



NATIONAL AVIARY

DARWIN 2009

EXPLORATION IS NEVER EXTINCT

Feathered Families

Lesson Plan
grades 4-7



REGENERATIVE MEDICINE
THE FUTURE OF HEALTHY
PLANNED MEDICAL RESEARCH AND
EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

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Principle funding from
Science Education Partnership Award
National Center for Research Resources
National Institutes of Health





Introduction

Feathered Families

DARWIN 2009
Exploration is Never Extinct

Discover Darwin all over Pittsburgh in 2009 with "Darwin 2009: Exploration is Never Extinct."

Lesson plans, including this one, are available for multiple grades on-line at www.SEPA.duq.edu/education/Darwin

Note:

Be sure to contact the Aviary to confirm the times of the "Flitezone" or "Feeding Time" shows.

Goals

1. To introduce the concepts of relatedness, species/speciation, adaptation, environmental niches, taxonomy.
2. To utilize exhibits at the National Aviary to demonstrate the relatedness of various bird species and groups.
3. To introduce the concept of environmental conservation through letter writing.

Learning Objectives

1. The student will be able to define the terms "species," "speciation," "adaptation," "environmental niche," and "taxonomy" and understand how they are related.
2. The student will be able to give examples of species of birds and orders of birds.
3. The student will be able to use "Bubble Maps" and Double Bubble Maps" to compare and contrast between two bird species or orders of birds.
4. The student will be able to participate in the conservation process by writing a letter to a congressman, expressing the importance of protecting wildlife.

Materials, Resources, and Preparation

1. Educator should read the Teacher Pages provided in this packet or found online. These pages provide important introductory materials.
2. "Bubble Map" and "Double Bubble Map" templates for comparing and contrasting birds are provided at the end of the lesson plan.
3. Preparations should be made for the class to go on a field trip to the National Aviary to observe various birds of prey exhibits.
4. Pencils/Pen and paper are needed to complete the conservation letter writing portion of the post visit.

A few things your students should already know:

1. What an organism is.
2. That a bird is an animal, but they have very unique characteristics to make them different from other mammals, etc.





Teacher Pages

Feathered Families

Definitions

1. **Species**- A group of organisms (plants or animals) that are capable of breeding with other members of the same group but are unable to produce fertile offspring with other organisms.
2. **Speciation**- The process through which a new species arises. This can happen through various natural phenomena including: mutation, migration, genetic drift, and natural selection.
3. **Adaptation**- The alteration in an organism's behavior or body resulting from natural selection. This change occurs over an extended period of time. Adaptations are tailored to the organism's environmental niche.
4. **Environmental Niche**- The unique position of a species in the biosphere.
5. **Taxonomy**- The science of naming, organizing, and classifying living organisms based on relatedness.

Overview

There is great diversity found among living organisms on earth. In order to better understand the relatedness of species on earth, scientists use taxonomy to group and organize related species. A system of classification puts all living things into a kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species based on relatedness. A kingdom is the broadest classification group, such as Animalia, The Animal Kingdom. A species is the most specific group, such as, *Aptenodytes forsteri*, commonly known as the Emperor Penguin. A species is defined as being a group of organisms (plants or animals) that are capable of breeding with other members of the same group but are unable to produce fertile offspring with other organisms.

One way of remembering the various classification levels in the taxonomic system is the mnemonic device: **King Phillip Cuts Open Five Green Snakes**. The beginning letter of each word in the above sentence represents a taxonomic level: Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species. This trick can be very helpful in remembering the various levels of classification.

In the case of birds, there are several characteristics that taxonomists uses to classify them into the class of Aves. Birds in general are classified as follows:

Kingdom: *Animalia*

Phylum: *Cordata*

Sub-Phylum: *Vertebrata*

Class: *Aves*



For a more specific bird, such as a Sharp-Shinned Hawk, the classification would be:

Kingdom: *Animalia*

Phylum: *Cordata*

Sub-Phylum: *Vertebrata*

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Falconiformes*

Family: *Accipitridae*

Genus: *Accipiter*

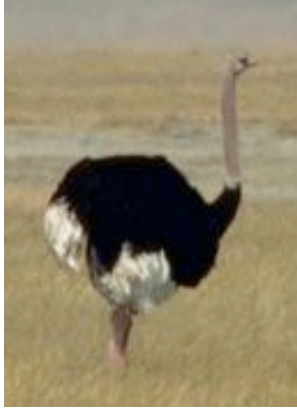
Species: *striatus*

All birds have feathers, lay eggs, have wings, have hollow bones, have beaks, and are warm blooded. All of the birds in the order *Falconiformes*, a more specific classification, have a hooked beak, strong feet (talons and legs, long broad wings for soaring, are meat eaters, have very good eyesight, and their juvenile birds look different than the adults. These shared characteristics are what make them related.

