

ELINOR WONDERS WHY

EP 107A Bird Song

By: Jorge Cham and Daniel Whiteson

Elinor's Question: Why do birds sing?

Logline: Elinor and friends figure out that birds use songs to talk to each other.

Curriculum Goals:

LS 3a. Observe ways that animals and plants get what they need to live and grow. [Elinor will observe the ways the birds use songs to communicate in order to get what they need.

SEP1 Ask and/or identify cause and effect questions that can be answered by an investigation [Elinor asks why birds sing and does an investigation]

SEP3. a. Identify and use a greater variety of tools to extend the senses for observing, measuring, and recording data about objects and events [Elinor uses binoculars]

SEP4. b. Use the 5 senses and simple tools to gather and record data [Elinor listens to as well as watches the birds]

SEP6 b Look for and describe patterns and relationships in natural phenomena [Elinor watches the birds to get a clue about why they sing]

SEP7. Engaging in argument from evidence

a. Engage in discussions before, during, and after investigations. [Elinor speculates about why birds sing, observes and updates her thoughts]

b. Support thinking and argue ideas with evidence [Elinor uses her observations to support her idea for why bird sing]

ET2. b. Use a variety of low-tech tools including binoculars.

CHARACTERS: Elinor, Ari, Olive, Mr. Rabbit , Ranger Rabbit

Line Count - 98

FIRST DRAFT: 28-Jan-19

SECOND DRAFT: 19-Feb-19

POLISH DRAFT: 5-Mar-19

RECORD DRAFT: 13-Mar-19

5 MR RABBIT (CONT'D) 5
 <groans>

2. INT. ELINOR'S ROOM

Elinor wakes up slowly. She rubs her eyes and yawns contentedly. She hears some <SFX: BIRD SONG> in the distance and her ears turn and react.

6 ELINOR 6
Hmmm. Who's that?

Elinor hops out of bed and goes to the window. ZOOM IN on the window, revealing the Robin outside.

7 ELINOR (CONT'D) 7
Oh, good morning, little bird!

The bird <SFX: BIRD CHIRPS>, seemingly in response.

8 ELINOR (CONT'D) 8
Thank you for the nice wake-up
song! I'll be outside soon. Maybe
we can play!

3. INT. KITCHEN -- DAY, A SHORT TIME LATER

Elinor comes down for her breakfast, which RANGER RABBIT (in her PJ's) has just served on the table. Elinor is now wearing her regular clothes.

9 RANGER RABBIT 9
Good morning, Elinor! How are you
this morning?

Mr. Rabbit enters through the kitchen door like a sleep-deprived zombie, still wearing his pajamas.

10 ELINOR 10
I'm great, mom! I just heard a cute
little bird singing a really pretty
wake-up song.

Elinor munches on her breakfast. Mr. Rabbit pours himself a coffee and slumps into his chair.

11 ELINOR (CONT'D) 11
Morning, Dad! Did you hear that
cute bird singing this morning?

12 MR RABBIT (UNENTHUSIASTIC) 12
Mmmm hmmm. I sure did, Elinor.

13 ELINOR 13
Wasn't the song pretty?

14 MR RABBIT 14
Yes. <pause> Pretty LOUD.

Elinor and Ranger Rabbit <SFX: LAUGH>

15 RANGER RABBIT 15
Did it wake you up, dear? I know
you wanted to sleep in today.

16 MR RABBIT 16
Well, I tried to go back to sleep
but I couldn't. Why do birds have
to sing RIGHT outside my window?

17 ELINOR 17
(intrigued)
Good question, Dad! And why do
birds sing anyway?

Mr. Rabbit shrugs sleepily.

18 ELINOR (CONT'D) 18
(excited by the mystery)
Lizards don't sing. Plants don't
sing. Some bugs make nice sounds,
but I don't think they sing.

19 MR RABBIT 19
Thank goodness for that!

20 ELINOR 20
So why do BIRDS sing?

Ranger Rabbit puts down a plate of food for herself and Mr.
Rabbit and joins the family at the table.

21 RANGER RABBIT 21
That IS a good question, Elinor!
Why do YOU think birds sing?

22 ELINOR 22
(excited to share)
Hmmm... Maybe they are practicing
to give a big singing concert
somewhere?

23 RANGER RABBIT 23
That's a fun idea. Have you ever
heard of birds giving a concert?

24 ELINOR 24
No, you're right. Birds don't give
concerts. So why do they sing?

25 MR RABBIT 25
 Maybe they just like waking up
 sleeping bunnies?

Elinor and Ranger Rabbit <SFX: LAUGH> again and Ranger Rabbit
 pats Mr. Rabbits arm comfortingly.

