



Chicago Bird Champions

2026-2027

Program Interest Form



LINCOLN PARK ZOO.

FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.

Chicago Bird Champions 2026–2027 Program Interest Form

Program Overview

Throughout the course of the program, students will:

- Develop an understanding of the reasons for bird migration and the geography involved
- Understand the challenges animals face when migrating, particularly through an urban environment
- Build a connection between themselves and the animals that live around them
- Learn some tools to advocate for wildlife, including writing a persuasive letter

Throughout the course of the program, teachers will:

- Gain experience in using project-based learning in their classroom
- Incorporate information on conservation and human impacts on the environment into their teaching
- Increase understanding and confidence in supporting students as they take conservation action

Chicago Bird Champions engages students in grades 3–5 in the driving question, “How can we make Chicago safer for migrating birds?” Throughout this six-week program, students will learn concepts related to animal migration, the challenges animals face in a human-built environment, and some of the things people can do to create more bird-friendly cities. It will also encourage students to advocate for wildlife in their community. CBC includes opportunities for learning both at their schools and at the zoo.

Due to high demand and limited availability of spots, teachers who participate must commit to fulfilling all requirements of the full program. **Teachers must teach students in grades 3–5 at a school within Chicago city limits.** Teachers will participate in one of two cohorts during the 2026–2027 school year. The fall cohort will run from mid-October to mid-December. The winter cohort will run from mid-December to the end of March. Please review the program with your school administrator and return this interest form to zooexplorers@lpzoo.org. Interest forms for the fall cohort are due by 5 p.m. on September 10. Interest forms for the winter cohort are due by 5 p.m. on November 20.

Additionally, the zoo has received a grant to offer Chicago Bird Champions to a limited number of schools for free. If you are interested in participating in CBC using the grant funds for either cohort, please submit your interest form by September 10.

Please note that CBC is primarily facilitated in English. Written materials prepared by the start of the school year will be available in English and Spanish. In the event that new materials are produced by zoo staff during the school year, the zoo cannot guarantee they will be available in any language other than English. If you have students who speak languages other than English or Spanish, it will be the responsibility of the school to provide translation.

Program Components:

I. Teacher Kickoff Meeting (via Zoom)

Time Commitment: One hour, held virtually on a weekday after school

Projected Time Frame: Mid-October for the fall cohort and mid-December for the winter cohort; dates will be determined based on cohort members’ availability

During these kickoff meetings, teachers will receive an overview of the program and its components, information about content, and a chance to begin scheduling class visits. **Attendance at the kickoff meeting is required.**

The zoo cannot move forward with scheduling visits to your classroom or the zoo if you have not attended the kickoff meeting.

II. Classroom Visits From a Zoo Facilitator

Time Commitment: Two class visits, each one hour long

Projected Time Frame: One class visit at the beginning of the program and one at the end

For each classroom visit a zoo facilitator will visit the participating school to work directly with the teacher and students. All supplies for the visits will be brought by the zoo facilitator. Teachers are asked to arrange their class periods into a single day for each classroom visit when possible. Zoo staff will make accommodations if necessary.

The first classroom visit will focus primarily on helping students understand the concept of migration. In the second classroom visit, students will write a persuasive letter to a neighboring organization to advocate for bird-friendly practices.

Teachers will coordinate with the zoo facilitator to determine days for the classroom visits that best fit their schedule. Teachers are expected to be present in the class during visits from the zoo facilitator. A one-week

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notice will be required for any schedule changes or cancellations.

III. Virtual Visit

Time Commitment: One hour-long virtual visit for each participating class

Projected Time Frame: After the first in-person classroom visit and before the zoo visit

Each class will participate in a virtual visit. During this time, students will learn about some of the challenges birds face during their annual migrations as well as some things they can do to create a more bird-friendly Chicago.

The virtual visit can take place on Zoom or on Google Meet.

IV. Community Survey

Time Commitment: Can be determined by teacher

Projected Time Frame: After the virtual visit and before the zoo visit

Each class will participate in a community survey, led by the teacher using zoo materials. In the community survey, students use their new knowledge to identify features of their community that are helpful to migrating birds, as well as things that would create challenges for birds.

V. Field Trip

Time Commitment: One full-day field trip for each participating class; classes from the same school should plan to come on the same day

Projected Time Frame: One trip in November (fall cohort) or February/March (winter cohort)

All participating classes will visit the zoo once to learn more about what makes a healthy habitat for birds. The visit will give students an opportunity to create window decals that they will use at school and send to the neighboring organization they have identified.

It is the responsibility of the school to provide bus transportation to and from Lincoln Park Zoo, unless the school has received the zoo's grant funding.

