

Questions and Suggestions for Further Learning

A 123 of Baby Birds by Sarah Prince

With the help of some super cute baby birds, this book introduces children to the numbers 1-20. There are some rare and unusual birds included not to mention some rare and unusual words! Silhouettes of little birds on a wire offer another element for children to count and provide a touch of humour!

Other features of the book include:

- Large softly coloured numbers
- Text in the form of rhyming couplets
- The names of 20 different baby birds
- Some rare baby birds as well as some familiar ones
- Some rare words, imaginary words, and some unusual adjectives
 - Large sepia toned images of baby birds to count
 - Silhouettes of little birds to also count
- Uncluttered illustrations for babies and toddlers
 - Fun facts in the back to explore

Suitable for ages 0-5, this book is the perfect book to share with even the youngest of babies. The text is written with a good deal of fun, quirkiness and humour, so be sure to demonstrate that in your voice as you read. The text also contains dozens of descriptive adjectives, some familiar, some not so – plump, straggly, chubby, cheeky etc. Emphasise these words as you read, children will love the sounds they make, then encourage older children to say them too!

Toddlers and young children learning to count will love counting these fluffy little babies. They'll be very familiar with some of them, such as ducklings and chickens, but will have never heard of spoonbills and plovers! However, this becomes the perfect opportunity for further learning, especially if you don't know what a spoonbill or a plover is either! Find out together. Show children *how* we learn (e.g. by asking someone else, reading a book, or using a computer); how much *fun* it is to learn; and how even as adults, there is *always* more to learn!

While the illustrations are purposely clear and uncluttered, as the book continues and as more baby birds appear, they get more and more complex (but never overly so). Children need to realise that when we count, we are not just making *sounds and words*, those sounds and words have *meaning*, and that numbers represent *quantity*. That the word *ten* (or number 10) represents *ten things*. That counting to *twenty* means there are *twenty things*. That *ten* baby birds, looks very different from *twenty* baby birds, because there are more of them. This is a surprisingly complex thing for a young child to grasp. Many young children can count to fifty or a hundred, but if you then ask them to bring you 50 or 100 things they can't do it because they don't understand *quantity*. Just like many children can recite the alphabet, but have no understanding of what letters are, or what they are for.

As with all my ‘Questions and Suggestions’ pages, I have included dozens of examples here, but don’t think you have to ask them all, or do the actions in one sitting. These lessons could last for weeks! **Don’t let too many lessons and learning interfere with the fun!** Some questions are obviously aimed at older children, but with babies both ask *and answer* some fun questions along the way.

When you first read this book however just enjoy the rhymes, the fun words, the beautiful pictures, and counting together, all this other learning can come later!

The front cover

When reading a book to any age child begin with the front cover. Read the title and the names of the author and illustrator, explain how one wrote the words and the other drew the pictures. Although in this case it’s just me! If there’s a picture on the cover, talk about that too. Ask older children what they think the book might be about just by looking at the cover.

The inside cover

Turn to the inside cover, and pointing to the numbers, read each one and if the children are old enough get them to join in as you do. Ask a child to point to the numbers with you as you count.

The dedication page

Read the dedication page and explain what that is. That authors and illustrators often write the book for someone else, with a child, or a friend, or a loved one in mind. This particular book I wrote for my Aunt Jenny because both of us are quite dyslexic and make loads of mistakes when it comes to numbers and counting! Tell the children this, that even though I can draw and write books, I still struggle with counting. Children need to know that people can still be successful, even though there are certain things they can’t do. They need to know that adults often struggle just like kids do!

Introducing the silhouettes

The following pages introduce my little bird silhouettes. These little birds appear throughout the book and provide a bit of humour, as well as another element for children to count. On these two pages the birds are not carrying the numbers in order, so when you count with the children, older ones must look closely to find where the next number is.

Using the fact pages

Jumping ahead to the fact pages located at the back of the book, there are several ways you can choose to use these pages. If reading to babies, you might like to read them first and become familiar with some of the facts beforehand, so you can talk about them as you read. With toddlers and older children however, you could turn to the fact pages as you read, saying something like, ‘Let’s see what the fact pages have to say’. That way you are demonstrating how to make better use of the book, how books have different sections, how to use them, and what facts actually are. Alternatively you could not interrupt the ‘story’ and instead read the facts altogether at the end.

Introducing the adult birds

This book is obviously about baby birds and does not include images of the adult birds, which in most cases look very different from their babies. There are numerous ways to introduce the adults to the children as you read (for very young babies this is not necessary, just enjoy the book together, they can learn about the adults later!). Firstly, you could collect images of adult birds yourself beforehand and display them around the room or have them next to you to refer to. Alternatively, you could find the images together with the children, either by having large fact books available, or by looking them up together online. If you are tech-savvy then a slideshow to accompany your reading time might be a good idea. Be creative there’s all sorts of things you could do!