26 ELINOR 26
 If I figure out WHY birds sing,
 then maybe I can figure out how to
 keep it from waking you up!

27 MR RABBIT 27
 Thank you, Elinor. That's the best
 idea I've heard all morning.

28 ELINOR 28
 Hmm... I need MORE OBSERVATIONS!

Ranger Rabbit gets up and pulls a pair of binoculars off a
 hook on the wall

29 RANGER RABBIT 29
 Then you might want to use these
 binoculars. They're good for
 watching birds.

30 ELINOR 30
 OK, I'm going to figure out this
 mystery! Thanks for breakfast, mom!
 See you later, Dad! Dad?

Elinor hops by her father, who is now fast asleep, head on
 the table. She pats him gently on the shoulder.

31 MR RABBIT 31
 <Snores...>

32 ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER) 32
 Don't worry, Dad. I'll figure this
 out for you.

4. EXT. FOREST NEAR ELINOR'S HOUSE - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Elinor is hopping around the woods near her house with the
 binoculars around her neck.

33 ELINOR 33
 OK, let's find some birds and make
 some observations!

She lifts the binoculars to her face -- the wrong way.
BINOCULARS POV: We see two small overlapping circles with far away trees.

34 ELINOR (O.S) (CONT'D) 34
Hmm, that doesn't look right.

BACK TO ELINOR: Elinor keeps the binoculars at her face and waves one hand in front of the binoculars. BINOCULARS POV: We see a small Elinor's hand waving.

35 ELINOR (O.S.) (CONT'D) 35
These are supposed to make things
look CLOSER, not FARTHER AWAY!

BACK TO ELINOR: She lowers the binoculars and realizes that she's had them backwards.

36 ELINOR (CONT'D) 36
Oh. <giggles> Oops!

She turns them around. BINOCULARS POV: We see two large overlapping circles that come into focus. Awesome!

37 ELINOR (O.S.) (CONT'D) 37
That's better!

Elinor scans around, we pan with her POV, until she passes a bird and then comes back to look at it (This could be CHICKY from Ep. 121, although Elinor hasn't named her yet).

38 ELINOR (CONT'D) 38
Ooh! There's a cute little bird.
Sing for me, birdie!

Something brown, fuzzy and blurry blocks her view.

39 ELINOR (CONT'D) 39
Huh? What's THAT?

BACK ON ELINOR: We see her adjusting the focus knob on the binoculars. BINOCULARS POV: The picture comes into focus and... we see part of ARI's face.

BACK TO ELINOR: We see Ari looking through the big end of the binoculars. OLIVE is standing behind him.

40 ARI 40
Hi, Elinor! Whatcha doing?

She lowers the binoculars.

41	ELINOR Oh, hi Ari, hi Olive! I'm using these binoculars to look for birds. I'm trying to answer a question!	41
42	OLIVE Cool! <beat> Uh, what's the question?	42
43	ELINOR I want to know why birds sing! Plants don't sing, lizards don't sing. Why do birds sing?	43
44	ARI Uh, of course birds sing! They are birds!	44
45	OLIVE But WHY do they sing, Ari?	45
46	ARI Oh. Hmm. I never thought about it before. You're right, I don't know!	46
47	OLIVE We'll help you, Elinor. Let's all solve the mystery together!	47
48	ELINOR OK! We'll all watch the birds and try to figure out what makes them sing.	48
The kids look around for birds. We hear <SFX: TRILLING AND CHIRPING OF VARIOUS BIRDS> from different directions.		
49	ARI (STAGE WHISPER) There's some that way! He points in one direction.	49
50	OLIVE (STAGE WHISPER) I heard one this way! She points in a totally different direction.	50
51	ELINOR I think there's one over there. She points to a nearby tree.	51

52	ELINOR (CONT'D)	52
	Hmm. There are a lot of birds in the forest.	
53	OLIVE	53
	Let's split up! I'll look for birds over here...	
54	ARI	54
	And I'll listen for some over there!	
55	ELINOR	55
	Great idea! Now we can get MORE OBSERVATIONS!	

Ari and Olive and Elinor tiptoe off screen in the direction of the birds they heard.

5. EXT FOREST -- VARIOUS LOCATIONS -- DAY

Elinor finds a good spot. She sits among some short bushes (so she's slightly hidden) in the center of the scene and cocks her head to listen for the <SFX: FOREST NOISES>. Ari and Olive are far enough away that we can't initially see or hear them.

56	ELINOR	56
	OK birds, I'm ready, let's hear some songs!	

There are faint <SFX: BIRD SONGS> from many directions, but nothing close. Suddenly she hears <SFX: ROBIN CHIRPING> in a tree to her left. She picks up her binoculars and puts them to her face, turning to her left. BINOCULARS POV: We see through her binoculars an American Robin mama bird. [AR adult design reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-LbyrrJzrM>]. The robin is looking left and right, up and down, <SFX: CHIRPING> each time. We get the sense that it's looking for something. [AR Adult sound reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZl2X4zjejA>]

BACK ON ELINOR: We see Elinor looking through her binoculars.