The process of speciation can easily be seen in the various species of birds of prey found in different habitats and niches around the world. While all of these birds share the characteristics of the order, *Falconiformes*, each species possess unique adaptations that better suit them to their individual environmental niches. Adaptations are unique features that the species have gained over time that helps them survive in their particular environment. Because its environmental niche contains a large population of fish, the American Bald Eagle has developed rough talon skin. The increased roughness of their feet allows these eagles to better catch the slippery fish that make up their diet. Another example of adaptation brought about by environmental pressures is the “eye spots” of the pearl spotted owl. In order to ward off attacks from the natural predators in its niche, the pearl spotted owl developed this unique plumage pattern. Because predators often attack from behind and rarely attack when they can see the face of their prey, the owl uses these “eye spots” to fool predators into thinking they are looking at the front of the owl. This can help prevent attacks from some of the owlets’ predators, thereby increasing its chances of survival.

The adaptations of these animals that have arisen from the pressures of their environmental niches support Charles Darwin’s principle of evolution. These adaptations arose over time in order to make the birds better suited to their individual environments, which in effect, increases the fitness of the birds. This facet of evolution, also known as “survival of the fittest,” shows that animals that are better suited to their environment, usually through the development of unique adaptations, have a better rate of survival in the wild.





Ostrich



Emperor Penguin



Great Horned Owl

Bird Taxonomic Groups

(Order- *example species*)

Tinamiformes - *Tinamous*

Rheiformes - *Rheas*

Struthioniformes - *Ostrich*

Casuariiformes - *Cassowaries*

Dinornithiformes - *Kiwis*

Podicipediformes - *Grebes*

Sphenisciformes - *Penguins*

Procellariiformes - *Tube-nosed Seabirds*

Pelecaniformes - *Pelicans and relatives*

Anseriformes - *Waterfowl*

Phoenicopteriformes - *Flamingos*

Ciconiiformes - *Hérons, Storks, New World Vultures and relatives*

Falconiformes - *Diurnal Birds of Prey*

Galliformes - *Fowl-like Birds*

Gruiformes - *Cranes, Rails and relatives*

Charadriiformes - *Shorebirds, Gulls and relatives*

Gaviiformes - *Loons*

Columbiformes - *Pigeons and Doves*

Psittaciformes - *Parrots*

Coliiformes - *Mousebirds*

Musophagiformes - *Turacos*

Cuculiformes - *Cuckoos*

Strigiformes - *Owls*

Caprimulgiformes - *Nightjars and relatives*

Apodiformes - *Swifts and Hummingbirds*

Trogoniformes - *Trogons*

Coraciiformes - *Rollers, Kingfishers and relatives*

Piciformes - *Woodpeckers, Toucans and relatives*

Passeriformes - *Perching Birds*

* *It is under discussion by geneticists whether or not owls are considered a separate order from the Falconiformes.*



Birds of Prey at National Aviary

Listed below are the various species of *Falconiformes*, the birds of prey found at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA. Listed under each bird are characteristics that are unique to that species. These characteristics can be used to complete the bubble or double bubble maps. Keep in mind all of the following birds share the characteristics of birds of prey, listed on page 4.

1. Stellar Sea Eagle

- Native to Russia, North Korea, and Japan
- One of the largest birds of prey, weighing 15-20 lbs.
- Diet consists of fish, crabs, shellfish, and smaller birds
- Females are usually larger than males
- Near threatened species

2. Bald Eagle

- Native to Canada, Alaska, U.S., and Northern Mexico
- Another large bird of prey, weighing 7-15 lbs.
- Wingspan of 6-8 feet.
- Diet consists of fish, small animals (turtles, rodents, snakes, etc.), and smaller birds
- National bird of the U.S.
- Have special rough feet to help grab onto slippery fish
- Threatened species

3. African Pygmy Falcon

- Native to North-Eastern Africa and South-Western Africa
- One of the smallest birds of prey, weighing only 1.9-2.6 oz.
- Diet consists of small lizards and rodents.
- Will often “take-over” the nests of white-browed sparrow weavers
- Live in dry areas with sparse vegetation
- Not-threatened species