1 Fuzzy Flamingo

Read the text with fun in your voice and always include the number – *One* fuzzy flamingo with very knobbly knees! – then point to his knobbly knees and explain that ‘knobbly’ means his knees are lumpy and bumpy and stick out a lot! Get the kids to feel their knees, are they lumpy and bumpy too? Talk about the word ‘fuzzy’, that he’s fuzzy because his feathers haven’t grown yet and that he’s covered in soft fuzzy down. Explain that ‘down’ are tiny wispy soft feathers.

Focus on the picture and point out his tiny wings which haven’t grown yet and about how big his beak is for such a little baby. Point to his webbed feet and see if the children can guess what they are for. Ask the kids to show you their toes, ‘Do you have webbed feet?’

Use the fact pages and talk about how some flamingos have pink legs, some have yellow ones, or some have grey ones with pink knees! Explain what mudflats are and saltwater lagoons. Talk about how their nests are made of mud!

Research flamingos online and show the children what the adults look like – talk about how they live in huge numbers all together; discuss their beautiful soft pink feathers; and their strange way of putting their heads upside down to find food! Get the children to stand up and put their heads upside-down and see if they can find some food! Explain that flamingos are also famous for standing on one leg – see if the children can stand on one leg! Look for some pink flamingo activities to do with kids.

Activities could include bringing in some feathers as well as some soft down from a pillow so children can clearly see the difference and understand how lots of soft down would help keep a baby bird warm (Keep the down because you can use it later with other birds in the book!) You could also fill a bath with water and have the children run their fingers through it and see how easy that is to do. Then have them hold an ice cream lid (or tape some lids to their hands!) and see how much harder it is and how they have to use their muscles to do so. Talk about how webbed feet help birds move faster through the water, but their little legs have to be very strong to do so! Explain that is why people use flippers when they go swimming! You could also have a map of the world on display. Cut out pictures of flamingos and stick them wherever they are found. Use tiny cut outs, because there will be *lots* of birds on this map by the time you finish!

Point to the silhouettes and that one little bird sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *one* finger. Get a child to help you by pointing to the bird as you all count again.

2 Tiny Hummingbirds

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘tiny’ means. Ask them what cheeks are and what cheek to cheek might mean, get them to point to their cheeks. (You could make them laugh by pointing out that bottoms have cheeks too!). You could also discuss the word humming and explain that hummingbirds are called that because their wings make a humming sound when they fly. Get the children to hum as they flap their wings as fast as they can. You could also play a guessing game by humming some nursery rhymes without using words and see if the kids know what they are. Get them to hum along with you.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get one of the children to point to the babies like you did and all count them again. Ask the children what these babies are sitting in. Then talk about how a bird’s nest is like their house, where they lay their eggs and bring up their babies. (This could extend into a great number of lessons about eggs and nests, that birds lay eggs, but most animals give birth to live babies).

Use the fact pages in the back to discover this nest is only 2cm wide and that their eggs are the size of jellybeans! Talk about how small these babies must be and that their nest is made of moss held together with sticky spider web! Explain how hummingbirds must eat all day, so they visit hundreds of flowers every day. Discuss how some flowers have nectar that birds love!

Research hummingbirds online and show the children some photos – explain how they have long tongues to put into the flowers so they can get to the nectar; that they can beat their wings very

fast which makes a humming sound; and how there are lots of different kinds of hummingbirds. Look for some hummingbird activities to do with kids.

Activities could include singing a round of *Heads and Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, but changing the words slightly to include cheeks! Bring in a bird's nest and discuss how birds make them when they don't have any hands! Talk about the different things nests are made of; sticks, mud, leaves, wool, hair, even wire! Make a tiny 2cm nest out of plasticine and two weeny little babies to go inside it and explain that this is how tiny these little hummingbirds really are.

Make some jellybean sized plasticine eggs and then compare them to chicken eggs, duck eggs, and if you can get them, some great big emu eggs! Talk about what size each of their nests would have to be to fit their eggs inside. Add some hummingbirds to your map of the world and talk about how we don't have flamingos or hummingbirds in Australia.

Point to the silhouettes and count the two little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *two* fingers this time. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you count again.

3 Fluffy Egrets

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'fluffy' means. Talk about how 'sticky-up' isn't really a word, but that these little babies sure do have 'sticky-up' feathers! Explain that sometimes it's fun to make up words!

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and all count them again. Talk to the children how these babies are in a nest made of sticks, turn back and show them how different it is to the hummingbird nest. Laugh again about their sticky-up feathers! Talk about how ugly they are as babies, yet they grow up to be very tall and beautiful!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover where they live and what colour they are. Get the children to stretch out their big wings as wide as they can and glide gracefully fly around the room!

