

Laura

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

Back of House

1. EXT./INT. RABBIT'S HOUSE/RANGER AND MR RABBIT'S ROOM EARLY MORNING

Elinor's House (backyard)

We see the sun rise over ~~Animal Town~~ on a clear morning.

CU: On a ROBIN sitting on a branch outside of ELINOR'S window. Through the window, we see Elinor in her pajamas sleeping peacefully. The Robin jumps from branch to branch and lands on one very close to her parents' bedroom window. (NOTE: although we can hear and possibly see all kinds of birds in the trees, all the "main birds" are American Robins. [HTTPS://WWW.ALLABOUTBIRDS.ORG/GUIDE/AMERICAN_ROBIN/ID](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Robin/ID))

→ may need bird to land on Elinor window sill
THROUGH THE WINDOW: we see MR. RABBIT in his pajamas sleeping, snoring quietly. The robin gathers itself and then belts out a loud and proud <SFX: BIRD SONG>, musical but with exaggerated pretension.

INSIDE: Mr. Rabbit wakes up. He stirs, somewhat confused, looking around.

MR RABBIT (MUMBLING)

Wha..?

The <SFX: BIRD SONG> stops. Mr. Rabbit lays back down, snuggles back into his pillow and tries to go back to sleep.

BACK ON THE TREE: The bird takes a deep breath and starts again, with great gusto.

BACK ON: Mr Rabbit's eyes open again. He groans sleepily.

MR RABBIT (PARTIALLY MUMBLED) (CONT'D) 2

WHAT is that?

The <SFX: BIRD SONG> pauses again.

MR RABBIT (CONT'D)

Ahhh, that's better...

He curls back up with his pillow. BACK ON THE TREE: The bird gathers itself for the pièce de résistance, and starts belting out in song again, even louder this time. It LOVES to sing. BACK ON: Mr. Rabbit jumps out of his sheets, startled.

MR RABBIT (CONT'D)

Wha? Who? (adlib startled nonsense)

He falls accidentally on the floor.

MR RABBIT (CONT'D)

<groans>



* Lots of dis. cues

follow bird

- see location design

- antic

- sits up very quickly - startled
- grogg - hair disturbed

back outside

- hops again a few times - then antics - belts out whistle

2
still laying down this time
3
in close - his head - eyes pop open

- closes his eyes

3
back outside

4
jumps up so quickly
- he throws himself out of the bed
- falls behind bed
- we don't see him
- then he pulls himself up
- hand first then his head (comedy)

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

Hmmm. Who's that?

6

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

7

ELINOR (CONT'D)

Oh, good morning, little bird!

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

8

ELINOR (CONT'D)

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. IF WE DO THIS

RANGER RABBIT

Good morning, Elinor! How are you
this morning?

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

ELINOR

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. *→ Better not timing*

11

ELINOR (CONT'D)

Morning, Dad! Did you hear that
cute bird singing this morning?

12

MR RABBIT (UNENTHUSIASTIC)

Mmmm hmmm. I sure did, Elinor.

13

ELINOR

Wasn't the song pretty?

2.

Bird Song RECORD 13-Mar-19

could possibly be window to speak to

response.

88

* we could stay with bird as it flew down to kitchen window as we see Elmer enter kitchen - then cut inside (Elmer in PJ's)

9

10

WINDS
RAISES
UP

eggs
1/2 vegetables
no bacon

Eleanor hops
up into
chain 10

small steps
- arms drooped to side

Then keep her in her
are you p/s.

Mr. Rabbit pours himself a
→ figure out timing
'D) - for him to get to
near that coffee-pour
morning? - then walk to
NENTHUSIASTIC) chair & slump
Elinor. down

2 half-asleep
3

Wasn't the song p
Ranger Rabbit
goes back
to store
cooling
she doesn't
put down
yet

↑
might
shll be
getting
coffee

14

MR RABBIT
Yes. <pause> Pretty LOUD.

Elinor and Ranger Rabbit <SFX: LAUGH>

15

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

16

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

17

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

Mr. Rabbit shrugs sleepily.

18

ELINOR (CONT'D)
(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
Thank goodness for that!

20

ELINOR
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
That IS a good question, Elinor!
Why do YOU think birds sing?

22

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

23

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

24

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

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MR RABBIT

Maybe they just like waking up - sleeping bunnies?

