

September-October 2016

THE WATER OUZEL

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

The Jones family was hiking along a clear, fast flowing mountain stream one beautiful summer day. Leading the way was their young son Billy. Suddenly Billy stopped in the path, and giggling, he tucked his hands under his armpits and began bobbing and dipping his body. Quite amused by his son's antics, Mr. Jones asked, "Son, what are you doing?"

Billy, still giggling, pointed at a small, chunky, dark grey bird with white feathers on its eyelids, standing on a rock in the middle of the stream. It was dipping and bobbing its whole body up and down. Billy squealed, "I am just copying that funny little bird!"

Laughing, Mr. Jones said, "That is an American Dipper. They are called that because of the dipping or ducking motion you see this one making. They are also known as a water ouzel." As they watched, the little dipper flew a short distance to another midstream rock, and began to sing a loud song made up of high whistles and trills. Mr. Jones explained, "The American Dipper is North America's only truly aquatic songbird."¹

"What do you mean by an aquatic songbird, Dad?" asked Billy's older sister Mary.

"Let's sit down and quietly watch him, and I think you will see what I mean," replied Mr. Jones.

Shortly, the little Water Ouzel stopped singing its song, dipped a few times and dove underneath the flowing water. "Whoa!" Billy cried out. "He fell into the water and is going to drown!"

Before Mr. Jones had a chance to calm Billy, the little bird popped to the surface, floated to another rock, jumped out and resumed its bobbing up and down. "You see, the dipper not only flies in the air, but he can swim underwater," explained Mr. Jones.

"But look at his feet. They are not webbed like duck's feet, so how can he swim underwater?" Mary asked her father.

"Instead of swimming with their un-webbed toes, the dippers use their wings to swim or 'fly' underwater. They will swim to the bottom and then walk on the stream bottom, turning over gravel and rocks with their beaks and toes, looking for food. I have read that dippers have been seen walking more than 6 feet (1.829 meters) under the surface of the water²," said Mr. Jones.

"Everybody look! On the other side of the stream, in the shallow water, is another ouzel walking with just his head underwater, searching for something to eat," joined in Mrs. Jones.

"What's he finding to eat?" asked Mary.

"American Dippers feed on many water or flying insects and their larvae (babies), such as

dragonflies, mayflies, mosquitoes, and midges," Mr. Jones answered. "They also will eat tadpoles, small fish, fish eggs or worms."³

"Yuck!" exclaimed Billy. "I'm glad Mom is a good cook and doesn't make me eat junk like that!"



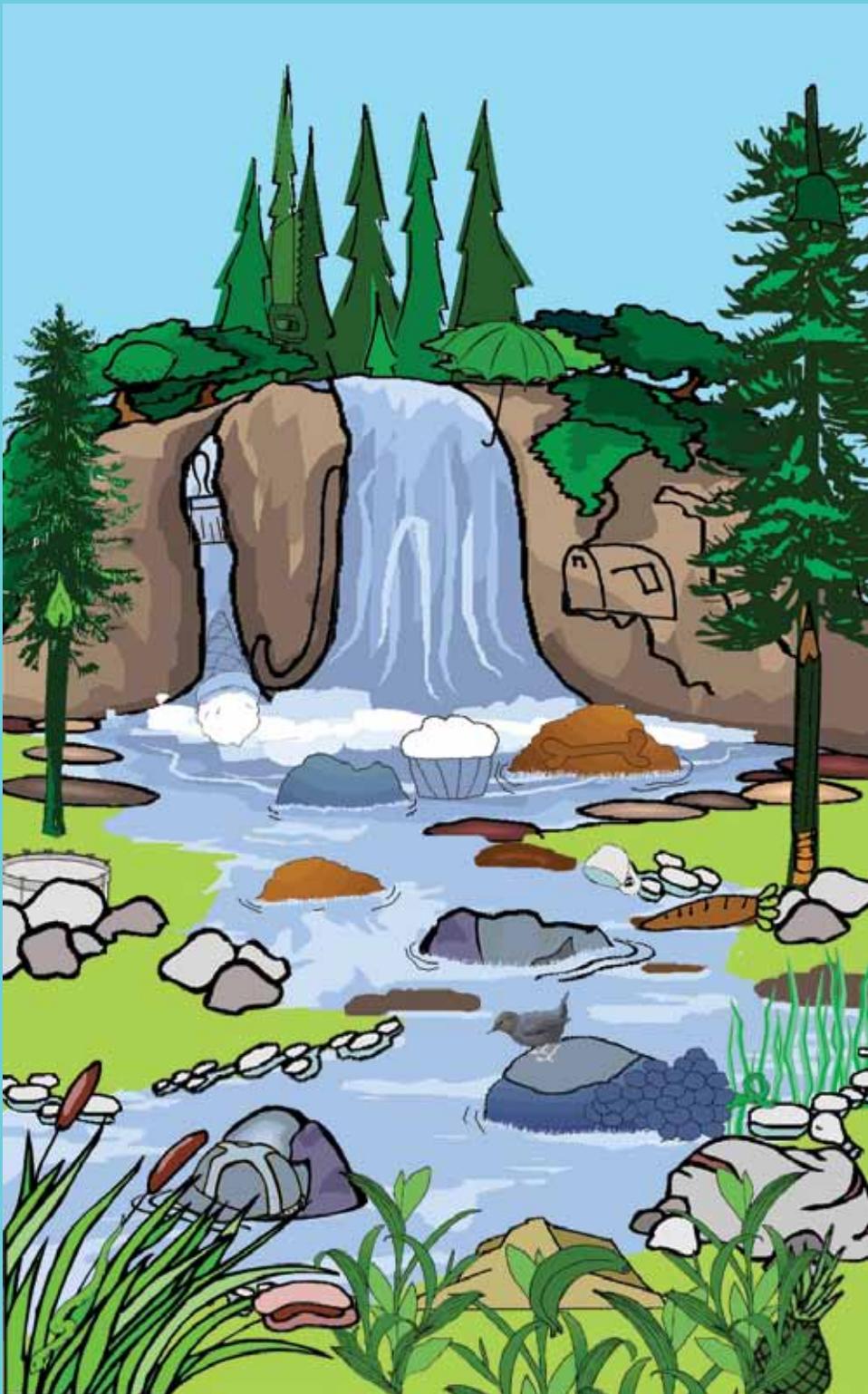
"Oh, Billy, you are so silly," laughed Mary. "I have seen you try to gross out your friends by eating a worm!"

