

Teacher Notes

Themes

- Birds
- Nature and environment
- Australian wildlife

Key learning outcomes

- Identify different native Australian birds and their unique calls
- Understand why birds sing and how this relates to animal behaviour and survival
- Explore how sound travels and is used as communication in nature
- Develop vocabulary and language skills through rhyme, repetition and descriptive writing

Key curriculum areas

- **Science:** Science Understanding (Biological sciences); Science Inquiry
- **English:** Language; Literature
- **The Arts:** Visual Arts
- **Cross-curriculum Priority:** Sustainability

Publication details

The Great Dawn Choir

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The Great Dawn Choir

Sarah Speedie and Cindy Lane

About the book

Each day the Great Dawn Choir
greet the morning sun.
Together in the growing light,
their voices join as one.

The Great Dawn Choir celebrates the dawn chorus and the beautiful native Australian birds that take part in it each morning.

Discover the chorus members, and find out what inspires them to sing and call with such passion as the sun rises on a new day.

Recommended for

Readers aged 5 to 9 (Years 1 to 4)



PUBLISHING

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About the author and illustrator

Sarah Speedie is an internationally published children's author. She loves to write inspiring and uplifting stories that entertain and spark the imagination.

Cindy Lane is an award-winning artist and illustrator, with a passion for the natural world. Nature provides Cindy with inspiration as well as materials to make her own paints, which she has used in this book.

Pre-reading questions or activities

Have you ever heard birds singing early in the morning? What do you think they might be saying or doing?

Why might birds sing more at certain times of the day?

Discussion questions

Science

1. Why do birds sing in the morning? What is the purpose of the dawn chorus?
Birds sing to attract mates, defend territory and communicate. Early morning is quiet and sound travels further.
2. Why do different bird species have different calls or songs?
Each species has a unique call that helps them recognise each other and avoid confusion with other birds.
3. What do birds need to survive in their habitat?
Food, water, shelter and space to build nests and raise young.
4. How can we help protect native birds and their environments?
By protecting trees, planting native plants, keeping pets away from nesting birds and avoiding pollution. Keeping your pet cat inside is very important!
5. What might happen if there were fewer birds in the dawn chorus?
It could mean changes to the ecosystem, like fewer insects being eaten, or less pollination happening.

Teacher Notes

English

1. How does the author use rhyme and repetition in the story? What effect does it have?
It makes the story musical, fun to read aloud and easier to remember.
2. Choose one bird from the story. Can you describe it using adjectives and action words?
For example, 'The cheerful rainbow lorikeet flaps its wings and chirps brightly in the trees.'

The Arts

1. How do the illustrations show the time of day and setting? What colours and textures can you see?
Soft lighting and warm colours suggest dawn; textures add a natural, painted feel.

Sustainability

1. What can we do at home or school to help birds stay safe and healthy?
Provide water bowls, plant native trees and avoid using chemicals in gardens. If your pet cat goes outside, make sure it is kept in an enclosed cat pen.

Activities

Science

Bird call sound map

Go outside or listen to recordings of birdsongs. Have students draw a map of where they think the sounds are coming from and describe the calls using words such as 'chirp,' 'caw' and 'tweet'.

Materials needed: clipboards, paper, coloured pencils

English

Poetry time: write your own dawn poem

Using a repeating pattern like the book, have students write a short poem describing what the birds do at sunrise. Encourage rhyming words.

For example, 'The magpies sing with all their might / They wake the world at morning light.'

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The Arts

Design a bird poster

Choose a bird from the book. Draw it, label its body parts, describe its call and include one fun fact.

Materials needed: A4 paper, markers, coloured pencils

Sustainability

Make a dawn chorus collage

Use natural or recycled materials (e.g. leaves, bark, old magazines, even feathers if you can find them) to create a morning forest scene with birds singing.

