Teacher Resource

# Focus Questions

As a class, discuss the stories featured in the episode of BTN Classroom and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following focus questions.

## Election Wrap

1. Five countries were featured in the BTN Election Wrap story. Name at least three of them.
2. Choose a country featured in the BTN story. What are some of the issues that influenced voters in that country?
3. Which group in Serbia decided to form a new party to challenge the Prime Minister?
4. Finish the following sentence: The outcome of the US mid-term elections will determine which party controls the Senate and the House of Representatives, which will have a big impact on…
5. What questions do you have about this story?

## Flood Safety

1. Which state has experience floods recently?
2. Why can even shallow floodwater be dangerous?
3. How much water can it take for a car to start floating?
4. What sorts of things could be hiding beneath the surface of floodwater?
5. How can people prepare for floods?

## Analogue Learning

1. In pairs, discuss the story and record the main points of your discussion. Share your points with the rest of the class.
2. How might writing by hand help students learn and remember information?
3. How much time do Australian students spend using technology for schoolwork each day?
4. Do you think schools should limit the amount of time students spend using laptops and tablets? Why or why not?
5. Name three things you learnt watching the BTN story.

**EPISODE 31**
3 November 2026

**KEY LEARNING**
Students will view a range of BTN stories and use comprehension skills to respond to a series of focus questions.

**CURRICULUM**
**English – Year 4**
Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, to expand topic knowledge and ideas, and evaluate texts.

**English – Year 5**
Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning to evaluate information and ideas.

**English – Year 6**
Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources.

©ABC 2026

## Bird Calls

1. What is the Bournda Bird Olympics?
2. Why did bird calling begin?
3. What sorts of things are the judges looking for?
4. What was your favourite bird call? Why?
5. Have a go at mimicking native birds in your area and record your bird calls.

Check out the teacher resource on the Archives page.

## Young Pianist

1. How did Dillon first become interested in playing the piano?
2. What achievement is Dillon most proud of?
3. What does he like about classical music?
4. What advice does Dillon give to young people who want to learn an instrument?
5. What did you like about the BTN story?

©ABC 2026

Teacher Resource

# Bird Call Olympics

**EPISODE 31**
3 November 2026

**KEY LEARNING**
Students will explore birds in their school yard. Students will investigate where birds live and the songs and calls they make.

**CURRICULUM**
**Science – Year 4**
Living things have life cycles.

Living things depend on each other and the environment to survive.

**Science – Year 5**
Examine how particular structural features and behaviours of living things enable their survival in specific habitats.

**Science – Year 6**
Investigate the physical conditions of a habitat and analyse how the growth and survival of living things is affected by changing physical conditions.

## Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. What is the Bournda Bird Olympics?
2. Why did bird calling begin?
3. What sorts of things are the judges looking for?
4. What was your favourite bird call? Why?
5. Have a go at mimicking native birds in your area and record your bird calls.

## Activity: Class Discussion

Students will discuss the BTN Bird Call Olympics story in pairs and then share their thoughts with the class.

- What do you THINK about what you saw in this video?
- What does this video make you WONDER?
- What did you LEARN watching the the story?
- Think of three questions you have about the BTN story.



## Activity: Q&A

All scientific discoveries start with a question! As a class, come up with some questions you think ORNITHOLOGISTS ask and solve about BIRDS.

Organise the questions into common themes. As a class, make a list of questions that you would like to ask an ornithologist. Use the internet to find answers to your class questions.

An *ORNITHOLOGIST* is a scientist or researcher who studies birds!

©ABC 2026

# Activity: Bird Study

Provide students with the opportunity to think and behave like an ornithologist, a person who studies and observes birds. In this activity students will explore a natural habitat in their local area, identify birds in the area and document what they find.

## Class Discussion

- Have you stopped to notice and listen to the birds in your area?
- What birds have you seen or heard in your school yard or near your home?
- Why do you think birds make sounds?

## School Yard Bird study

Students can work individually, in pairs or small groups, using the following as a guide.