Mr. and Mrs. Jones laughed at Billy's guilty grin. Then Mr. Jones continued, "God designed the ouzel with some other special features that help him hunt underwater. To enable them to see clearly underwater, He provided them with an extra eyelid (nictitating membrane)⁴ and special focus muscles that can change the curvature of the lens⁵. They also have nasal flaps⁶ that close to keep water from getting in

their noses.

"Dippers also have special designs to help them survive very cold water during the winter – thick feathers and low metabolic rates⁷. They also make more oil than most birds⁸, which keeps their feathers dry, thus helping keep them warm.

"As you can see, kids, the American Dipper is more than just a cute little bird doing peculiar antics. He is a delightful little bird that is packed full of design. Design points to an intelligent Designer, not the mindless chance and accident of evolution. I see the amazing Dipper as more evidence of the God of the Bible," Mr. Jones concluded.

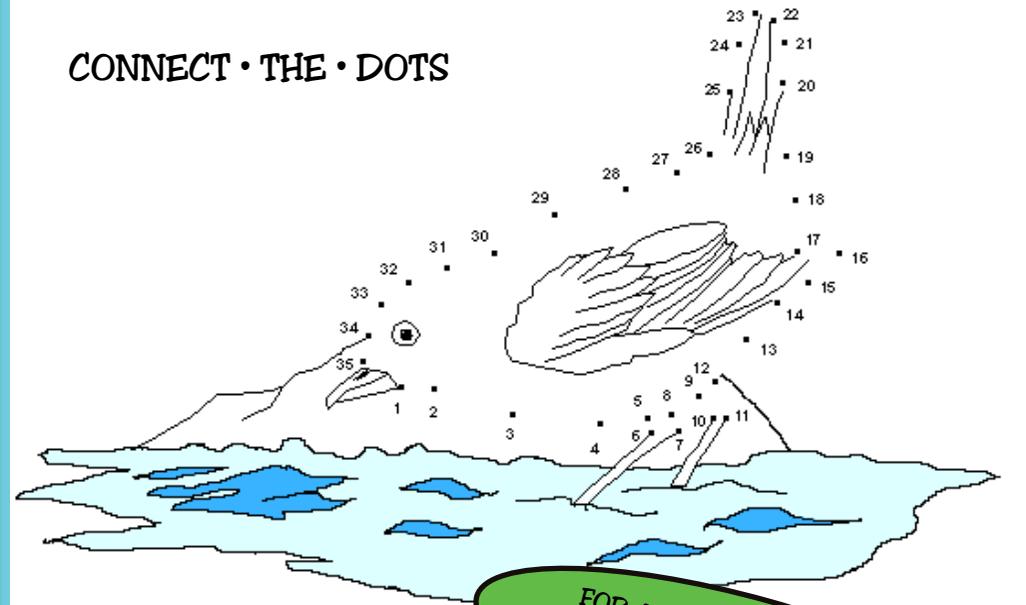


HIDDEN OBJECTS

Find objects hidden in picture on left
from list of objects below

1. Hot Dog & Bun
2. Paint Brush
3. Pencil
4. Snake
5. Carrot
6. Dog Bone
7. Umbrella
8. Ice Cream Cone
9. Green Banana
10. Grapes
11. Hard Hat
12. Saw
13. Drum
14. Lime
15. Water Ouzel
16. Light Bulb
17. Mail Box
18. Pineapple
19. Hand Bell
20. Cup Cake
21. Cane
22. Candle
23. Tea Cup

CONNECT • THE • DOTS



FOR ANSWERS GO TO: <http://www.discovercreation.org/kids/NewsletterAnswers.htm>

¹ https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Dipper/lifehistory

² <https://www.birdingisfun.com/2011/12/american-dipper-how-water-ouzel-got-its.html>

³ https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Dipper/lifehistory

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_dipper

⁵ <http://www.creationmoments.com/radio/transcripts/little-dipper>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Dipper/lifehistory

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_dipper

⁹ Photo front page - Richard Crossley [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

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