



Cardinal by Delani.

# Red Birds in Winter

## Nancy Walkup

**A** longtime birdwatcher, I am always looking for ways to make my students aware of the birds around them and how they can help them survive and thrive. Our school is bordered on two sides by hayfields and has many trees. As a result, we can see quite a few different kinds of birds at school.

I believe that learning to identify birds helps students take more notice of them and become aware of things they can do to ensure the birds' survival. Birds we have seen on our school grounds include scissortail flycatchers, killdeers, robins, blue jays, Canada geese, sparrows, and grackles, but everyone's favorite seems to be the cardinal.

### Cardinals

Cardinals certainly attract the most attention, perhaps because of the bright red color of the male and possibly because we see them year-round. Our trees are pretty drab in winter and

many times, the cardinal is the only spot of color. If we are lucky to get any snow, they certainly stand out against the white.


### Sweet Music

To introduce all these birds to my young students, I made a presentation that included our local birds and audio files of their songs (and cardinals are particularly musical). We also talked about evergreens and the possibility of snow.

### Making Feathered Friends

Students used oil pastels to draw branches, leaves, and snowflakes on a sheet of background paper. Next, each student traced around a circle pattern on red paper and cut it out. Students cut the circle in half and cut one of the halves into four parts to make

a head, wings, and tail. Finally, students glued their birds onto their trees and added details as desired (female cardinals or other birds could also be included).

The birds provided a bright spot of color on a dull day and, hopefully, will remind students to watch out for our feathered friends. 

**Learning to identify birds helps students take more notice of them and become aware of things they can do to ensure the birds' survival.**

*Nancy Walkup is the editor of SchoolArts and taught this lesson at W.S. Ryan Elementary in Denton, Texas. [nwalkup@davisart.com](mailto:nwalkup@davisart.com)*

### NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students make connections between visual arts and other disciplines.*

### WEB LINKS

[www.whatbird.com/](http://www.whatbird.com/)

[www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_cardinal/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_cardinal/id)