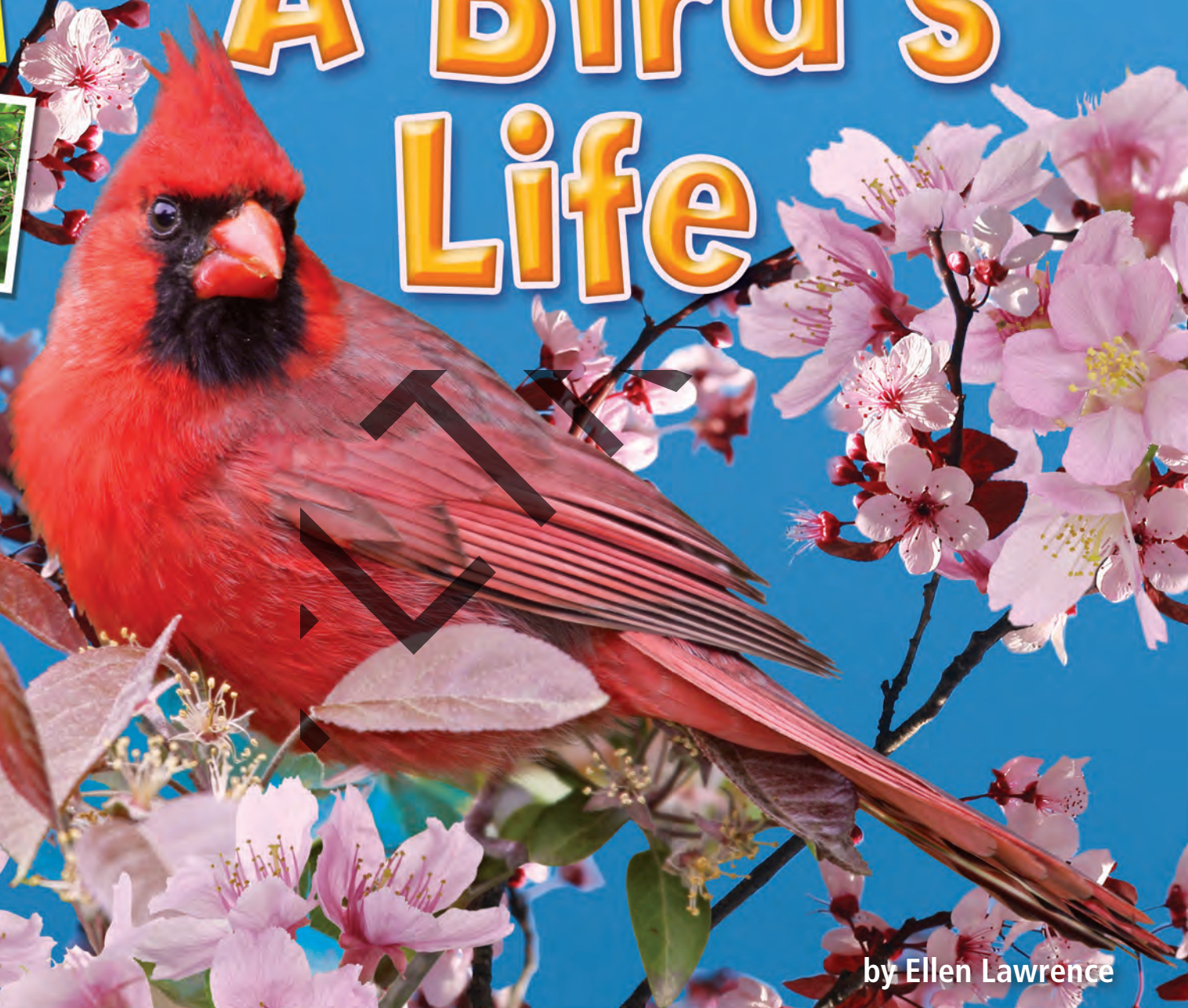


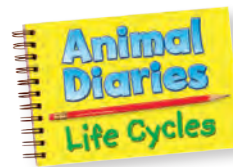
**Animal
Diaries**
Life Cycles



A Bird's Life



by Ellen Lawrence



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Ellen Lawrence

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Name: Max

Date: March 25

New Neighbors

Today, I spotted two birds flying from tree to tree in our backyard.