## Step 1: Plan

Plan a visit to a local nature reserve or your own school yard to explore and identify birds. You will need to write a list of tools you may need for the investigation, for example: pen and paper for taking notes, camera and binoculars. Predict what you might see and find. Think about what you would need for your bird study investigation.

## Step 2: Explore

Visit the habitat and carry out an exploration of the area. Choose a spot in the environment to sit and listen for birds. Consider exploring the area from different angles, closeup or far away. Look and listen for evidence that birds live in the area.

## Step 3: Collect

Once you have found a bird in the area, begin to study the bird and its environment in more detail. Collect as much data as you can about it and record what you hear and see. You may write notes and sketch what you see to help in your investigation. Record what you see with a stills or video camera.

- Can you hear any bird calls or songs? What does it sound like? Can you identify the bird based on the bird sounds you hear?
- What does the species look like? Take photos and draw pictures. Describe its characteristics.
- What else is the bird doing? How does it interact with the environment? Record the behaviour of the bird.
- What does the environment look like? Describe the bird's habitat and identify any trees or plants in the area.
- Ask one "how" and one "why" question about what you see and hear.
- Return to the classroom and share/compare your findings.

## Step 4: Analyse

Analyse your findings and write a short summary of your investigation.

- Did you find any birds during your investigation? If yes, identify and describe what you found. If you didn't see any, did you find any evidence that birds live in the area?
- How could you help protect this habitat?

©ABC 2026

### Step 5: Research

Choose one bird species found in your school yard or one featured in the BTN Bird Call Olympics story. Respond to one or more of the following research questions:

- What is the difference between bird calls and bird song?
- How can bird songs help us identify different bird species?
- Explore the taxonomy of the species and categorise the information you find using the classification system.
- What might you notice if you visit this bird's habitat at different times of the day or year?
- How has this species adapted over time to survive in their environment? Research some specific adaptations they have made to survive in their habitat.
- Where is this species on the food chain? Predict what might happen if they are removed from the food chain.
- Are there any examples of a conservation project helping this species? Investigate what citizen science projects are happening to help monitor or protect this species.

Students will gather information using a range of reliable sources.

### Step 6: Reflect

Reflect on the investigation by responding to one or more of the following questions:

- What did you enjoy about this investigation?
- What did you find surprising?
- What would you do differently next time?

## Useful Websites

- Dying art of bird calling roars back at 2026 Bournda Bird Olympics – ABC News
- Bird Call Olympics – BTN
- Bird of the Century – BTN
- The Birds of Australia STORYBOX – Australian Museum
- Birds Story Box: First Nations storytelling – Australian Museum

©ABC 2026

Teacher Resource

# BTN Transcript: Episode 31 – 3/11/2026

Hey, I'm Amelia Moseley and you're watching BTN. Thanks for joining us again. Let's see what's coming up on today's show. We learn how to stay safe in a flood, find out about calls for a digital detox in classrooms and listen to some Bird Call Olympians.

## Election Wrap

Reporter: Wren Gillett

*INTRO: All that soon, but first today to some big news in politics from well, a lot of places. In the past week or so we've seen some really important elections with some really interesting results and there are more to come. Here's wren to fill us in.*

SERBIAN STUDENT: This is an amazing feeling.

DONALD TRUMP, US PRESIDENT: This is really, I think, the most important midterm election maybe we've ever had.

WREN GILLETT, REPORTER: Yeah It's been a lot. Over the past couple of weeks, there have been elections all over the world. Well, you know, not everywhere, but more places than usual, and they've been pretty big ones. Where should we start? Brazil.

It's a big country, fifth biggest in the world actually. And for the past four years, this guy has been in power, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, or Lula. He campaigned on issues like reducing poverty and protecting the Amazon rainforest. Challenging him was this guy, Flavio Bolsonaro, son of former president Jair Bolsonaro. He led Brazil from 2019 to 2023, and pushed for things like stronger law enforcement, and opening more of the Amazon to mining and development. And when he was voted out, this happened.

ABC REPORTER: Far-right supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro broke into congress.