Materials needed: A4 paper, natural or recycled materials, glue, scissors

SAFETY NOTE: Supervise use of glue and scissors.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Worksheet: Literacy activities for *The Great Dawn Choir*

Activity 1: Vocabulary match

Match the words below from *The Great Dawn Choir* to their meanings.

Word	Meaning
Chorus	a. The natural home of an animal or plant
Dawn	b. Found naturally in a particular place
Habitat	c. A group of birds singing together
Melodious	d. The first light of the day
Native	e. A pleasant or musical sound

Activity 2: Comprehension questions

Answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. What is the dawn chorus?

2. Why do birds sing and call in the morning?

3. Name three birds that are part of the dawn chorus in Australia.

4. How do birds communicate through their songs and calls?

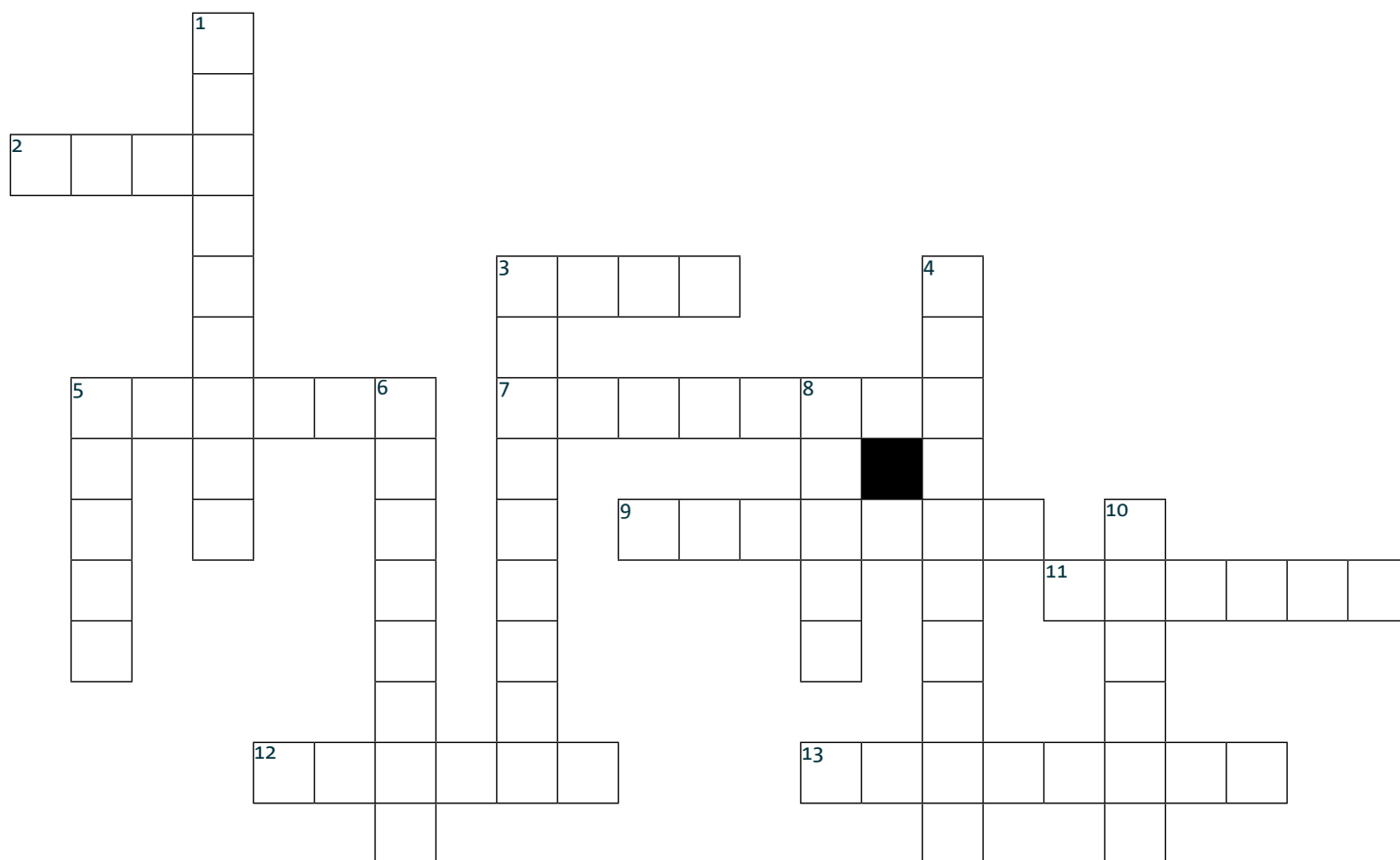
Activity 3: Creative writing – a bird’s morning song