Research egrets online and show the children some photos of what these babies look like as adults and how white their feathers are and how long their necks are! Find out how many kinds of egrets (or herons) there are in the world and if we have them here in Australia. Look for some heron activities to do with kids – I'm assuming there are some!

Activities could include bringing in a tape measure and showing the children just how big a Great Egret actually is. Show them how big a metre is by marking it on the wall. Then get each child and measure how big they are. Are any of them as tall as a Great White Heron? Then show them how wide 1.7 metres is, make some marks on the floor (or wall) and explain that is how wide their wings are (keep these marks so you can compare them with other birds later). Then get the children to lie down (or stand) between them and stretch out their 'wings', mark them out and see who has wings as wide as an egret! Stick some egrets to your map of the world and point out how they are only found in hot countries.

Point to the silhouettes and count the three little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *three* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette bird as you count again.

4 Baby Owlets

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'snuggled' means. All get down on the floor and snuggle up together! Ask the children if they like to snuggle up with their parents or their brothers and sisters and how it makes them feel.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and all together count them again. Talk to the children about how these babies have long toes and sharp claws so they can hang onto tree branches and how they have great big eyes so they can see at night.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover where these owls live and what colour they are and how their thick, soft feathers allow them to fly in silence. See if they can work out why the owls would need to fly in silence. Get the children to stretch out their wings as wide as they can and

fly around the room in complete silence(!) looking for mice. Then get the girls to make a ‘tu whit’ call and the boys to answer ‘hoo’!

Research Tawny Owls online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different owls there are, if they are all the same colour, and if they all make the same call. Find out if we have owls in Australia. Look for owl activities to do with kids (there’s loads!).

Activities could include cutting out a simple owl shape with a beak. Cut loads of coloured triangle shaped feathers, together with some circles for eyes. Make three or four different sized circles, and stick them one on top of another, to represent the thick feathers owls have around their eyes (or you could use those paper cupcake things!). You could introduce Winnie The Pooh’s friend Owl and talk about how he is not very good at spelling, that owl is spelt O W L not W O L like Owl spells it! Add some tawny owls to your map of the world and talk about how we have different kinds of owls in Australia.

Point to the silhouettes and count the four little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *four* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

5 Little Loons

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what a funny name Loon is and how in some countries they are called Divers. Also talk about what ‘little’ means. Encourage the children to give you some examples of big and little. While they are sitting down get the children to pretend they are baby birds trying out their little wings for the first time. Ask them all the things they could do if they could fly – where would they go?

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children how these babies still have their soft downy feathers and tiny little wings, but how they can already swim.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover that loons are very strange birds. To start with their bodies are big and fat with short wings, perfect for swimming and diving underwater, but their legs are so short and so far back that they can hardly walk! Because their wings are so short they have a hard time taking off and must run and run and run, flapping and flapping until they have lift-off!

Research loons online and see how amazing their adult feathers are. Watch some funny videos of these loony birds landing and taking off! Look for some loon activities to do with kids – I’m sure there must be some out there!

Activities could include going outside and getting the kids to demonstrate their crash landing and take-off skills. Boys will particularly like this game and get very enthusiastic so you will have to set some safety rules! Add some loony loons to your map of the world and talk about how they have to live on lakes or the sea.

Point to the silhouettes and count the five little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *five* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

6 Squawky Swallows

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘squawky’ might mean. Get everyone to be as squawky as they can be. Talk about why these baby birds would be squawking.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk about how wide their mouths are and how they might be learning how to sing, but they are probably very hungry and waiting to be fed!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover what great flyers swallows are and how they are found in every country on earth except Antarctica. Ask the children why swallows wouldn’t live in the Antarctic. Also discover that this nest is made of mud so these swallows are mud-nesters.

Research online about the different swallows there are and the nests they build, e.g. some nest in tree hollows, some use nests other birds have made, some dig holes into muddy banks, some nest in holes in cactuses! Watch some videos of thousands of swallows all flying together and how beautiful it looks. Such a video, at first, will be very difficult for young children to grasp

what they are looking at, they will not understand that those swirls of black are actually birds all flying together. Talk about how clever they are that they don't crash into one another! Talk about how swallows eat (and drink) 'on the wing' and explain what this is. Look for some simple swallow activities to do with kids.

Activities could include cutting out some simple swallow shapes, with their long, pointed wings and v-shaped tails, the children could paint them all different colours then stick them around the room, or better still hang them from strings so they can 'fly'. Stick some swallows to your map of the world – the children can have fun with this one as they are found nearly everywhere.

Point to the silhouettes and count the six little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *six* fingers – this will be a bit tricky at first as obviously it involves two hands! Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

7 Downy Cygnets

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'downy' means. Remind the children how the flamingo baby was also covered in soft down. Talk about how cygnet is the name for a baby swan. Talk about what 'in a row' means. Get the children to all stand in a row. Talk about how trees can be in a row, or even houses.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children how these babies have soft grey feathers and black beaks and how you can't see their legs as they are in the water.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover that some swans are white, but in Australia they are all black. Talk about the different swans there are e.g. the Mute, Trumpeter and Whooper!