They were a male and a female northern cardinal.

My dad said the birds have **mated** because it's spring.

Now they are looking for a place to build a **nest** so the female can lay her eggs.



Max

A male northern cardinal has bright red feathers. A female is brown with some red feathers. The birds have orange beaks and a crest of feathers on top of their heads.

In what ways do
the male and female
cardinal look alike?
How are they different?

female northern
cardinal

male northern
cardinal

crest

beak

feathers

Date: March 31

Nest Building

The female cardinal is building a nest in a tree in our backyard.

It looks like a little bowl made from twigs.

The male bird looks for twigs and then carries them back to the female.

She carefully adds each twig to the nest using her beak and feet.

Today, I saw the female collecting soft, dry grass to put inside the nest.

male northern cardinal





It takes a male and female cardinal between three and nine days to build a nest.

female northern cardinal

twig

nest

Date: **April 3** -----

The Eggs Are Here

To get a close-up view of the nest,
I watch it through my **binoculars**.

The female bird has laid three eggs in
the nest.

She sits on them so that they don't get
cold.

The **chicks** inside the eggs need to be
kept warm to help them grow.

The female will sit on the eggs until they
hatch.

These northern cardinal
eggs are life-size.



binoculars



a female sitting in a nest

A female bird sits on her eggs for many days until they hatch. How do you think she gets food when she's hungry?

When it is time to lay her eggs, a female cardinal lays one egg a day. She lays between two and five eggs in total.

nest

eggs

Date: **April 15** _____

The Chicks Hatch

The female cardinal has been sitting on her eggs for 12 days.

The male bird has been bringing her food.

This morning, three chicks hatched from the eggs!

The chicks' eyes are closed, so they cannot see.

The babies have no feathers—just a little gray fluff.

A newly hatched cardinal chick cannot fly or walk. It can't even stand up!

Imagine one of your friends has never seen a new chick. Describe what the bird looks like to your friend.



Date: **April 21** _____

Three Hungry Chicks

The cardinal chicks are now six days old.

Their eyes have opened, and feathers are sprouting from their little bodies.

The hungry chicks squawk and beg for food.

The parent birds catch **insects** for the chicks and bring them to the nest.

They drop the insects into the babies' wide-open mouths.

The chicks eat spiders and insects such as these.



caterpillar



fly



barn funnel
weaver spider



grasshopper



a father cardinal
feeding a chick

chick

Adult northern
cardinals sometimes eat
insects, but they mainly
eat seeds and fruit, such
as blackberries.

Date: **April 23** _____

Chicks in Danger!

Many animals hunt and eat cardinals.

Today, I heard a noise in the yard that sounded like *shriek, shriek!*

The cardinals were telling each other that there was danger.


A cat was near their nest.

The parent birds flew at the cat to scare it away.



a father cardinal
warning of danger

Do you think being
a parent bird is hard
work, or do you think
it is easy? Why?



Pet cats and large birds such as owls eat adult northern cardinals and their chicks. Snakes, squirrels, and chipmunks eat cardinal eggs and chicks.

Date: **April 27** -----

An Amazing Day

The 12-day-old chicks are now flapping their wings and hopping around the nest.

Today, one of the chicks climbed onto the edge of the nest.

It flapped its little wings—and then it jumped!

The chick flew from the nest and landed on a branch next to its mother.

Soon, all three chicks were flying around the yard.

a chick getting ready to leave its nest



A close-up photograph of a young bird chick, approximately 12 days old, perched on a dark, textured tree branch. The chick has a large, open, yellowish-orange beak and a prominent, dark eye. Its feathers are light brown and downy. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. A yellow callout box with a black border points to the chick's neck area. A green leaf-shaped callout box is positioned to the left of the chick. Large, stylized black arrows point from the text boxes towards the chick. The page number '17' is in a small circle in the bottom right corner.