Imagine you are a bird waking up at dawn. Write a short paragraph describing what you see, hear and feel as you sing your morning song.

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Dawn chorus crossword challenge

Teachers: Answers are on page 9.



Across

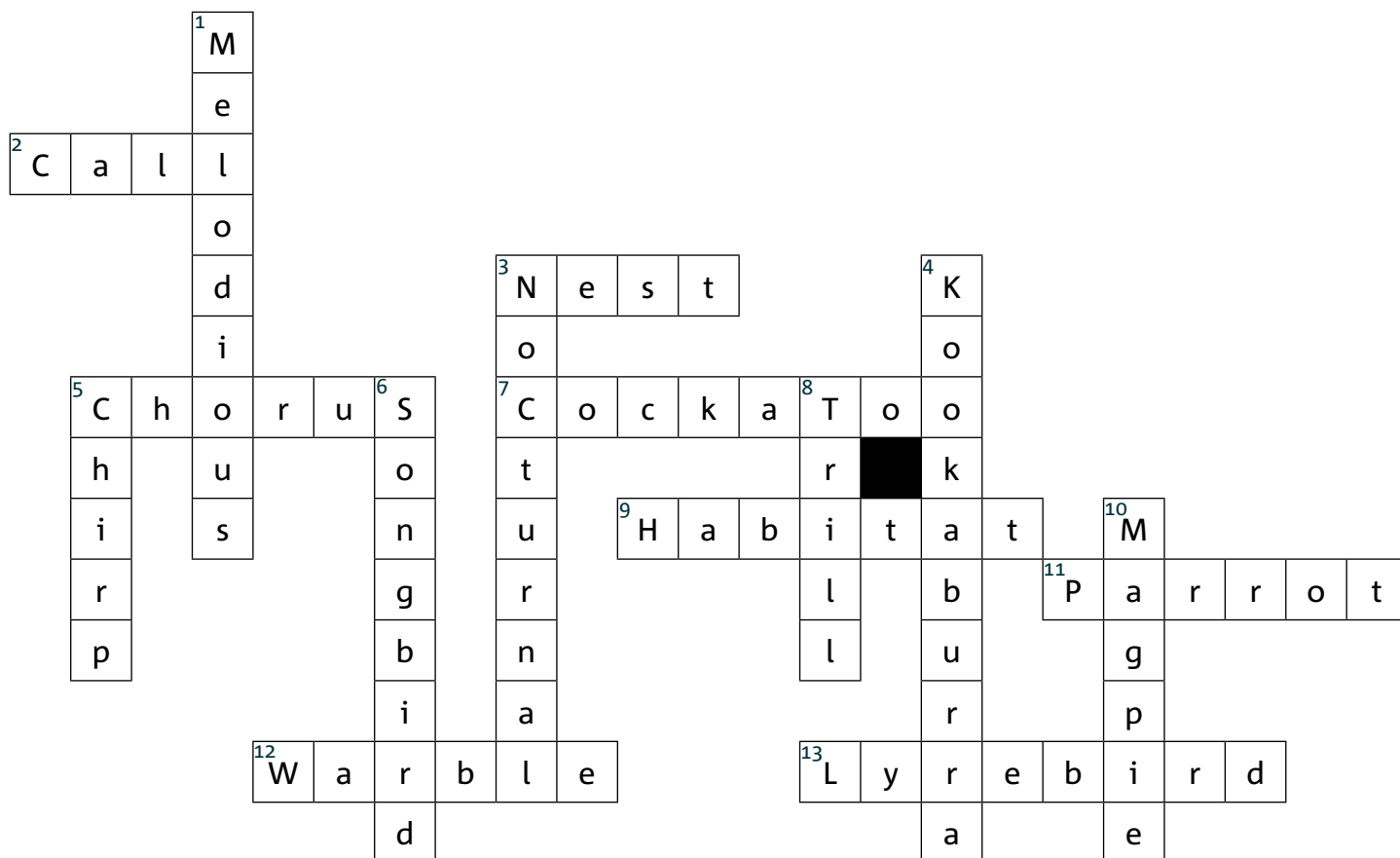
2. Another word for a bird's vocal sound.
3. A home built by some birds out of sticks and other materials.
5. A group of birds singing together.
7. A large, loud parrot often found in Australia.
9. The place where an animal naturally lives.
11. A brightly coloured bird known for mimicking sounds.
12. A gentle, musical sound often made by birds.
13. A bird known for its ability to mimic many different sounds.