*falling over
lower in
chair or
on table*

25

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

26

ELINOR

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

*Ranger
Rabbit eats
while they
talk*

26

27

MR RABBIT

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

27

28

ELINOR

Hmm... I need MORE OBSERVATIONS!

28

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

*or off top of
fridge.*

29

RANGER RABBIT

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

29

30

ELINOR

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

<Snores...>

31

32

ELINOR (STAGE WHISPER)

Don't worry, Dad. I'll figure this out for you.

*maybe on
her toes
to get
close to
him -
whisper*

32

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.

*Elinor in
regular
clothes*

*with
binoculars
strapped
around her
neck*

ELINOR

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

33

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

ELINOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
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.

ELINOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
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.

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

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

ELINOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
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).

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

Something brown, fuzzy and blurry blocks her view.

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

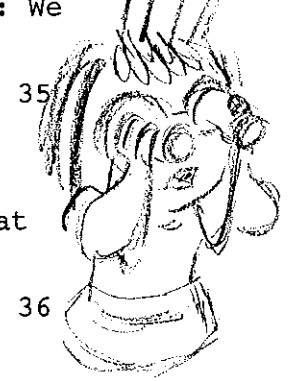
BACK ON ELINOR: We see her adjusting the focus knob on the binoculars. BINOCULARS POV: The picture comes into focus, and... we see part of ARI's face.

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

ARI
Hi, Elinor! Whatcha doing?

She lowers the binoculars.

5. - we can't see the trees so she'll be looking at them P.O.V. they are far



- yes - let's make this chickie

39 be in close so we don't see Ari

40 } maybe we don't do this?? what gag works better?

- so he says this as we see his partial face in binoculars

when she reaches to pick them up - she ends up twisting them so she's putting the large side against her eyes.

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!

they can turn to face one another

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.

- could possibly try gag where they begin to leave but each need to get to other place but are blocking each other need to step as well oops. sorry before going around

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

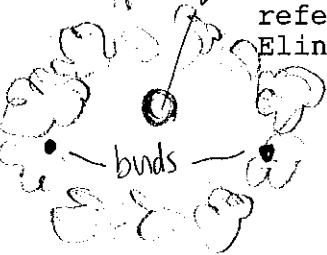
There are faint <SFX: BIRD SONGS> from many directions, but nothing close. Suddenly she hears <SFX: ROBIN CHIRPING> in a tree to her left. She picks up her binoculars and puts them to her face, turning to her left. BINOCULARS POV: We see through her binoculars an American Robin mama bird. [AR adult design 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=WZ12X4zjeJA>]

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.

Set-up so Elinor is in the middle and the 2 birds are on opposite sides but continue to get close to one another until they must



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 *(O.S.) as we look through bins*
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 *(v) (O.S.)*
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 *(O.S.)*
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! *- pointing*

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
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
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?

but we can't hear from one side to next, only seeing trees

could be over the shoulder of Elinor as she looks left and right

looks up 72 - then looks around as she talks because she's trying to see Ari

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!

*they to
start
back
close to
Elinor*

*} pick-up
with
thought
bubble.*



*reuse
animation*

*Elinor
can stand
up at
same point*

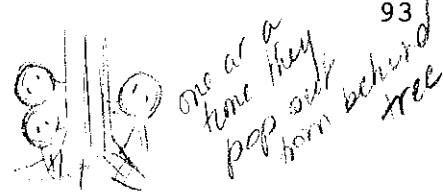
90 ARI AND OLIVE 90
Ohhh...

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
① How do you do!
② Or This is MY tree,
③ Or even I love you, -

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

could do heart shape with hands



Binoculars P.O.V.
- then Olive & Ari pop up in view.
- could all giggle

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.

Let's discuss -
- could pan up to blue sky
- then dissolve to night sky
- shooting stars

② after night with shooting stars dissolve to day and then pan down to Elinor's house day

OR

Then
① pan down to Elinor's house (night)
- then dissolve to day

could have
① Ari on sc. left
Elinor in center
(they shake hands)
② Elinor then gestures to herself then makes like a tree

Up on tree

③ Elinor turns to sc right & makes heart shape with Olive hand to hand

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

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.

ELINOR (CONT'D)

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

Hola amigos, how many guitars do I have today?

99

100

ELINOR

Two!

100

101

SENOR TAPIR

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

101

Olive points quickly to the blue guitar.

102

OLIVE

That one!

102

103

SENOR TAPIR

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.

103

maybe downer bird P.O.V. looking up
branch to branch
then flies from tree to tree
through window
turns to look back



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.

*