010 (or sooner, if possible)** and we will send them to your partner class in Latin America. Please do your best to stick to this schedule!

You should receive materials from your partner class in Latin America before the end of May.

7. Have your students complete the post-evaluation survey. Return these forms to us by December 10 and you will be entered to win a free pair of binoculars!

8. Complete and return the program evaluation form by June 30.

Your feedback is essential! Please fill out the evaluation form and return it to us by June 30. Use this form to also let us know whether or not you wish to participate again the following school year. We can only guarantee a spot in the program if you return this form to us by the end of June.



Suggestions for making BTA a more meaningful experience for your students:

- Schedule a BTA Outreach visit to your classroom at any time during the school year.
- As migrants return in the spring and you await the packet from your Latin American partner class, review the BTA activities you did with your students in the fall or introduce new activities from your manual.
- Empower your students with the knowledge of what they can do to help protect migratory birds. Give out copies of the ***I'm For the Birds* pledge card** for all to complete and sign.
- Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day! Each spring, International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is held in the United States and Canada to celebrate the return of migratory birds to their breeding grounds in North America and to raise public awareness about the problems these birds are increasingly facing. IMBD events are held throughout the spring, and culminate on the second Saturday in May. In honor of this event, consider displaying some of the materials from this program or your students' work in a location where they can be enjoyed by the whole school.

Projects That Go Beyond the Basic Program Requirements

Below are examples of some of the many creative projects *Bridging the Americas/Unidos por las Aves* participants have done that go beyond the basic program requirements:

Art (and beyond)

• As an art project and as a way of sharing information about themselves, partnered classes in Maryland and in Nicaragua exchanged handmade, illustrated booklets entitled "What I Want to be When I Grow up" and "My Favorite Foods". Other classes in Nicaragua have sent handmade booklets with illustrations of their school, houses, favorite activities, and surroundings.



• A fifth grade art class created 11" X 17" watercolor paintings of migratory birds.

• Children in Costa Rica painted pictures of migratory birds on paper made from banana plant fibers. Another class made mosaic pictures of birds using dyed broken pieces of egg shells and included poems they wrote about migratory birds.

• Several classes in San Jose, Costa Rica spent months preparing a creative presentation on migratory birds which they then performed for the entire student body, teachers, parents and administrators. The program included a play, dances, songs, and poetry readings all centered on the theme of bird migration and the importance of protecting bird habitats. An exhibition of the art work done by both the students in Costa Rica and their partner classes in the United States followed the performance.

- Many classes have mounted their drawings on construction paper and glued the range maps to the back.
- Fifth grades in El Salvador created a comic strip that told of the adventures of a migrating bird.

Computer technology

- Inspired by their participation in this program, a fourth grade class at Forest Knolls Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland won first prize in a Montgomery County Schools media contest for their video on the human-made hazards faced by migratory birds.
- To gain experience with using digital photos and formatting documents on a computer, second graders in MD each produced a printed page that had a photo of themselves holding their drawing of a migratory bird and some text about their chosen bird and themselves.

Science

- After learning that some migratory birds use the earth's magnetic field to navigate, third grade students learned to use compasses.
- Using the theme of migratory birds, fourth graders in Washington, DC explored the concepts of seasons, life cycles, and adaptations: they learned how the types and amounts of insects available to birds varies according to the seasons, that migration is one way that some animals cope with scarce wintertime food, and that migratory birds may travel thousands of miles over the course of a single year. The students then wrote and performed a play that integrated what they'd learned.

Writing (and beyond)

- Third graders in Virginia each selected and researched a migratory bird species from the list of birds shared in common with their partner class' country. Using books, the internet, CD-roms, and other sources, each child wrote a summary of basic natural history information along with some facts they found particularly interesting. They also developed a Powerpoint presentation based on their research and gave oral presentations to their class.
- Fourth graders in Hyattsville, MD researched, wrote and illustrated a "Field Guide to 21 Migratory Birds that Migrate between Nicaragua and Maryland."
- Fourth graders at Oyster Elementary School in Washington, DC worked with their school librarian and a professional shadow puppet artist to first research information about selected migratory bird species and then to create puppet shows centering on the theme of birds migrating between Washington, DC and Nicaragua. Puppet shows were performed for parents, students, and teachers.

Action projects

- After learning about the amazing lives of migratory birds, kids in Mexico were asked to do something to help the birds. The action many children chose was to turn in their slingshots that

they had previously used to shoot at birds. Over several years, kids have voluntarily handed over dozens of slingshots!

- Several teachers and their students have created bird-friendly habitat on their school grounds as a way of actively helping birds.
- Under the creative leadership of one teacher, children in Costa Rica formed a club called the “Young Protectors of Migratory Birds”. The children meet regularly to go on field trips to look for birds, to learn more about birds and migration, and to discuss ways of helping protect birds. Their club was featured in the Costa Rican national paper’s equivalent of the “Mini-Page”.
- Classes in Maryland collected paper, pencils, crayons and other basic school supplies to send to their partner classes in rural El Salvador.
- In Silver Spring, Maryland, ninth-graders of Latin American heritage mentored an elementary school class participating in *Bridging the Americas*. The mentors taught the younger kids about Latin American culture and translated letters into Spanish.