57	ELINOR (CONT'D)	57
	Hmm, you look like you're looking for something.	

Elinor hears another <SFX: CHIRP>, this time to her right. It sounds similar, but like a fledgling. [AR fledgling sound reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMZdn3y2VBk>] Elinor lowers her binoculars and turns to the right.

58 ELINOR (CONT'D) 58
Ooh, another bird. They sound kind
of the same. I wonder if they know
each other?

She looks through her binoculars again. BINOCULARS POV: We see a fledgling American Robin in the tree. [Fledgling Design reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-LbyrrJzrM>].

59 ELINOR (CONT'D) 59
Hi, cute little bird! You look like
a baby version of the other bird!

The fledgling bird looks around, <SFX: CHIRPING> constantly.

60 ELINOR (CONT'D) 60
Huh. You look like you're looking
for something too.

We hear the mama bird <SFX: CHIRP> again (offscreen) and see the fledgling respond <SFX: CHIRP>. BINOCULARS POV: swishes left to where the mama bird is.

61 ELINOR (CONT'D) 61
Hey, you must be the mama bird! Are
you looking for your baby?

We hear the mama bird <SFX: CALL>, and the fledgling <SFX: REPLY>. The mama bird flits over to the tree on the right near where the fledgling sits. BACK ON: Elinor lowers her binoculars and tries to show the Mama where to go.

62 ELINOR (CONT'D) 62
Yes, your baby is over there!

Elinor lifts her binoculars again. BIN POV: We see the Mama and fledgling near each other but not next to each other. The mama calls and the fledgling replies. The mama moves over to the fledgling and they have a happy reunion.

BACK ON ELINOR: She's looking through the binoculars.

63 ELINOR (CONT'D) 63
Yay! You found each other!
(putting down the bins)
Hmmm.

Elinor looks like she's about to have an idea, when suddenly we hear some crashing in the bushes <SFX: Ari crashing bushes> and then Ari calling out to Olive.

64 ARI (O.S.) 64
OLIVE! Where are you?!

Elinor's ears perk up.

65	OLIVE (O.S.)	65
	I'm over here! Who is calling me?	

The voices come from the left and the right. Elinor turns her head each time to follow the voices.

66	ARI (O.S.)	66
	It's me Ari!	

67	OLIVE (O.S.)	67
	Ari?	

68	ARI (O.S.)	68
	Yes!	

69	OLIVE	69
	Where are you?	

70	ARI	70
	I'm right next to a tree!	

71	OLIVE	71
	Which tree?	

Ari emerges from the left-hand side of the screen, standing next to the tree the mama bird was spotted on earlier.

72	ARI	72
	Uh, it's tall, with a bunch of leaves?	

OLIVE emerges from the right-hand side of the screen, standing next to the tree that has the mama and baby bird.

73	OLIVE	73
	That sounds just like the tree I'm standing next to.	

The mama and baby bird fly off.

74	ARI	74
	Oh, I see you!	

75	OLIVE	75
	I see you too!	

76	ELINOR	76
	Guys! I think I figured it out! I think I know why birds sing!	

77	ARI	77
	What? Already?	

78 OLIVE 78
Yeah, we haven't seen a lot of
birds yet.

79 ELINOR 79
You two helped me figure it out!

Ari and Olive look at each other.

80 ARI AND OLIVE 80
We did?

81 ELINOR 81
I was looking around, and I saw a
mama bird trying to find her baby
bird.

Next to Elinor, we see a **THOUGHT BUBBLE** recalling the scene
from earlier.

82 OLIVE 82
Awww!

83 ELINOR 83
Both birds were singing, and then I
realized they were doing the same
thing you and Ari were doing!

84 ARI 84
They were?

85 ELINOR 85
Yes! They were talking to find each
other!

86 ARI 86
Wait, am I supposed to be a baby
bird?

87 OLIVE 87
(laughing)
Noooo, Elinor means the birds
called to each other with their
singing the way we did with our
words.

88 ARI 88
Oh! When we couldn't find each
other!

89 ELINOR 89
Birds use singing to TALK to each
other! That's why they sing!

90 ARI AND OLIVE 90
 Ohhh...

91 ARI 91
 It's bird talk!

92 ELINOR 92
 Yes! That is SO INTERESTING!

<MFX> MONTAGE: of the kids watching birds as they sing.

93 ELINOR/OLIVE/ARI 93
 We know it's true,
 Birds like to sing,
 But why do they sing?
 It's for lots of things.

 A singing bird can say
 How do you do!
 Or This is MY tree,
 Or even I love you,

 Birds love to sing,
 And now we can see!
 They're talking to each other,
 Just like you and me!

