



Avian Scientific Advisory Group

[www.aviansag.org](http://www.aviansag.org)

## Activities for International Migratory Bird Day

Following is a compilation of ideas for bird-themed activities provided by the Avian Scientific Advisory Group (ASAG) of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) that are currently held at North American zoos for celebrating International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) on any day throughout the year.

For more information on IMBD, please visit <http://www.migratorybirdday.org/>.

1. Coloration of Birds
  - a. A variety of different colored bird feathers of various types
  - b. Show how the color of the feather can assist certain birds in camouflaging into their surroundings or habitat.
    - i. Macaw or other parrot feathers are really good for this as they show the difference of color from the top and the bottom - giving them a difference based on perspective.
2. Bird Vocalizations
  - a. Need a recording of a variety of bird calls and a picture of the birds that make the call.
  - b. The idea is to match the call with the bird – it is best to do some easy ones for the younger kids and a couple of harder ones for the adults.
3. How Far Did You Migrate
  - a. Get a map of the U.S. and/or a global map – depending on how many visitors you get from outside the country.
    - i. Use pushpins to have people mark from where they came. This will give you a picture of how far they have migrated to visit.
    - ii. You can use a string measured out and marked with distances to help give them the miles they migrated.
4. What's Your Wingspan
  - a. Use a life size cutout of a large bird with a good size wingspan. It does not have to be too detailed as a silhouette will serve nicely. Eagles, large vultures, condors, cranes and storks work great for this as they are large and most facilities have at least one or two of these in their collections.

*(What's Your Wingspan continued)*

- b. Have the Guest step up to the wingspan cutout (photo opportunity as well) and spread their wings to show how they compare. You can have distance measurements on the graphic to help you see just how wide your wingspan is.
5. What's Your Leg's Length
  - a. Similar to the wingspan but use life size cutouts of a few birds with long legs – such as cranes, storks and flamingos. To make it more fun for the little kids, you can use geese or spoonbill/ibis for the little legs. Have the Guest step up next to the image and see how long their legs are and which species they are closest to.
6. What's Your Bird Height
  - a. Very similar to the leg one but using the overall height of the birds as the measuring device for the Guest. This is fun as you can use a variety of species to help them see how the measure up to birds – keep in mind that Ostrich are birds, too, and are very tall!
7. Banding the Birds
  - a. This is probably the most popular with Guests that visit. We use different types of wristbands to band people as they migrate through the park.
    - i. Once they are banded, they are asked to visit banding stations and at each station visited they receive an item for being checked in. This includes stickers and tattoos that are really inexpensive and not too messy to hand out.
8. Focus on Your Bird Conservation Programs
  - a. We use a table top display and have someone who works in these programs man the booth and talk about what the project is and share the story of how they work with the project species. Example would be Piping Plover hand rearing and monitoring.
9. Bring in Your Conservation Partners to Share their Story
  - a. This is the best for the Guests as they get to meet people who are doing amazing work in the field and gives our partners a chance to talk up their work and gain more support. We have used Operation Migration, Audubon Society, and USFWS as partner displays.
10. Bird Feeder
  - a. Set up a row of items to make peanut butter/bird seed pine cone bird feeders. The guest can make them and take them home with them and hang in their own trees.
11. Nest material holder enrichment
  - a. Collect paper towel tubes, cut holes, attach twine and fill with nesting material.

12. What's it like to have wings!

- a. If you have some creative people, you can actually create a pair of wings that can be worn by Guests for a great photo opportunity.
- b. Wings should be of a large bird such as a stork, crane, eagle or vulture and be as life-size as possible to help share the message of how big these birds are while flying.

13. How can they eat THAT!

- a. A great vulture activity to share how important it is to have vultures in our ecosystem.
  - i. Use two containers to show a human digestive system and that of a vulture – in one jar put in water and in the second put in vinegar.
  - ii. Take a plastic dog bone and carve out a groove to place a small amount of baking powder in this groove. Add a string or something similar to the bone to allow you to add it into the jars.
  - iii. By placing the bone in water – human stomach – there is no reaction. In the vinegar jar – vulture stomach – take the bone with the baking powder and lower it into the jar. The reaction is a fizzy reaction that can lead to how the vulture stomach can be helpful in removing diseases that we humans cannot ingest or will get very sick by.
  - iv. You will need to change out the vinegar over a period of time as it will lose its effectiveness.

14. Banding Stations!

- a. One of the most fun ways to get people to participate in your activities.
- b. Find a way to identify your migrating birds – use bands of some type – the colored party bands are always good.
- c. As they migrate through your park, you can add stickers or hole punches to identify them as checking in at the banding stations!

15. Why band birds?

- a. Utilize your collection birds to discuss how to band birds and why – including why bands are on specific legs.
- b. Set up a mist net – in an indoor area preferably – and show how wild birds are caught and what is done in the field while working with birds.
  - i. A great time to bring in a person/organization that has a banding permit to share their story about their work and equipment.