A one-week notice will be required for any schedule changes or cancellations. Due to the limited dates available for field trips, there may not be time to reschedule trips that are cancelled after the deadline. Therefore, if a teacher needs to reschedule after the deadline, the visit may be subject to cancellation.

How to Participate

If you would like to participate in CBC with your classes, please complete the program interest form and return to us at zooexplorers@lpzoo.org. Lincoln Park Zoo has received funding to offer Chicago Bird Champions to a limited number of schools for free. Those interested in receiving grant funding should complete BOTH the interest form and the additional grant-related questions located at the end of the form. Schools not receiving grant funds will either receive an invoice for payment by check or a custom link to pay by credit card at a later date.

Due dates:

- For those participating in the FALL cohort (program runs October–December): September 10
- For those participating in the WINTER cohort (program runs December–March): November 20
- For those applying for grant funds for EITHER cohort: September 10

If you have any questions, please contact us at zooexplorers@lpzoo.org.

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Part I: School Information

School Name _____ CPS Network _____

School Address _____

Neighborhood _____

School Phone _____ School Fax _____

Minutes, per day, that each student receives science instruction _____

Grade levels to participate (check one or multiple) 3 4 5 _____

Number of classes to participate _____

Total Number of Students _____

Part II: Teacher Information

Teacher's Name _____

School Email _____ Alternate Email _____

Illinois Educator Identification Number (IEIN) _____

Cell/Home Phone _____

Are you the primary teacher of all participating classes?

Yes No (If you check "No," please share the names and contact info of the other participating teachers at your school below)

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Why do you want your students to participate in the Chicago Bird Champions program? How does the program align with your curriculum goals?

I would like my class(es) to participate in the:	Fall Cohort	Winter Cohort	Open to Either Cohort
Is your school's participation in CBC contingent on receiving grant funds:	Yes	No	Unsure

Part III: Commitment to Program

By initialing/signing below, you confirm that you have reviewed the program components and time commitment to participate in Chicago Bird Champions during the 2026–2027 school year.

- One (1) required teacher kickoff meeting
 - Two (2) classroom visits from a zoo facilitator
 - One (1) virtual visit led by a zoo facilitator facilitated by participating teacher
 - One (1) community survey facilitated by participating teacher
 - One (1) field trip to Lincoln Park Zoo
- I understand that if my school does not receive grant funding, the fee to participate in Chicago Bird Champions is \$650 per class.

I understand that if my school does not receive grant funding, it is my school's responsibility to provide bus transportation for my students to participate in the field trip to the zoo.

I understand that if my school receives grant funding, my students and I are required to participate in a program evaluation.

I understand that Chicago Bird Champions is primarily offered in English with written materials in English and Spanish. I understand that if students in my classes speak languages other than English it is my school's responsibility to make accommodations.

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I understand that Chicago Bird Champions is intended for students in grades 3–5.

Lincoln Park Zoo may discontinue the program with the teacher and/or school if significant changes occur with participating classes, making it difficult to administer the program, or if substantial progress through the program is not being demonstrated. Discontinuing the partnership could include revoking all supplies provided by Lincoln Park Zoo.

Lincoln Park Zoo is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free of discrimination. Accordingly, the zoo will not tolerate any form of harassment, unlawful discrimination, or intimidation against our employees by anyone, including managers, supervisors, co-workers, executives, members, vendors, clients, customers, or third parties. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written, or physical conduct that represents an unwanted sexual advance and/or denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, or any other characteristic protected by law, or that of their relatives, friends, or associates, and that: a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment, b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities. In the event this policy is violated by a participant or participant's school, Lincoln Park Zoo reserves the right to immediately discontinue partnership with the participant or participant's school.

Teacher Signature

Date

YES, as the school administrator, I hereby pledge that has my support to participate in the program. I have reviewed the program components and time commitment and will provide the needed support for my staff and students to participate in all aspects of the program. I understand that as part of this program, I am allowing data collection equipment, including a field camera and bat monitor, to be set up on school grounds.

School Administrator Printed Name

Date

School Administrator Signature

Please note: In lieu of a signature, you may forward an email to zooexplorers@lpzoo.org from a school administrator stating their support for you implementing the program.

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Optional: Grant Funding

Lincoln Park Zoo has received a grant to offer Chicago Bird Champions to a limited number of classrooms for free. If your school receives these funds, all program fees will be waived and the zoo will provide bus transportation (one bus per class) for your students to participate in the field trip.

Would you like your class to be considered for grant funding? Yes No

How do you anticipate your students will grow or benefit by participating in CBC?

Part IV: Submit Materials

Please email the completed interest form to zooexplorers@lpzoo.org. You can take a picture and email it, as long as we can read everything on the application. Or, type your name into the signature lines to make it easier to save and send the application as an email attachment.