Research swans online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different swans there are and if they all make the same call. Listen to some of the funny sounds swans make and get the children to copy them. Look for some swan activities to do with kids.

Activities could include cutting out one large mother swan from some card and some small cygnet shapes (one for each child in your care). You could either use black feathers from a craft shop (or white depending on what colour swan you wish to make!), or some black paper feathers and altogether decorate your mother swan. Then get the children to decorate their own cygnet by colouring-in their black beaks and eyes and sticking some soft downy feathers to them. Then display them all in a row behind their mother! Going back to the marks you made on the floor (or the wall), revisit how big the egrets wings were, then talk about how the mute, trumpeter and whooper swans' wings are 3 metres wide! Measure 3m out on the floor and show the children the difference. Then get the children to lie down two at a time next to each other and see if their 'wings' together are the same size as a swans! You could read *The Ugly Duckling* and get the children to guess why he might be such an ugly duck! Stick some swans to your map of the world, make sure you have white ones in Europe and black ones in Australia, point out how they like to live near water.

Point to the silhouettes and count the seven little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *seven* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

8 Weeny Moorhens

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'weeny' means. Point to their extra-long toes. Get the children to take their shoes off and see how long their toes are!

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children about why these babies have such long toes – so they can walk on the waterlilies!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover where they live and what colour they are and how their knees are red and their feet are green! Talk about what reeds and waterlilies are.

Research moorhens online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different moorhens there are, if they are all the same colour, and if they all make the same call. Look for some moorhen activities to do with kids – they might be hard to find!

Activities could include – actually I can't think of any!! Maybe you could have a discussion about the difference between hens and moorhens and how moorhens are also known as 'swamp hens'. Explain what swamps are and why these birds might like to live in them. They certainly don't lay eggs that we eat, but they do lay lots of eggs and have lots of chicks each year. They live near water and like to swim (which hens don't!) and they can even swim underwater! Stick some dusky moorhens to your map of the world, point out that all moorhens like to live near water, but only dusky moorhens live in Australia (as well as Papua New Guinea and Indonesia – show the children where these countries are on your map).

Point to the silhouettes and count the eight little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *eight* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

9 Noisy Toucans

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'noisy' means. Thanks to breakfast cereal and *Rio* movies, the children might know about toucans. Get them to hold their hands up like beaks and see how noisy they can be!

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. This will be a bit trickier now there are more of them. It might be an opportunity to teach them left to right and top to bottom.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover where they live, why their wings are quite small and how many eggs they lay – they lay a lot!

Research toucans online and show the children what they look like as adults. Talk about how big their beaks are and how brightly coloured they are. Find out how many different toucans there are and if their beaks are all the same colours. Look for some toucan activities to do with kids (there are loads of them!).

Activities could include making some simple cut outs of toucans and getting the children to colour in their beaks. You could also bring in two dozen eggs, either hard boiled or boil them with the children (not in the same pot!). You could also paint them (again the eggs not the children!). Get the children to make a nest out of grass and sticks (point out that toucans don't make nests made of sticks, but use hollows high up in the trees, but that is too hard for us, so we're making one of sticks!) Then get each child to gently place one egg at a time in the nest and count them out until there are 21. Talk about how many babies that would be for the parents to look after when they hatch and imagine if your Mummy had 21 babies! Stick some toucans to your map of the world and point out how they like to live in thick forests where it is nice and hot.

Point to the silhouettes and count the nine little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *nine* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

10 Delightful Ducklings

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'delightful' means. Talk about the difference between delightful and yukky and come up with some examples of each. Ask the children what ducklings will grow up to be and talk about what they know about ducks. Ask if they remember who else had webbed feet, right in the beginning of the book (ie the flamingo) and ask them again what webbed feet are good for.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Ask them if they can tell you what kind of a sound ducks make. Everyone waddle around the room quacking like ducks!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover there are diving ducks and dabbling ducks and how they each feed.

Research ducks online and find out the different kind of ducks there are e.g. Mallard, Pekin, etc., the different sounds they make, and how male ducks have one curly tail feather! Look for some duck activities to do with kids – again there are squillions!

Activities could include discussing some of the famous ducks the children might know from books or movies. Read some duck books together. Sing some duck songs and do the actions together

e.g *Five Little Ducks*. Talk about how some people have pet ducks, that follow them around everywhere! Ask the children what they would call their little duckling if they had one. You could cut out some simple duck shapes and glue some downy feathers to each one. Stick some ducks to your map of the world and again have fun because ducks are found everywhere, well except the Antarctic!