Jair Bolsonaro was accused of plotting to overturn the election result and is currently under house arrest. But his son, Flavio, very nearly won the election, in fact, he won the first round of voting, but in round two, Lula came out on top.

WREN: And on the same day that all happened, another country also saw an unexpected victory, here in Serbia.

For the past two years, Serbia has seen a lot of protests against the Government, mainly over concerns about media freedom, corruption and whether the government was listening to ordinary people. The President was this guy, Aleksandar Vučić. He's been one of Serbia's most powerful politicians for more than a decade and was running to be the country's Prime Minister. But a student-led movement, backed by professors, doctors, scientists, farmers and other community leaders, decided to form a new political group to challenge him, called The Student List, and in a result that surprised a lot of people.

ALEKSANDAR VUČIĆ, SERBIAN PRESIDENT: It is clear that we have lost these elections, the Student List has won.

©ABC 2026

WREN: Another big election happened over here in Israel.

This guy, Benjamin Netanyahu, has been in power since 2022. It's his third go at the job, making him the country's longest-serving PM. But he's also faced a lot of criticism over that time for his Government's decisions, and more recently for his handling of the October 7 terrorist attack, and Israel's response to it. His main opposition is led by this guy, former defence force general Gadi Eisenkot. When the votes were counted, Netanyahu's party had the most seats, but not by much, and to form Government, one of these leaders will have to make deals with smaller parties. Meanwhile, Arab-Israeli parties did better than ever before, which means they could play a big part in the outcome.

ISRAELI CITIZEN: I feel like there is this small chance that we should take now.

Negotiations have started, but it could be weeks or even months before we know who Israel's next leader will be.

WREN: Speaking of big elections, they don't do them much bigger than here, the USA.

TRUMP SUPPORTER: Whatever they throw at him, it makes him stronger.

This week is the US midterm elections, which are pretty much what they sound like, elections held in the middle of a President's term. The President isn't up for election, but a lot of other politicians are. The outcome will determine which party controls the Senate and the House of representatives, which will have a big impact on how much power the President has for the next two years.

DONALD TRUMP: You have to pretend I'm on the ballot. Okay.

As you might know, this President, Donald Trump, is very controversial, and opinion polls have shown he's unpopular right now. So, many are predicting the Democrats, the opposition, will win quite a lot of seats. But we'll have to wait and see what happens, and the impact it will have on the rest of us.

WREN: And last, to an election not quite so big but close to us, New Zealand.

This one is happening on the weekend, and it involves two Chris' - Christopher Luxon and Chris Hipkins. This Chris has been Prime Minister of New Zealand since 2023, and the other Chris was PM briefly before that, taking over from Jacinda Ardern when she stepped down. New Zealand is facing some big economic problems at the moment, and dealing with them will be a big focus this election.

WREN: So yeah a whole world of political change is going on, so stay tuned.

## News Quiz

Can you name the famous racecourse where the Melbourne Cup is held every year? Is it Caulfield, Flemington or Royal Randwick? It's Flemington Racecourse. The "race that stops the nation" is held on the first Tuesday in November every year and it's been going since 1861.

The first international passengers have arrived at Sydney's brand-new airport. But do you know where it is? Is it north of the city, west of the city or south of the city? It's here in the west, Western Sydney, that is.

PASSENGER: I got confused. I saw Western Sydney, I thought it was Western Australia, and I'm meant to be in Perth. But look, it's still pretty fun.

©ABC 2026

Oh, no. The Western Sydney International, or Nancy-Bird Walton Airport was 80 years in the making, with a second Sydney Airport first proposed in 1946, but it's taken a long time and a lot of debate to finally make it a reality.

Where would you have to go to get a selfie with this giant piece of shrivelled fruit? Mudgee, Mildura or Mannum? It's Mildura! The fibreglass sultana, which stands more than five metres tall, was made to celebrate 100 years of dried fruit production in the Sunraysia region of Victoria.

KID: It's very cute.
KID: It has a funny smile.

And how much would you have had to pay to own this dinosaur skeleton, which sold last week at an auction in New York? Is it $5 million, $35 million or $47 million? It's $47 million! This rare specimen of a nanotyrannus was bought for US$47.3 million by a private buyer. I wonder where they'll put it.