4. Pearl Spotted Owlet

- Native to Southern Africa
- Another small bird of prey, weighing only 2.4-5.2 oz.
- Diet consists of rodents, insects, frogs, and small birds
- Females larger than males
- Has “eye spots” on the back of its head to ward off predators
- Has specialized “silent” feathers to keep quiet while hunting in the dark
- Not threatened species

5. Spectacled Owl

- Native to Central to South America, Mexico to Argentina
- Weighs 15.9-31.8 oz.
- Diet consists of rodents, bats, crabs, and insects
- Has white plumage around the eyes that resemble eye glasses or “spectacles”
- Lives in rainforest habitats
- Has specialized “silent” feathers to keep quiet while hunting in the dark
- Not threatened species





Pre-Visit

Feathered Families

Lecture

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

- Teacher Pages (for reference)
- Bubble Map Template
- Double Bubble Map Template

Note:

- Inform students that they will be visiting the Aviary to observe live examples of birds of prey.

1. Start a discussion with students about birds. Ask students questions like,
 - What kinds of birds are at the Aviary?
 - What do they look like?
 - What do they eat?
 - Do you know what makes a bird a bird?
 - Etc.
2. The definition of a species can be given here and explained using individual bird examples.
 - “A species is defined as a group of organisms (plants or animals) that are capable of breeding with other members of the same group but are unable to produce offspring with other organisms.”
3. Once examples/facts are given, explain to students that all of their examples of birds are birds, but that birds can be further divided into groups called orders. Orders are a way of placing birds with similar characteristics into groups.
4. Use the students’ examples and place a few these birds into their respective order.

Activity

1. As a class, have the students complete a “Bubble Map” (using the template) on the order Falconiformes. Falconiformes are more commonly known as “birds of prey.”

Be sure that the “Bubble Map” includes the following characteristics: a hooked beak, strong feet (talons) and legs, long broad wings for soaring, meat eater, juvenile birds look different than adults, and very good eye sight.

2. For a more advanced lesson, have the students complete a “Double Bubble Map” that compares and contrasts the order Falconiformes with the order, Anseriformes (Waterfowl). Characteristics that are shared between the orders should be placed in the circles with lines going to both orders. (See template.)

- Shared characteristics can include:

1. has feathers
2. wings
3. hollow bones
4. warm blooded
5. lays eggs
6. has a beak

- Characteristics specific to each order are placed in the circles with lines connecting them to their respective order.

- See the examples on pages 12 and 13.

Note:

- All of these characteristics are what make a bird a bird.





Visit

Feathered Families

Lecture

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials:

- Teacher Pages (for reference)
- Double Bubble Map Template

1. Upon arriving at the Aviary, use the list provided in Teacher Page 5 to visit various examples of the Falconiformes.
2. Either as a class, or in groups, have students look at 2 different birds of prey. Have the students observe each bird closely.

Activity

1. Encourage the students to notice specific characteristics of each bird. To guide students in their observation ask questions such as,
 - Where does this bird live?
 - What does it eat?
 - How big is the bird?
 - What color pattern is it?
 - etc.
2. Clarify to the students that they are now comparing and contrasting birds within the same order, Falconiformes.
3. Have the students complete a “Double Bubble Map” that compares and contrasts the two birds they observed. Remember that shared characteristics go in the middle circles, while characteristics unique to one bird go in the circles on the side.
4. Some suggested pairs of birds for the double bubble map are:
 - Pearl Spotted Owlet vs. Spectacled Owl
 - Stellar Sea Eagle vs. Bald Eagle
 - African Pygmy Owl vs. Pearl Spotted Owlet
5. Any of the birds of prey found at the aviary can be used for the double bubble map. Remember to place characteristics which categorize birds of prey, like “a sharp hooked beak,” or “strong feet and legs” into the shared circles, or also characteristics that are shared between the species like “eats small birds” while keeping characteristics of the individual species to the outside circles.
6. If time permits, see either of the Aviary’s shows, “Flitezone” or “Feeding Time.”