Point to the silhouettes and count the 10 little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *ten* fingers. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

11 Gawky Spoonbills

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘gawky’ might mean. That the baby spoonbills are a bit awkward and odd because their beaks are so big compared to their bodies. Talk to the children about how their strange-shaped beaks look a bit like a big spoon which is why they are called spoonbills, because bill is another name for beak. Again remind the children what down is and how soft it is.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and all count them again. Using the picture as a clue ask the children what their nest might be made of.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover what colours they are and how they sweep their open beaks from side to side in the shallows, when a little fish touches it, they snap it shut! Talk about how the spoonbills in Australia are white with yellow beaks.

Research spoonbills online and show the children what they look like as adults, especially the Roseate Spoonbill, which is bright pink with a grey beak! Look for some spoonbill activities to do with kids – which might be a bit tricky!

Activities could include attaching some paper clips to some little fish you have cut out from a plastic ice-cream lid, put them in a wading pool full of water. Then using their outstretched arm and their hand as a spoon, get the kids to sweep them back and forth and catch some fish! You could also provide some spoons for the kids to go fishing with instead, or even get the kids to collect some sticks and make some fishing rods using string with a magnet attached and try some ‘real’ fishing! There’s also a great book by Narelle Oliver called *Don’t let a Spoonbill in the Kitchen!* Which introduces even more birds and their habitats, with a great deal of humour, just perfect for reading with young kids. Stick some spoonbills to your map of the world and point out how they like to live near water.

Point to the silhouettes and count the eleven little birds sitting on the wire! Ask the children to hold up *eleven* fingers. ‘Oh wait we only have ten fingers! How can we count up to eleven?’ Some might suggest we use our toes, or you could get two children up beside you and have some fun getting them to hold up different fingers while everyone counts to eleven, e.g. 10+1, 6+5 etc. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

12 Teeny Quails

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘teeny’ means and how it is another word like ‘weeny’ (see the number 8 page). Talk about how ‘crown’ is another word for head. Perhaps you could recite the nursery rhyme *Jack and Jill* to demonstrate this further.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Get the children to look closely at the quails’ little heads and explain what ‘tuft’ means. Talk about how ‘tufty’ is just a fun made up word that means the same thing. Talk about how stripy these little babies are.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover that quails live on the ground and how their stripy feathers help them to hide in the grass and leaves. Talk about what the word ‘creep’ means and get the children to pretend to be little quails pecking at the ground, then makes some noise so they must all creep slowly and quietly away and hide!

Research quails online and find out where they live in the world and show the children what they look like as adults. Focus on the tuft of feathers they have on their heads. Look for some quail activities to do with kids – they do exist!

Activities could include cutting out some simple brown and grey quails. Using some textas get the kids to give them some speckled feathers. Decorate some paper plates (or a big collage they can all do together) with some grass and sticks and stick your little quails to them. Talk about camouflage and how brown and grey quails can hide much easier than pink and yellow ones! Bring in some little quails eggs and some chicken eggs and talk about how different they are. You could collect more grass and little sticks and make a nest to keep your eggs in. Explain how the eggs are speckled too so they are also hard to find. Bring in some hair gel and give the children some ‘tufts’ of their own to take home! Stick some quails to your map of the world and point out how they like to live on the forests floor or sometimes in people’s gardens!

Point to the silhouettes and count the twelve little birds sitting on the wire! Get two children to stand beside you and play the same game as you did with the number 11, e.g. get one child to hold up ten fingers, the other two, or both to hold up six, and count them out loud together. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

13 Stripy Goslings

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘stripy’ means and how these babies have white stripes down their backs. Also discuss what kind of bird a gosling will grow up to be.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Point out where the mother is in the picture and how she has black spots on her feathers and black feet.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover these geese are very rare (explain what ‘rare’ means) and only found in a few places in Australia and nowhere else in the world. Laugh about how these geese don’t like to swim even though they live on islands surrounded by water!

Research geese online and show the children what these Cape Barren Geese look like as adults – talk about their pink legs and soft grey feathers. Find out how many other kinds of geese there are in the world and if they too are the same colour. Talk about what it means for a little gosling to be ‘protected by their mother’ – What do your mother and father do to protect you? How do they help to keep you safe (**you may have to avoid such discussions depending on how much you know about the kids, and their families, in your care!**). Look for some goose activities to do with kids – again there are heaps!

Activities could include singing the nursery rhyme *Goosey Goosey Gander* together or play a game of *Duck, Duck, Goose!* That’s always a fun one. There are lots of goose activities to do online. A paper plate goose is quite beautiful and simple to make (actually it would make a good swan activity too!). You’ll have to have a look online as there are loads of different versions to make. Just make sure your plates are painted pale grey with black spots and maybe add some pink legs and black feet! Stick some Cape Barren Geese to your map but only on Tasmania and Kangaroo Island (an island off South Australia).

