

ABSTRACT

This master's thesis deals with creating and implementing a long-term school project focused on birdwatching and bird species identification in the non-breeding season. Over a seven-year period, ten 7th-9th grade classes, in total 181 students from two elementary schools, participated in the project. At the beginning and end of the project, students were quizzed on identifying 33 bird species that commonly visit or are seen in the area around the bird feeder. Birdwatching occurred from mid-October to mid-March at bird feeders the students had placed near their homes. The students regularly recorded their observations in their ornithological journals. The project fell under the science curriculum but was also integrated as a cross-curricular project into other subjects, especially art education. The project significantly improved the students' knowledge and skills, increased their interest in birds, and raised their awareness of the need for bird conservation. Students became significantly more proficient in using the resources and equipment needed to observe and identify birds. The students' interest in nature, especially in their immediate surroundings, increased significantly. The results show that long-term natural science-based projects can positively impact education, help build environmental awareness, and form and strengthen students' positive attitudes toward nature.

KEYWORDS

ornithology, environmental education, project-based learning, bird species identification, experiential learning