## Flood Safety

Reporter: Saskia Mortarotti

*INTRO: Now to Queensland, where lots of people are cleaning up this week after parts of the state were hit by deadly floods. So why are floods so dangerous and what can we all do to stay safe? Well, Sas went to speak to an expert to find out.*

PERSON: It just poured and poured all night long.

PERSON: It was pretty strong this morning and rising at quite a rapid rate.

PERSON: Yeah, water everywhere.

SASKIA MORTAROTTI, REPORTER: This is what parts of Queensland have looked like over the past couple of weeks. One person has died, and there have been some close calls like this one, which made news headlines around the world. This car was driving through floodwaters when the car stalled and began to sink. Two bystanders, including an ABC reporter, jumped into the floodwaters, and they were able to help the driver out.

WILL MURRAY, ABC REPORTER: We all gave each other a big hug. Just... Never been so relieved in our lives because it was very, very scary.

It showed just how quickly people can get into trouble during a flood. So, to find out more about how to stay safe, I've gone to talk to a member of the State Emergency Service, or SES. Hey David, thanks for catching up with me

DAVID O'SHANNESSY, SA SES COMMANDER: It's great to be here.

Thank you. what does the SES do during floods?

DAVID O'SHANNESSY: Yeah, so the SES is an organisation made up of thousands of volunteers across Australia, and we help people before and during floods. We help them prepare, we help them prevent floods, and we also help them respond to floods by stopping water getting into properties and perhaps even rescuing people that might get stuck in floods. Unfortunately, people do drown in floodwaters by entering into them and getting stuck.

©ABC 2026

During a flood, water is always moving, travelling from higher to lower areas, and it's not always obvious how fast. There can be currents that you can't see, and the water might be deeper than you expect. Even waters that are shallow can be forceful enough to knock you off your feet and pull you under. As for cars, it can take just 10cm of water for a car to start floating, and then it can be swept away.

DAVID O'SHANNESSY: We want to make sure that people don't drive into floodwaters; they don't play around floodwaters because we don't know what's in the floodwaters

Hiding below the surface in that murky floodwater could be things like broken glass, debris, chemicals, sewage, even snakes and spiders. Which is why experts say you should never jump in yourself.

DAVID O'SHANNESSY: The only reason SES or emergency services would get into a floodwater is to rescue someone. But we have the right training and the right equipment, the right clothing. So yeah, we would really ask that everybody stays well away from floodwater.

While some parts of Australia are more prone to flooding than others, David says it can happen at any time and anywhere.

DAVID O'SHANNESSY: Traditionally people think of summer as a fire season, which it absolutely is, but flooding occurs all year round. There would be people who know that they live near a river or a large creek that could flood. But flash flooding can occur from something like heavy rainfall. So any street, any house could be at risk of flooding if the rainfall conditions are right.

What is some of the prep we can do before a flood comes?

DAVID O'SHANNESSY: So, we encourage everybody in Australia to have an emergency plan. Make sure you know where your important documents are, where you might go with your family during a flood, and how you might contact people if things did become a bit hairy and then if flooding was to occur, try and stay away from that water.

## Digital Detox

Reporter: Samoda Silva

*INTRO: What would you rather use at school keyboards and screens or pens and books? well Australia's education minister reckons we need to go a little more analogue after some disappointing test results. Samoda looked into the digital detox debate.*

ARCHAEOLOGIST: Eureka! I think I've got something.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: What on earth is that?

ARCHAEOLOGIST: Some kind of, cylindrical wooden artefact. I wonder what it was used for?

ARCHAEOLOGIST: I think I've found something too! It's kind of like a tablet, only, yeah, the words aren't moving?

ARCHAEOLOGIST: How fascinating.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: That's a pencil. And that's a dictionary.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS: Oh!

©ABC 2026

OK, pencils and books aren't exactly a thing of the past just yet. But we probably use them much less now than we did before.

