

Who's Who?

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Grades: 1-3

Subject: science, art

Skills: recognition, identification

Duration: 30-60 minutes

Vocabulary: Gray Jay, banding, leg bands

Objectives:

Students be able to: 1) recognize Gray Jays from different coloured leg bands.
2) name Gray Jays from band combinations.

Method:

Students colour Gray Jays and give them coloured leg band combinations based on actual Algonquin Park study birds.

Background:

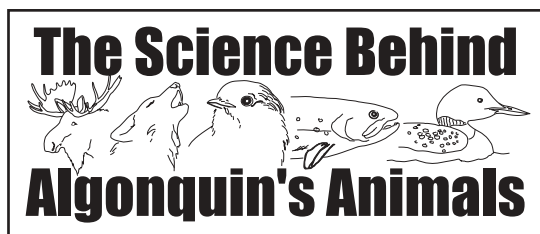
For wildlife researchers the animals they are studying are often difficult to distinguish from one another without some means of identification. There are several different ways in which wildlife researchers can mark and identify their study animals. One way of doing this is putting external identification tags on the animal. These usually consist of a plastic or metal tag attached to the ear. Animals that don't have external ears, like fish, have a tag attached directly to their body just behind the dorsal fin. Others, like turtles have small metal tags attached directly to their shell, and have distinct notch patterns cut out of the edge of their shell. With this means of identification the only way researchers can identify an animal is to capture it and identify it by the tag. Smaller animals have internal identification tags. These are known as PIT tags, or passive integrated transponders. They are very small electrical tags that are placed just under the skin of the animal. The tag is read by running a hand-held scanner over the area, which reads the data in the tag, kind of like a barcode reader at the supermarket. As with external tags the animal needs to be captured in order to be identified.



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For most animals with external tags this is often a secondary means of identification. The primary means is often a radio telemetry collar. The tags are used to identify an already sampled animal if the telemetry transceiver is somehow lost and the animal is recaptured. With telemetry transceivers wildlife researchers can identify animals without recapturing them or even seeing them.

Some animals need an identification system so they can be easily identified without having to be recaptured or are unable to be fitted with a radio telemetry transceiver. In Algonquin Park wildlife researcher Dan Strickland has been studying and colour banding Gray Jays for over thirty years. By placing colour leg bands on individual birds in specific combinations, Dan is able to identify individual birds through casual observation. Each bird is given four leg bands, three coloured plastic and one silver metal band with an identification number. The combination of the bands allow for easy identification of individual Gray Jays which are similar in appearance. The combination of colours and the placement on the legs then becomes the jay's name. For example, the female Gray Jay from the Sunday Creek territory near the Algonquin Visitor Centre is banded **ROOLWOSR**, which is **Red Over Orange Left White Over Standard Right**. This means there is a red band over an orange band on the left leg and a white band over a standard band on the right leg. Thus the bird is called ROOLWOSR, pronounced *rule woser*.

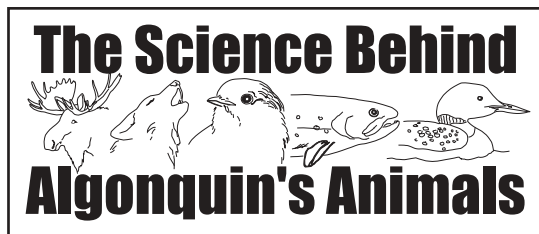
Materials:

✓	Items Required	Quantity
	Gray Jay picture	one
	picture of leg bands	one
	Gray Jay colouring sheet	one per student
	Gray Jay band combinations with corresponding territories	one



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Procedure:

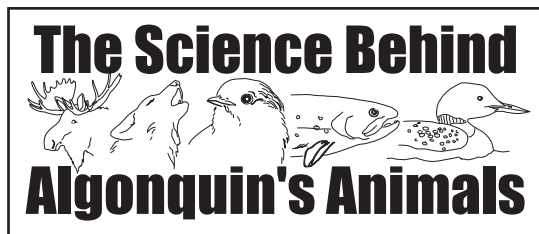
- 1) Explain to the students that when wildlife researchers are studying an animal they need to be able to distinguish individuals from one another. Have the students brainstorm how researchers might be able to tell on animal from another. Write the answers on the black board or overhead.
- 2) Once students have exhausted the list go through it with them and have them decide which one would be best for identifying an animal just by sight without having to capture it.
- 3) Tell the students about Gray Jays in Algonquin Park and how wildlife research Dan Strickland identifies over 55 birds in 25 territories. Show them the picture of a Gray Jay with coloured leg bands.
- 4) Explain that the coloured leg bands represent the name of each bird, e.g. the bird in the picture has the band combination **Red Over Orange Left White Over Standard Right**, and is therefore named **ROOL WOSR**, pronounced *rule woser*.
- 5) Tell the students that they will become Gray Jay researchers and will be using actual band combinations from jays in Algonquin Park to band their own Gray Jay by colouring bands on a picture of a jay.
- 6) Hand out the colouring sheet of the Gray Jay. Students will need to first colour the Gray Jay itself. Have the students use the photo for reference.
- 7) After they have coloured in their Gray Jay they will need to band the bird by colouring on their specific band combination. You can either assign each student a specific bird or have them draw the combinations from a hat. You will have to explain to the students how to read their band combinations. Also make sure they colour the bands on the appropriate leg, i.e. left is the bird's left leg, not left as the student is looking at the bird (which would be the right leg).
- 8) When they have finished colouring on the leg bands have them print the territory the bird is associated with in the appropriate spot on the sheet along with the sex of the bird.
- 9) Have them hand in their Gray Jay when completed.



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Extensions:

Post all the Gray Jay pictures on a wall and have the students find the other birds from their bird's territory.

Evaluation:

Ask students to:

- 1) Hand in their coloured and banded Gray Jay.
- 2) Write out and pronounce their Gray Jay's name.



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