Point to the silhouettes and count the thirteen little birds sitting on the wire! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *thirteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

14 Dainty Plovers

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘dainty’ means. Get the children to take dainty little tiptoe steps across the room, then big solid stomps. Show them a dainty teacup compared to a big solid mug. Ask what the text is referring to – ‘waiting for their brother’.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children about how these plover babies

have speckled down to help them hide in the long grass, just like quails. Point to their long legs. Talk about the one little brother on the left-hand page and how the others are waiting for him! Use the fact pages in the back to discover they are found all over the world, except in the deserts and the North and South Poles. Explain these places are too hot or too cold for plovers to live in. Talk about how tiny they are as babies and that you could fit 2 or 3 in your hand!

Research plovers online and show the children what they look like as adults and discover they are also called dotterels and lapwings. Find out how many different plovers there are in the world and if they are all the same colour. Show the children some videos about how tiny their babies are. Talk about how plovers are known for building nests in silly places, like in the middle of a football field! Look for some plover activities to do with kids – you may have to improvise!

Activities could include creating a giant plover cut-out and give the children some large brushes to paint his back brown, his body black and white, his legs red, and his beak yellow, then using a shrivelled up yellow balloon, give him a ‘wattle’! You could also make smaller cut-outs for each child and give them each a bit of wriggly yellow balloon so they too can make some wattles. Stick some plovers to your map of the world and point out how they often like to live by the beach!

Point to the silhouettes and count the fourteen little birds sitting on the wire! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *fourteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

15 Speckled Seagulls

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘speckled’ means. Turn back to the plover page and point out how they too have speckles. Talk about what ‘nesting by the shore’ might mean. Why would seagulls nest by the shore and not up in the mountains, or the deserts or deep in the jungles?

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Point out the little seagull who is yawning and the one who we can only see his bottom! Point to their feet and see if the children can remember who else had webbed feet e.g. the ducklings (and others).

Use the fact pages in the back to discover more about them. Talk about what ‘large colonies’ might mean – any child that has been to the beach will have seen large numbers of seagulls all flying together, explain that they all nest together and all have babies together!

Research seagulls online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different kinds there are, and if they all make the same squawky call. Look for some seagull activities to do with kids – there are lots!

Activities could include watching or talking about the movie *Finding Nemo* and how funny the seagulls are all calling ‘*Mine! Mine! Mine!*’ and getting stuck in the sails! Maybe extend your seagull activities to include all sorts of sea related things, make a huge mural and add some actual sand if you are lucky enough to live by the sea, or paint on some sand and water, then add boats, windsurfers, kites, buckets, spades, some underwater critters and of course some seagulls! You could have a lot of fun with this one! Stick some seagulls all over your map of the world and point out how they live by the sea.

Point to the silhouettes and count the fifteen little birds sitting on the wire! Talk about how one little bird is upside down! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *fifteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

16 Chirpy Chickens

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘chirpy’ means. All have fun chirping as you peck about the room! Why does it say, ‘soon to be some more!’? What does that mean? How many more chickens will there be?

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk about the one who is looking down through his legs and how the two either side are wondering what he's doing! Talk about how these little babies have sharp little claws for digging up worms. Count the eggs and have a conversation about who likes eggs and how they liked them cooked! You could talk about how chickens lay eggs every day, but that they only become chicks if you have a rooster, so we are NOT eating baby chickens!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover some more facts about chickens. Talk about what kind of pets the children have, do any of them have chickens? If they did have a chicken for a pet what would they call them? Discuss how the chickens can be heard peeping inside the egg and how their mothers gently cluck to encourage them to hatch. Talk about the names we call chickens, e.g. males are roosters, females are hens, get everyone to do their best rooster impersonations!

Research chickens online and show the children what they look like as adults. Explore some of the amazing (and truly weird!) looking chickens there are in the world and their different 'hairstyles' and colours. Look for some chicken activities to do with kids again there's squillions!

Activities could include reading some of the delightful chicken stories there are e.g. *The Little Red Hen* is a great one for little kids to join in with and then discuss. *Rosie's Walk* is an absolute treat – there are lots of chicken stories! You could purchase some yellow cotton balls, some felt spots for eyes, and cut some triangle beaks from orange felt. Then using some craft glue, make some little chickens and display them, either in an egg carton or a nest. Stick some chickens to your map of the world and point out how they live with people and not out in the wild.

Point to the silhouettes and count the sixteen little birds sitting on the wire, talk about the little bird that has fallen off! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *sixteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

17 Plump Pufflings

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what 'plump' means. Don't connect it with weight (in case there are weight issues with the kids or their families), but instead plump up some cushions and pillows, or plump up the children's hair! Talk about how they are baby puffins which are called pufflings.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children about how cute these little pufflings are and how they also have webbed feet because they spend so much time swimming. Talk about their little white tummies and ask the children to show you their tummies!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover where they live and how they live on islands and cliffs and sometimes they lay their eggs in rabbit burrows!