**12-day-old
chick**

**During the
babies' first flight,
parent birds cheer
on their chicks with
chirps and calls.**

Date: May 27 -----

Growing Up

The chicks are now six weeks old.

They know how to find insects to eat, but they still beg for food from their father.

They show him they want to be fed by fluttering their wings.

The mother bird no longer feeds the chicks.

She is too busy building a new nest so that she can lay more eggs.

a mother cardinal
collecting grass for a nest



**A pair of
cardinals will
raise two or three
groups of chicks
each year.**



six-week-old
chick

a father cardinal
feeding a chick

Date: **August 1** _____

Feathered Friends

I've been watching the cardinal chicks all summer.

Now they are growing red and brown feathers.

Soon the young birds will fly off to look for new places to live.

By spring, they will be adults and ready to raise their own chicks.

Northern cardinals become adults when they are about one year old. They usually live between 4 and 13 years.



Look at the two young cardinals in these pictures. Which one do you think is a male and which is a female?

(The answer is on page 24.)

Science Lab

Be a Bird Scientist

Find out what foods birds like to eat best.

First, find a place where there are lots of birds.

It could be your backyard or a park.

Then put different bird foods on a tray.

Place the tray where you see birds, and sit quietly nearby for 30 minutes.

In a notebook, keep a record of how many birds try each food.

Your record could look like this.

Bird food	Number of birds
sunflower seeds	1 / 1 1
corn	1 / 1 1 1 1 1
chopped-up fruit	1
breadcrumbs	
peanuts	

Which food did the birds like best?

Here are some ideas for bird foods.



sunflower seeds



corn



chopped-up fruit



breadcrumbs



peanuts

Borrow a bird book from the library. Try to find pictures of the birds that visited your food.

Science Words



binoculars (buh-NOK-yuh-lurz)
a tool for seeing a close-up
view of things that are far
away



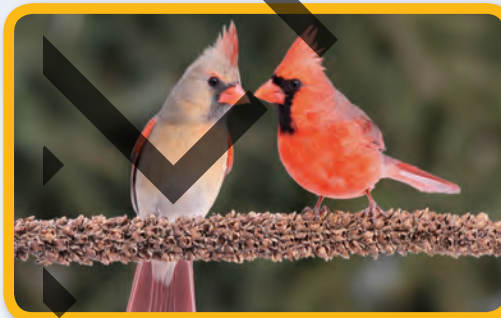
chicks (CHIKSS) baby birds



hatch (HACH) to break out of
an egg



insects (IN-sekts) small
animals that have six legs, two
antennas, a hard covering
called an exoskeleton, and
three main body parts



mated (MAYT-id) came
together in order to have
young



nest (NEST) a home built by
birds where they lay their
eggs and raise their chicks

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Read More

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Zollman, Pam. *A Chick Grows Up*. New York: Scholastic (2005).

Learn More Online

To learn more about birds, visit www.bearportpublishing.com/AnimalDiaries

Answers

Here is the answer to the question on page 21.



young female
northern cardinal

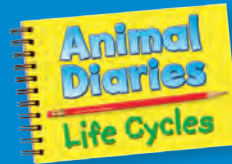


young male
northern cardinal

About the Author

Ellen Lawrence lives in the United Kingdom. Her favorite books to write are those about animals. In fact, the first book Ellen bought for herself, when she was six years old, was the story of a gorilla named Patty Cake that was born in New York's Central Park Zoo.





A Bird's Life

Max watched two cardinals fly from tree to tree. His dad said the birds had mated and were looking for a place to build a nest. As it turned out, they built one in Max's backyard. Then the female cardinal laid three eggs. When the chicks hatched, Max decided to keep an eye on them and write about what he saw in his diary. When you read it, you'll be amazed to discover all the ways these little chicks get ready to become grown-up cardinals.

A Bird's Life

A Butterfly's Life

A Chameleon's Life

A Dragonfly's Life

A Frog's Life

A Kangaroo's Life

A Snake's Life

A Spider's Life

A Wolf's Life

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