Post-Visit Feathered Families

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

- Pencils/Pens
- Paper
- Address of Congressperson:

Mike Doyle
401 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Reflection

1. It is important to explain the idea that the characteristics written in the middle circles of the “Double Bubble Map” show the commonalities between the species of birds of prey. These commonalities are what make the birds related to one another.
2. Taxonomy, or the science of grouping and categorizing living things, is based upon placing organisms with similar characteristics in the same group. The similarities are both morphological (has bones, is feathered) and evolutionary.
3. It is also important to explain the idea that the characteristics contained in the circles on the outer edges (which are connected to only one species) show how each species is separate and distinct from the other species.
4. These circles will contain each species special adaptations. These adaptations have developed in each particular species to fit the environmental niche that the species occupies. “Adaptations are unique features that the species has gained over time that helps them survive in their particular environment.”
5. Be sure to explain that the appearance of special adaptations like eye spots of pearl spotted owlets and the rough feet of the bald eagles are from the environmental pressures of each species unique environmental niche.

Activity

1. After reviewing the “Double Bubble Maps, it is important to inform students about the “endangered species” status of many birds of prey.
2. Provide students with the address of a congressperson or conservation organization (See the materials list at the top-left of this page.) Have students write a letter to the congressperson/ organization that tells them about what they observed and learned at the Aviary and gives them their opinion on habitat destruction/ conservation.

Discussion

1. As a wrap-up activity, have a class discussion about what students can do in their daily lives that can help protect endangered animals’ habitat.