STUDENT: Now that we've gotten our laptops, we've like, been able to do more projects around research and stuff so we would use pen and paper less.

STUDENT: I think we have like an equal amount of screen time and an equal amount of writing time.

STUDENT: We probably use our laptops nowadays, but in the past, we just used to listen to the teacher more often.

On average, Australian students spend around 2.6 hours a day using technology for schoolwork, and are way more likely than a lot of kids overseas to use screens for learning. And some people think that might not be a good thing. Recently, we got the results of PISA - a test that looks at the skills of 15-year-olds around the world in reading, maths and science. And the results weren't that great. Australia was above average in all subjects, but our reading and maths scores were at a record low. So last week, the Education Minister announced some changes.

JASON CLARE, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think we know that our schools also need a digital detox.

He said PISA data shows…

JASON CLARE: the more time kids spend behind a screen, the more their results are inclined to decline.

There are some studies that show that kids learn and remember information better when they read it on paper and write it down by hand. And there are a few possible reasons for that. For starters, writing by hand is slower, so you tend to think more about what you're writing. Handwriting also activates more areas of your brain responsible for movement, vision, sensory processing, and memory. Plus, you're free from all the distractions that can come from a laptop or a tablet.

There are already quite a few countries overseas that have moved away from digital technology in classrooms. Like Sweden, which has brought in a policy with the catchy name of från skärm till pärm, or from screens to binders. But some say there's no proof that going old-school will improve test results, and that we need to be careful not to lose the benefits of using technology in the classroom.

NEIL SELWYN, PROFESSOR AT MONASH UNIVERSITY: Education is about a lot more than just learning facts and learning figures. So for sure, if you want to have a deep read of a story, or you want to remember things, perhaps doing things off a screen is a good idea. But if you want to do other stuff, if you want to create films, or you want to communicate with people around the world or you want to, you know, do a deep dive into knowledge, then digital technologies can be fantastic.

Now, the education minister isn't suggesting getting rid of screens altogether.

JASON CLARE: I'm not talking about burning iPads here, but I am suggesting that we need to dial this back a bit.

He says he's going to talk with state and territory leaders to figure out the best way to help kids learn and meet future challenges, with a bit of help from some old-fashioned tools.

## Quiz

Can you name the world's oldest known writing system? Is it Hieroglyphs, Cuneiform or Linear A? It's Cuneiform. The writing system was developed in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium BCE.

©ABC 2026

# Bird Olympics

Reporter: Wren Gillett

*INTRO: Now for something a little different - some kids who sound like birds! They've been taking part in the Bournda Bird Call Olympics - a competition with quite a long history and a focus on conservation. Here's Wren.*

Ah, nothing beats the sound of our beautiful native birds. Oh, I just love 'em! Oh, I could honestly just listen to them all... day. Hang on, those noises were you guys? OK, so turns out these students are all pretty great at making convincing bird sounds.

And what better place to showcase this skill than at the annual Bird Call Olympics - yep you heard me. The event takes place in Merimbula, on the New South Wales south coast, and sees students come together and compete in different categories imitating different bird calls. I honestly can't tell the difference.

BRUCE, FORMER BIRD CALLER: There's quite a lot of teams here this year, I think a lot more than there was last year.

ROSIE, TEACHER: We've seen it on Behind The News before.

Yeah, as long-time viewers would know this isn’t the first Bird Call Olympics.

The idea was born way back in 1910. To stop kids from stealing and collecting eggs from native birds, a group, called the Gould League of Bird Lovers was formed. They encouraged everyone to observe our birds and practise their calls, to try to foster a bit more love for them. Two years later, an annual bird calling competition began in Sydney, and the rest, as they say, is history.

BRUCE: My first one was 1952.

As far as the actual art of bird calling goes, there are a few things judges are paying close attention to.

BOB, BIRD CALL OLYMPICS JUDGE: we will be looking for the amount of enthusiasm that they're showing for the task, that's usually pretty easy to score.

BOB: We'll be looking for clarity and then accuracy. Could it be the real thing or not.

