



What do I want to study about birds? Designing a research question

Name: _____

Directions: Read the information below to help guide you in your process of developing a feasible research question about urban birds.

1. Where to look for ideas for research questions?
 - a. Bird Journals
 - b. Literature from class
 - c. Observations

2. Some questions to help you:
 - a. What are you curious about regarding birds?
 - b. What is happening in your neighborhood that puzzles you?
 - c. What do birds act the way they do?
 - d. Is it different from other bird behaviors you have seen?
 - e. Is there anything from your bird journal observations that interests you to find out more about?

3. When thinking about a question, remember the following:
 - a. Make sure the topic you choose is something that you are *genuinely* curious and interested in finding out about
 - b. Questions with *hows* and *whys* invite deeper thinking than *what, when, and where*.
 - c. Make sure your question cannot be answered by simply looking it up
 - d. Make sure question is testable and not a dead end. You must be able to find hard data to settle the question.
 - e. Some questions that seem trivial or silly have answers more significant than expected.
 - f. Make sure your question has significance, beyond your simple interest in it. So what? Why would others think this is a question worth asking? Think of it this way, how would not answering this question keep us from understanding something else better than we do?

3 Steps to Coming up With a Question

(*The Craft of Research*, Booth et al., 2008)

1. Name your topic

- a. I am trying to learn about (working on, studying) _____
- b. *Ex. I am studying the causes of the disappearance of large North American mammals...*

2. Add an indirect question (indicates what you do not know or understand about your topic)

- a. Because I want to find out who/what/when/where/whether/ why/ how

- b. *Ex. because I want to find out whether they were hunted to extinction...*

3. Answer so what?

- a. In order to help my reader understand how, why or whether:

- b. *Ex. in order to help my reader understand whether native peoples lived in harmony with nature or helped destroy it.*

<p>1. Name: _____</p> <p>2. Group Members: _____</p> <p>3. Group Topic: _____</p> <p>4. Group Research Question: _____ _____</p>
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