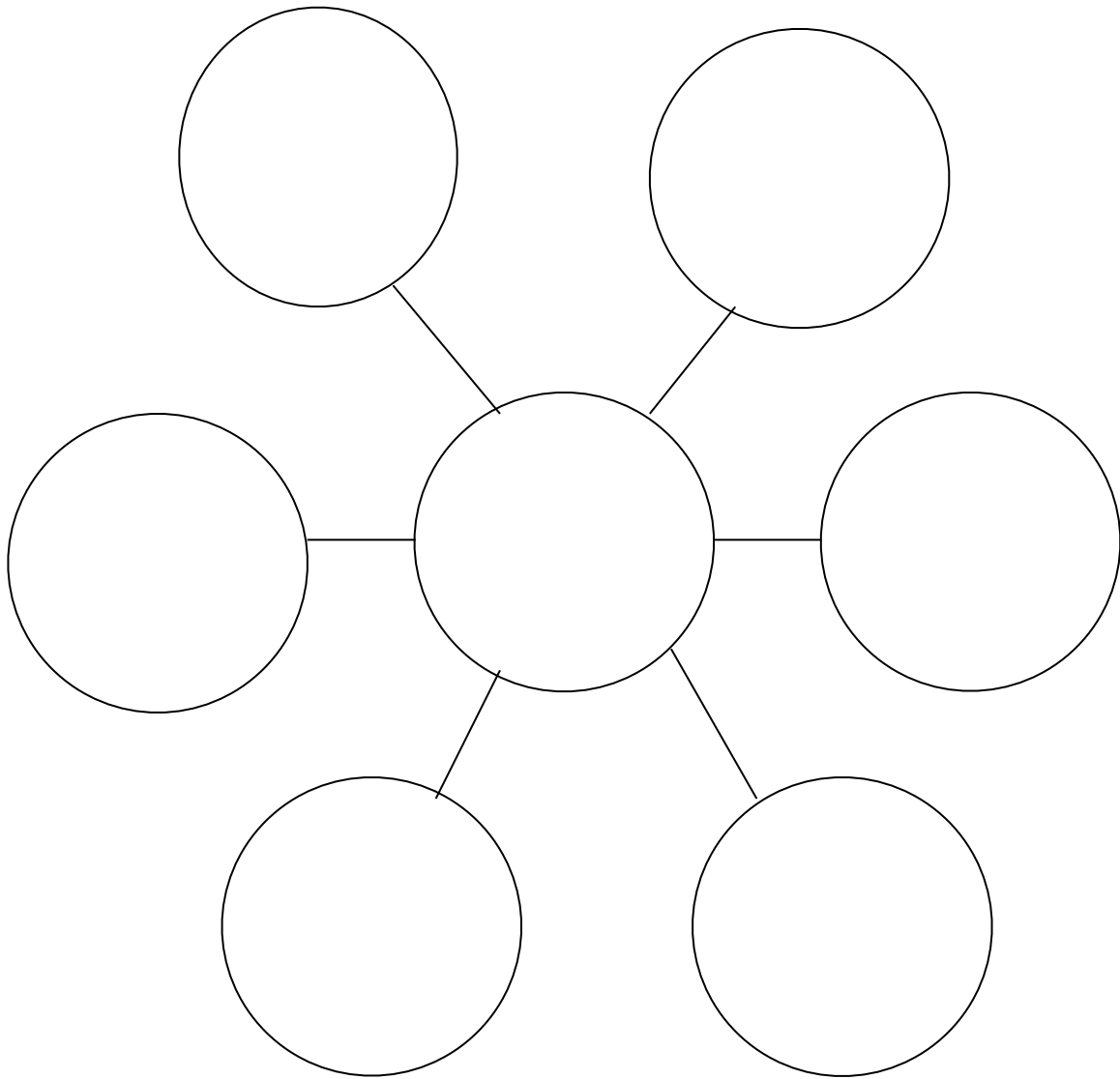




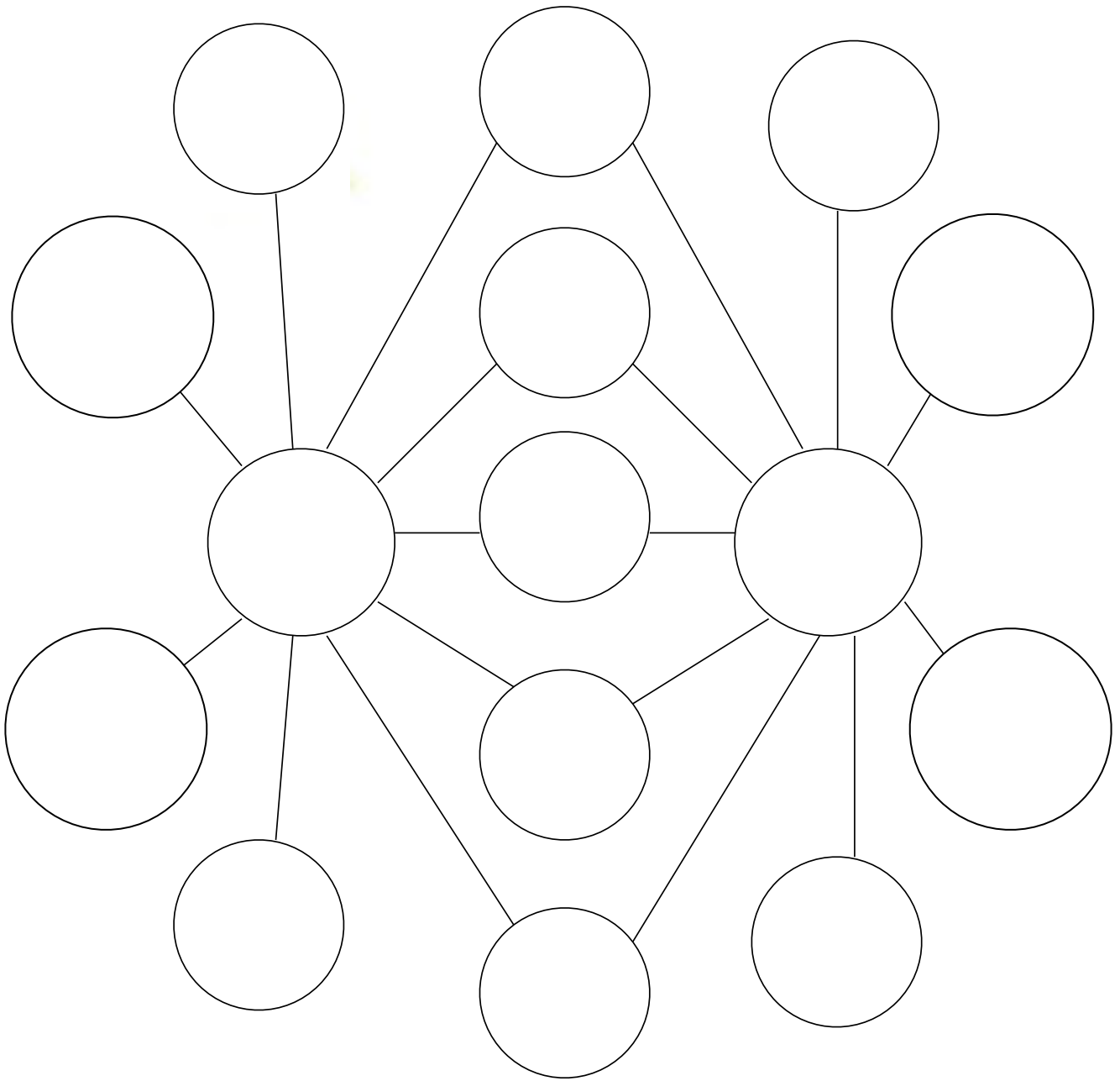
Appendix

Feathered Families

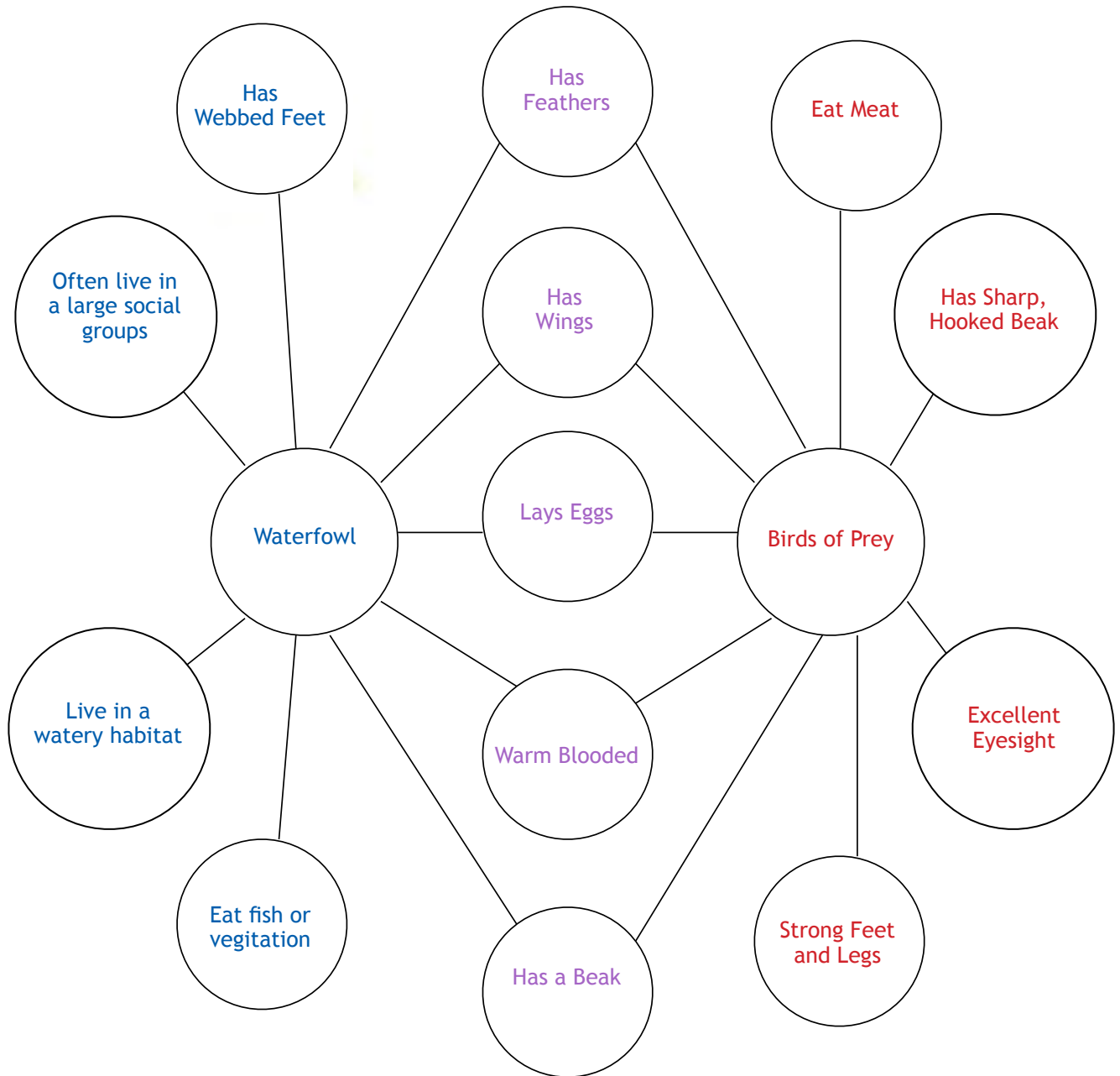
Bubble Map



Double Bubble Map



Double Bubble Map Comparing Waterfowl and Birds of Prey



Double Bubble Map Comparing the Pearl Spotted Owlet and the Spectacled Owl