Ultimately, it was these students from Tathra Public School who came out on top. But Bob and Bruce say there's a lot more to the comp than the scores.

BOB: It's all about fostering interest and engagement in the natural environment.

BRUCE: It's great to see that the youngsters in schools are involved with birds and nature. I'd like to see every school involved actually It would be great.

Well, you heard Bruce! Go for it!

# Did you know?

Did you know the Kookaburra's call can be heard in jungle scenes of some Hollywood movies? Apparently some sound effects artists thought it sounded more like a monkey than, well, a monkey.

©ABC 2026

# Sport

At just 20 years and 68 days old, Italy's Kimi Antonelli has become the youngest driver to ever win the Formula 1 world championship. Antonelli needed to finish ninth in the Mexico City Grand Prix to seal the title and after avoiding a crash early on, he finished in third to make history.

KIMI ANTONELLI, FORMULA 1 DRIVER: Grateful for this moment and it's one that will live forever.

Now to the Rugby League World Cup where Tonga held on for a 20-18 victory over Samoa. Addin Fonua-Blake was the hero for Tonga as he skipped through a tackle to score the winning try. Securing Tonga a spot in the semifinals.

SUPPORTER: Feeling a lot of emotions right now.
SUPPORTER: That was crazy. And...and Tonga won. Tonga should win all the time.

Finally, to NYC where nearly 60,000 runners took part in the city's famous marathon. Australia's Haftu Strintzos finished in fifth coming in at 2:06:34 only 33 seconds behind first-time marathon runner and winner Sweden's Andreas Almgren. Kenya's Sheila Chepkirui won the women's title in 2:24:36.

# Young Pianist

Reporter: Saskia Mortarotti

*INTRO: Finally today, let's meet Dillon. He's 14 and about to compete against some of Australia's best classical musicians at the ABC Classic Young Performers Awards. Sas caught up with him to find out how he got there and what playing the piano means to him. Take a look.*

SASKIA MORTAROTTI, REPORTER: Hey, Dillon, thanks for chatting with me today.

DILLON CHAN, YOUNG PIANIST: Hi.

SASKIA: Congratulations on being nominated for ABC Classic Young Performers Awards. Only three people were nominated and you are the youngest of those three by quite a lot. What's that like?

DILLON: Well, I feel very privileged and very super excited to be able to play in the Grand Final in the Sydney Opera House. All the semi-finalists are really wonderful musicians and they all played their semi-final round very beautifully I think everybody deserves to be in the final, but I just felt really lucky to be in the final.

SASKIA: I sort of just want to know for starters, how you got into playing the piano.

DILLON: When I was very little. My brother was practising the piano just for fun. And I was dancing around him. So my parents thought it would be nice to get me to try and learn the piano as well. Since I liked it a lot. I started off with a teacher and then she recommended me with some books. And then I started learning the books and then I went through them really fast. I just keep getting better and better and moved on to different teachers. They all taught me really great things.

SASKIA: What's been your favourite achievement so far?

DILLON: I'm actually most proudest of getting to the ABC final because the Sydney Opera House is kind of like one of the world's greatest venues and I've never played in something of this high calibre.

©ABC 2026

SASKIA: Do you listen to classical music or just play classical music?

DILLON: I listen to classical music, but I also listen to some other songs. I actually listen to Martha Argerich and Lang Lang. But I also listen to some upcoming artists like Yunchan Lim. I want to be a concert pianist and represent Australia on the world stage and also spread Australian music because it's just really unique in its own way.

SASKIA: Do you have any advice for any kids who might want to pick up piano?

DILLON: Piano is really the same as anything else. Any instrument, anything you really like. So I guess just if you really love piano then you should pursue your dream. It takes hard work but if you really love it, then it won't seem like hard work. It'll just seems like something that you do normally every day. That's fun.

## Closer

Good luck Dillon. Well, that's all we've got for you today. I hope you've enjoyed the show. Don't you worry, though, we'll be back with more stories next week. And in the meantime, Newsbreak is right here in the studio every weeknight, keeping you up to date. Have a good one and I'll see you soon. Bye!

©ABC 2026