END MONTAGE - back where we started.

94 ARI 94
 We solved the mystery!

95 OLIVE 95
 We know why birds sing!

96 ELINOR 96
 Hmmm... and that gives me an
 idea...

PULL OUT: As the kids run off screen, we PAN UP to the sky.

6. EXT ANIMAL TOWN - WIDE

The sun sets, the night passes, the sun rises again.

7. EXT. ELINOR'S HOUSE -- MORNING

It's early morning and through the window we see Elinor's father sleeping happily. Suddenly the same bird from yesterday lands on the branch outside his window.

ON: Just as the Bird opens its mouth and prepares to belt out a good morning song, it's interrupted by an off-screen <SFX: WHISTLE>.

ON: Elinor whistling to the bird. She smiles.

97	ELINOR	97
	C'mon, little bird. Let's go sing somewhere else.	

WIDEN: The bird looks interested in Elinor's whistle. Elinor backs away <SFX: WHISTLES> more, then she beckons (so it's clear to the audience) and the bird follows. It flits from tree to tree, <SFX: CHIRPING> as Elinor leads it away.

98	ELINOR (CONT'D)	98
	Sleep well, Dad!	

PAN back to show Elinor's father sleeping happily.

SEGMENT 2.

1. EXT PARK -- DAY

Open on SENOR TAPIR in the park of Animal Town, sitting on a tree stump at the edge of a pond. There are two different GUITARS next to him, one RED and one BLUE one. A group of kids sit at his feet, including ELINOR, ARI and OLIVE.

99	SENOR TAPIR	99
	Hola amigos, how many guitars do I have today?	

100	ELINOR	100
	Two!	

101	SENOR TAPIR	101
	Right! I want to play a blue guitar. Which guitar is blue?	

Olive points quickly to the blue guitar.

102	OLIVE	102
	That one!	

103	SENOR TAPIR	103
	Yes. Let's sing about a scientist named Irene Pepperburg and her talking bird, who knew more than 100 words! Words such as two and blue.	

Tapir picks up the blue guitar, starts to <MFX: STRUM> and sings. After a line or two, we transition to a simpler style of animation that describes what he is singing.

During the song, Senor Tapir sings in a "parrot" voice every time a word in the song is capitalized and in "quotation marks.

2. IRENE'S LAB -- DAY

Irene Pepperburg looks at Alex the Grey Parrot, who sits on a perch looking back at her. Alex sits on her shoulder and they look at each other. We see close ups of Alex's face when he says HELLO. NOTE: Please make Senor Tapir's parrot voice easy to understand.

104 SENOR TAPIR 104

(singing)

This is a song about a scientist
who
Wondered if birds could talk like
we do.

Her name is Irene Pepperburg, and
Alex the Parrot was her special
bird.

Irene wondered if she could show
That Alex could say a lot more than
"HELLO."

Irene holds up two blue keys in front of Alex the Parrot.
Alex's beak opens when he says BLUE and TWO.

105 SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D) 105

She said what color? He said
"BLUE". She said how many? He said
"TWO".

We see Irene teaching words to Alex, while Alex sits on his wooden stick perch. She shows him objects like a spoon, a banana, different colored shapes, etc.

[Reference: See 5:30-5:35 of <https://www.pbs.org/video/nova-sciencenow-profile-irene-pepperberg-alex/>]

106 SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D) 106

What a bird! What a bird! Said
scientist Irene Pepperburg.
So many words! So many words! Her
bird knew over a hundred words!

Close up of Irene's hands holding up two pieces of paper, one green and one red. The red one is noticeably larger. Alex looks at the paper and his beak opens when he says RED. Her hands hold up a loaf of bread next to Alex, who opens his beak to say YUMMY and BREAD.

107

SENOR TAPIR (CONT'D)

107

What color's bigger? He said "RED".
What do you want? He said "YUMMY"
and "BREAD."

Shapes, colors, counting to eight,
Alex could really communicate!

What a bird! What a bird! Said
scientist Irene Pepperburg.
So many words! So many words! Her
bird knew over a hundred words!

END SONG:

3. EXT PARK -- DAY

108

ELINOR

108

Let's sing the song a hundred more
times!

Tapir grabs his red guitar.

109

SENOR TAPIR

109

Great idea. Let's start with one
more time.

He starts to <MFX STRUM>

=====

Note from Emily DuVal, our bird expert on how Pepperburg's work is perceived in the scientific community: "She's a fellow of the Animal Behavior Society, and I lectured on her cognition work last Wednesday (including pointing out that you'd think it would be a bad idea to base your PhD on one parrot, but she pulled it off). I've seen her speak in packed-room seminars at Berkeley and at conferences. Legit. "

THE END.

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