

# How did we make the Urban Bird Sounds Project?

Use this step-by-step guide to make your own audio guide to birds...  
or frogs... anything else that makes sounds!

## Materials:

### -Computer (for recording narrations):

We used a Mac with the Garage Band software. All recordings were done on one computer but, if you had more microphones, you could record on multiple computers.

### -Microphone (for recording narrations):

We used a Logitech - USB Desktop Microphone, Model: 980186-0403 | SKU: 5431927. Available for around \$30 at Best Buy.)

[http://www.bestbuy.com/site/olspage.jsp?skuId=5431927&type=product&id=1055388008858&ref=06&loc=01&ci\\_src=14110944&ci\\_sku=5431927](http://www.bestbuy.com/site/olspage.jsp?skuId=5431927&type=product&id=1055388008858&ref=06&loc=01&ci_src=14110944&ci_sku=5431927))

### -Recordings of birds, frogs or whatever (mp3 files):

Alas, the \$30 mic will not be -sadly-- not adequate for recording many animals in the wild. However, you can get wonderful recording files from the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds at The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. They have an excellent collection and they may be able to get you low cost or free-of-charge sound files. To contact them about getting sound files please go to:

<https://animalbehaviorarchive.org/order.do>

### -Resources (to use when writing narrations):

Bird-related resources include:

-The Birder's Handbook, by Paul Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye

-Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior, by David Allen Sibley

-Stokes Guide to Bird Behavior, by Don and Lillian Stokes

-And... if you have Internet access: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's

"All About Birds" site (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/>) and

the "Celebrate Urban Birds" site

(<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration>).

-Optional: Handout listing information required in each species account (as developed by students).

## What to do:

### 1. Preparing Narrations:

a) Begin by listening to all of the bird sounds as a group, with each

b) student writing down ideas of what they think the birds could be "saying."

c) Compile all responses and work as a class to choose those which are the most catchy/easy to remember.

d) Work as a class to develop a format for the segments. (i.e. What information will be shared about each bird?)

e) Individual students select their bird(s) and begin writing narration using the class-developed format as a guide.

- f) As individual students finish writing narrations they may want to take on additional species or review their narration with a classmate. (Note: Reading the narration aloud to a classmate is a great way to discover and correct errors!)
2. Recording Narrations: (Note: What follows are mostly suggestions. Step-by-step instructions will vary depending on the recording program you use.)
- a. Get to know Garage Band (or whatever program you will be using) in advance! Be sure to know how to replay takes and delete bad takes. This will save editing time down the road!
  - b. Students can begin working one at a time on recording as they finish writing their narrations. The teacher –or whoever knows how to use the recording program- should get the first person started.
  - c. Ideally, try to use a small quiet space near your classroom. We started out doing the recordings in the classroom (with everyone present) but it was tough to get complete silence --and it was a bummer to have everyone waiting around in silence. For the rest of the recordings, either two students went together to a quiet space (with computer and mic) and record their narrations or students did recordings one on one with me outside of class time (before school, after school, during lunch).
  - d. As mentioned earlier: be sure to edit as you go. Although some narrations were recorded in just a few takes, others required many, many small takes. Encouraging students to evaluate the takes (and only keep the good ones) will make editing much easier.
  - e. Additional notes on editing:
    - i. It would be tough to engage and involve all students while editing as a group. Students who are particularly interested in editing can, of course do some of the editing –you just probably should not make it an expectation for all.
    - ii. The Garage Band software made it extremely simple to insert the bird recordings into the narration files. (All you'll need to do is drag the bird (or other) recordings from itunes into Garage Band.)
  - f. When it's all done...
    - i. Play it for students.
    - ii. Share it with others...
      - 1. ...at school (can be presented in assembly or featured in school paper)
      - 2. ...at festivals and street fairs (students can introduce it to adults and children alike)
      - 3. ... at conferences (invite students to share their work with educators)
      - 4. ...online (create a project website and podcast so it can easily be used by others)
      - 5. Write and tell us about your project! (rb13@cornell.edu)
  - g. Congratulations, you're done!

**Additional Note Regarding Podcasts and Pictures:** *(Please see next page.)*

**Additional Note Regarding Podcasts and Pictures:**

- If you want to create a podcast of your audio guide you can easily do so!

The Urban Bird Sounds Project website and podcast was created using the program iweb. As our class had actually ended by the time I learned about this, only a few students were involved in posting to the website. However, if you have access to multiple computers, creating the project website could be a great class/group project as it can easily be divided into separate tasks! Have fun!

-Taking pictures of wild birds (or other creatures) can be a fun challenge for students. However, it can be difficult to get access to high quality cameras for each student. If you need good quality pictures for your class website or anything else, Wikimedia is a great source of images that are in the public domain

([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)). Additionally, many amateur photographers may let you use their pictures for free. Just e-mail them and ask!

Have fun and email me ([rb13@cornell.edu](mailto:rb13@cornell.edu)) if you have any questions!

-Regan Brooks, Teacher and Bird Nerd