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Down

1. A word describing a pleasant, musical sound.
3. Birds that are active at night are called this.
4. This Australian bird has a famous laughing call.
5. A short, high-pitched bird sound.
6. A type of bird known for its singing ability.
8. A high-pitched, vibrating bird sound.
10. A black-and-white Australian bird with a famous warbling call.

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Australian Curriculum Links (Version 9.0)

Year Level	Learning Area: Science	Other Learning Areas
Years 1/2	Science Understanding: Biological sciences - Identify the basic needs of plants and animals, including air, water, food or shelter, and describe how the places they live meet those needs (AC9S1U01) Science Inquiry: Planning and conducting - Make and record observations, including informal measurements, using digital tools as appropriate (AC9S2I03) Science Inquiry: Communicating - Write and create texts to communicate observations, findings and ideas, using everyday and scientific vocabulary (AC9S1I06)	English: Language: Text structure and organisation - Explore how repetition, rhyme and rhythm create cohesion in simple poems, chants and songs (AC9E1LA04) Visual Arts: Developing practices and skills - Experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials (AC9AVA2D01)
Years 3/4	Science Understanding: Biological sciences - Compare characteristics of living and non-living things and examine the differences between the life cycles of plants and animals (AC9S3U01) - Explain the roles and interactions of consumers, producers and decomposers within a habitat and how food chains represent feeding relationships (AC9S4U01) Science Inquiry: Processing, modelling and analysing - Construct and use representations, including tables, simple column graphs and visual or physical models, to organise data and information, show simple relationships and identify patterns (AC9S3I04)	English: Literature: Examining Literature - Discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative (AC9E3LE03) Visual Arts: Developing practices and skills - Experiment with a range of ways to use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials (AC9AVA4D01)
All	Cross-curriculum Priority: Sustainability – Systems All life forms, including human life, are connected through Earth's systems (geosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere) on which they depend for their wellbeing and survival (SS1)	

Related books from CSIRO Publishing

For younger readers:

- *Cassowary Dad* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8116>)
- *Swiftly: The Super-fast Parrot* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8062>)
- *Swoop* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8054>)
- *The Forgotten Song: Saving the Regent Honeyeater* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8078>)

For older readers:

- *Sensational Australian Animals* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8094>)

And if you loved Cindy's illustrations, check out:

- *Oceans at Night* (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/book/8104>)

Teacher Notes

Other CSIRO resources

CSIRO has developed and delivered a broad range of high-quality STEM education programs and initiatives for nearly 40 years. Our programs aim to inspire the pursuit of further STEM education among students and the community, to equip the emerging workforce with tomorrow's skill sets, and to strengthen collaboration between industry and classrooms across Australia. For more information visit: <https://www.csiro.au/en/Education>