

# CANADIAN GEOGRAPHIC IN THE CLASSROOM

Magazine issue: January/February 2015

Article: “The National Bird Project”, pages 41 to 45



## Learning objectives:

Students prepare a debate centred on designating a national bird for Canada.

## Time required:

40-75 minutes

## Recommended grades:

Grades 7-12 (may be adapted for younger grades)

## Materials:

Several copies of the January/February 2015 issue of *Canadian Geographic*

## Canadian National Standards for Geography:

- *Asking geographic questions*
  1. Plan how to answer geographic questions.
- *Answering geographic questions*
  1. Develop and present combinations of geographic information to answer geographic questions.
  2. Make generalizations and assess their validity.
- *The Uses of Geography*  
Role of multiple points of view in contemporary geographic policies and issues
- *Places and Regions*  
Factors that influence people’s perception of places and regions

## Introduction:

- Ask students to make a list of national symbols of Canada (e.g., maple leaf, maple tree, beaver, hockey, lacrosse, motto, etc.). Record their answers on the board.
- Invite students to circle those that are related to geography (trees, animals, etc.).

## Development:

- Lead a class discussion, asking: what is the role of a *national symbol*?
  - National symbols are the symbols that countries use at home and abroad to represent the nation and its people
- Inform students that while Canada has a national animal, and the provinces and territories have representatives birds, Canada does not have a national bird.
- Explain to the students that there are over 400 species of birds in Canada.
- Provide them with an overview of *Canadian Geographic’s* National Bird Project, the goal of which is to help designate an official bird for Canada by 2017, the country’s sesquicentennial.
- Divide the class into four groups. Distribute copies of “The National Bird Project” article to each group.
- Assign each group to read one essay: Will Ferguson/Canada goose; Charlotte Gray/Osprey; Alissa York/Great Grey owl; Noah Richler/Raven.

## Conclusion:

- Instruct groups to prepare a rationale for why their bird should be named the National Bird of Canada.
- Explain to each group that their work and ensuing class debate should follow these steps:
  - **Organize ideas:** Using the January/February 2015 issue of Canadian Geographic's National Bird Project essays as a source, identify several arguments why their bird should be chosen. Divide key points and arguments between four speakers. The first speaker should have three arguments. The second and third speaker should have two or three arguments. The fourth speaker should prepare a summary/conclusion.
  - **Structure the speech:** The speech structure should include an overview (what bird the group is proposing), an overview of the reasons, the three speakers points (name, explanation, reason); and a conclusion.
  - **Deliver the speech:** Allow each group 10-15 minutes to present its perspective. If desired, groups may then take a 5 minute break between speeches to allow each team to organize their questions and counter arguments to challenge their opponents.
  - **Prepare counter arguments:** Each group will have 5 minutes to present their counter arguments.
  - The remaining time will entail questions and discussion involving the entire class.
- Invite students to film their argument and share their video with Canadian Geographic on YouTube. Make sure students vote for their personal favourite at [nationalbird.cangeo.ca](http://nationalbird.cangeo.ca) or tweet to *Canadian Geographic* using @CanGeo.

## Extend your geographical thinking:

- Invite students to submit their own 300-word essay to [nationalbird.canadiangeographic.ca](http://nationalbird.canadiangeographic.ca) indicating their choice of Canada's national bird.
- Use *Canadian Geographic's* tiled map of Canada to highlight where each bird is commonly found and to follow the progress of the National Bird Project ([education.canadiangeographic.ca](http://education.canadiangeographic.ca)).

Canadian Geographic Education is the standing educational committee of The Royal Canadian Geographical Society. Since 1992 it has been creating authoritative, accessible and free resources for K-12 geography curricula. Discover all programs and become a member at [cgeducation.ca](http://cgeducation.ca)