Research puffins online and show the children what they look like as adults and discuss their bright orange beaks. Find out if we have puffins in Australia. Talk about how Puffin Island near Wales, has no people at all on it, only puffins! Look for some puffin activities to do with kids – there's actually a lot!

Activities could include cutting out some simple puffin shapes and colouring in their stripy beaks and orange feet. You could use either black felt or paper for their wings. Then make them an ocean to swim in, mix together blue and white paint to make lots of different blues (get the kids to help you do this), then paint a large mural in all the different blues, finally stick your puffins to it. There are also some cute books about puffins, *Skye the Puffling* is about Skye who is as cute as can be! You could also collect some Puffin kids books (Puffin is one of the world's largest publishers of children's books). The kids can have fun finding the little Puffin logo found on each book. Stick some puffins to your map of the world and point out how they like to live on islands right out in the middle of the ocean in places like Iceland.

Point to the silhouettes and count the seventeen little birds sitting on the wire, talk about the little bird that is still upside down and still falling! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *seventeen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

18 Cheeky Lovebirds

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘cheeky’ means. That cheeky can be a little bit naughty but still fun, where no one gets hurt. Talk about how lovebirds are a type of parrot and parrots can be very cheeky because they answer you back!

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children how these babies are just starting to grow their feathers which you can see on their wings, their adult feathers are starting to grow through their soft down.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover why they are called lovebirds, where they live, and how they carry things under their tail!

Research lovebirds and other parrots online and find out if lovebirds come in different colours. Find out what sort of noises they make and if they talk like some of the other parrots. Watch some funny videos of parrots talking and singing! Ask the children what they would teach their parrot to say if they had one! You could even get adventurous and make a bird feeder. There are dozens of different designs most of which are incredibly simple to make. Work out what birds you have in your garden then look online for whichever feeder will suit your situation.

Activities could include collecting photos of all the different coloured parrots you can find, then making some simple cut outs of parrots for the children to colour, get them to decide which kind of parrot they will make. Or instead of colouring, the children could stick paper strips for feathers (or even feathers themselves!). When cutting strips of paper, curl them with the edge of your scissors, for a curly tail effect. You could make a pair of lovebirds for each child to decorate. Talk about how the lovebirds do not have such bright colours as the parrots, but they are still very pretty. Then bring a large branch inside and attach the lovebirds and the parrots to it as a display. Stick some lovebirds to your map of the world but make sure they are all on the continent of Africa because they don’t live anywhere else on Earth (unless they are in a cage of course!).

Point to the silhouettes and count the eighteen little birds sitting on the wire, talk about the little that is now right side up and flying again! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *eighteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

19 Straggly Albatrosses

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘straggly’ means. Ask the children if their cat or dog looks straggly when they get wet, or if their own hair is straggly when it’s wet. Talk about storms and why the baby birds would be wet. Talk about how we stay dry in our houses but that birds get wet.

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Talk to the children how these babies have big, long beaks, so when they grow up they can catch big fish!

Use the fact pages in the back to discover how these babies are Laysan Albatross that live on islands like Hawaii and that one Laysan lived to be over 65 years old – which is older than your Grandma, even older than your Grandpa!!!

Research albatross online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different albatrosses there are and how big some of them get (they are huge!). Talk about how some of them spend all their time at sea, only coming to land to have their babies. Look for some albatross activities to do with kids – they may be hard to find!

Activities could include marking out their wingspan like you did with the swans to show the children how big they get. You could also discuss how albatross are tracked flying vast

distances without ever coming ashore. There is a great book although for slightly older children called *A Perfect Day for an Albatross*, which you could read together and come up with even more albatross activities. Stick some albatross to your map of the world but only above the sea. Point to the silhouettes and count the nineteen little birds sitting on the wire! Talk about the one that fell is now flying away. And that birds rarely fall down like we do, that they can just flip over and fly away! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *nineteen* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count again.

20 Chubby Penguins

Read the text (and the number!) with fun in your voice – talk about what ‘chubby’ means – be careful with this one, avoid it if you have overweight children in your care. Instead talk about what ‘cuddled’ means. Talk about how the owl babies were snuggling which is just like cuddling. In the case of people, cuddling usually involves putting your arms around someone. Ask the children if they like to cuddle with their parents or their brothers and sisters and how it makes them feel safe and warm. Ask them if they like to cuddle their pets!

Focus on the picture and point to each baby as you count them together. Get a child to point to the babies like you did and count them again. Maybe talk about how all the bird babies in this book look the same, all the chickens look the same, all the swans, all the penguins. Talk about how this is not the case with human babies. that we all look different. If you have twins in your class/group then talk about how they look alike.

