

The Wonders of Woodcock

Each March, when the snow in the small, grassy openings in the woods has thawed, we can hear two strange sounds around dusk. They are the sounds of the male woodcock trying to prove to the female that he'd be a good choice as the father of her chicks. He struts around on the ground making a funny *meep, meep* sound then rockets into the air, flying in big circles while his wing feathers make a high pitched *chip, chip, chip* sound. He comes back to the ground and begins strutting and *meeping* again. It is wondrous to watch and to hear as a sign that spring is coming and our woods are about to burst with life again after a quiet winter.

Please look at bird books and visit the website: <https://timberdoodle.org/biology> then create a poster that will teach others about these awesome birds of our woods. You can lay it out like the table below or choose your own design.

<p><i>Include a digital or hand-drawn picture of a woodcock. Try to show the habitat around the bird. Make sure the picture is big enough to show details such as markings, body size, leg length, bill length, etc.</i></p>	<p><i>Woodcock are closely related to the sandpipers that are seen on our shores. Many sandpipers just pass through Maine while migrating but the Spotted Sandpipers – like the Woodcock – nest here and raise their chicks in Maine. Insert a picture of a Spotted Sandpiper with comments about how they are similar to and different from woodcock. Draw an arrow from each comment to the part of the bird you are describing. (for instance, you could point out that sandpipers have much longer legs and draw an arrow from your comment to the sandpiper's legs.)</i></p>
<p><i>Watch the video at the website below. Describe the courtship/breeding ritual of woodcock with words and sketches. Maybe you could set it up in a panel of four boxes, like a newspaper cartoon.</i></p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeRgumMIJHw</p>	<p><i>Include a Woodcock Facts section:</i></p> <p><i>Plumage (Color and markings on feathers):</i></p> <p><i>Description of a woodcock's body (Size, shape, eye position, bill shape and size):</i></p> <p><i>What sound does a woodcock's feathers make?</i></p> <p><i>Diet (What do they eat and how they get their food?):</i></p> <p><i>Habitat (Where would we be likely to see or hear woodcock once the chicks have left the nest?):</i></p>
<p><i>Insert a poem that you have written that includes some of the woodcock's folk names.</i></p>	<p><i>Breeding (When do they mate? Where do they mate? What time of day to they perform their courtship/breeding ritual?)</i></p> <p><i>Migration (Where do they go? Do they travel by day or by night? When do they come back to Maine? Do they return to the same place where they were hatched?):</i></p>

After you've made your poster, create a dance that imitates the woodcock's courtship ritual. Maybe someone else in your home will join you in the dance.

Nesting and chicks: Where do they make their nests? What are their eggs like? What are the chicks like? How soon do they leave the nest? They are precocial; what does that mean?)

Predators (what eats woodcock?):