Use the fact pages in the back to discover that these are Emperor Penguins that live only in the Antarctic. Explain how penguin wings are used as flippers and not for flying and discuss what flippers are used for. Get the children to flap their flippers! Talk about how long 18 minutes is, use an oven timer to demonstrate how that is such a long time to hold your breath! Get the children to try and hold their breath and time them. Also discuss how far 50km is and how far 120km is and imagine if they had to walk all that way, and especially how long it would be on short little penguin legs!

Research penguins online and show the children what they look like as adults. Find out how many different penguins there are, if they are all the same colour, and if they all make the same call. Find out if we have penguins in Australia. Talk about how penguins carry their eggs on their feet, by shuffling along. Roll up some socks (or even use hard boiled eggs!) and have the children try and walk around the room with eggs on their feet.

Activities could include bringing in some baby photos of you and all the children (and their parents and grandparents perhaps) and make a display to show how all the human babies are different, but all the bird babies are the same. There are a few famous penguins you could talk about – the penguins from *Madagascar*, *Happy Feet*, or *Mr. Popper’s Penguins*. Make some potato stamps of penguin footprints (they are very simple to draw). Depending how messy you like things, you could extend this to include making footprints of each child, and you as well! Stick some penguins to your map of the world and point out how they like to live where it is very cold and there is often snow and ice.

Point to the silhouettes and count the 20 little birds sitting on the wire! Talk about the big bird that all the little ones are looking at. Ask them if they can guess what might be about to happen! Get two children to stand beside you and hold up *twenty* fingers and play the same game as you did with the number 12. Get a child to help you by pointing to each silhouette as you all count.

Big bird on the wire!

Have a giggle over the big bird and how he has landed on the wire and all the other birds are falling off, ask them if they know what happened. Why has the wire gone down? Is he too heavy?

Further counting skills

There are certain basic concepts that are important for toddlers and young children to understand when it comes to learning how to count.

ORDER – understanding that when we count, we count in the same order 1, 2, 3, etc, every time.

CARDINALITY – the cardinal number is the last number, thus understanding that the last number we say, is how many things there are.

NUMBERS REPRESENT QUANTITY – understanding that numbers represent an amount.

LESS AND MORE – understanding less and more is the basis of adding and subtracting and the mathematical skills they will learn later in school.

There are countless counting games that can be played with young children. The old hopscotch is still a good one, or even just drawing the numbers 1 to 5 on the ground (or 1 to 10 depending how old the children are), and then pulling random numbers out of a hat and getting the children to stand on the appropriate number. Or getting them to put one foot on the number 3, or five fingers on the number 4 etc. There are countless variations to this game which can be extended to include colours, shapes, letters, animals, etc.

Dominos – either buy a set or getting the kids to help make your own. Make them quite big so you can play together on the floor. You can draw or glue on numbers, dots, shapes, animals, even the children's faces, the possibilities are endless.

Bingo – again making your own is much more rewarding, with pictures of animals, birds, numbers, dinosaurs, cars, anything you like really!

Playing 'Shop' – be creative with this one, you can make your own money out of cardboard, then come up with all sorts of groovy shops and things to buy, e.g. children can create their own ice-creamery using coloured cotton balls and paper cones. A pizza bar with paper plate pizzas, etc. Shops of course need money to buy things, but keep it *very* simple, money and giving change is extremely complex for young children.

Playing cards (just use the numbers 2 to 10 or better still use Uno cards!) – spread the cards face up on the floor and ask the children to find a red two, a black ten, ask how many sixes are there? Make piles of red cards and count them, or piles of threes etc. Ask how many fours can you find? etc. For older children turn the cards face down and play a memory game, but limit the number of pairs you play with, or else it will just be too hard. Again there are endless possibilities!

Adding and subtracting games – keep this very simple to begin with and depending how old the children are. Start with just five cars (bears, birthday candles, grapes, money, whatever you like!). count them together and then ask a child to remove one. Then count them again. Take them away and put them back, then use the children's shoes, hats, the children themselves, to count again.

Count beads and blocks – again ask the children to find one red bead, four blue blocks, etc.

Make counting part of day

Children need to realise that it doesn't matter *what* we count, we always count *in the same way* in other words *in the same order*. Whatever we are doing, include counting, see every opportunity as a teaching moment. However, don't make it a focus, just make it a natural thing to do, don't ruin the play with too much teaching! For example: count out spoonfuls when you cook; count the socks as you fold them; count the number of toy cars there as you put them away; when bouncing a ball; when cutting a slice of bread or cheese, etc. When out walking, look at house numbers, or count the number of blue cars you see, how many dogs you see. The possibilities are endless. By doing these things children will naturally be learning without even realising. While sounding out letters and pointing to signs teaches them literacy, counting and pointing out numbers teaches them numeracy.