



Nest Building

Introduction

Some birds are more social than others. Crows for example, may roost together in the thousands on winter nights. Roosting together has advantages; younger birds can learn from more experienced birds about where to successfully forage. Different birds will roost together for different reasons, and will often change their roosting habits in different seasons.

When birds are nesting, birds focus on their mate, building a nest, and raising their young. Kids will learn more about how nests are built and what they are used for as they create a nest of their own.

Supplies

- Natural materials that you find outside such as twigs, grass, leaves, dirt, mud, moss, rocks, sand, etc.
- Ribbons
- Yarn
- Bits of trash, such as plastic bags
- You might also want to provide some of the tools used in the **EATING AT HOME** activity, such as pliers, tweezers, tongs, etc., if kids want to build using their “beak”



Get kids thinking ...

ASK KIDS: Why does a bird build a nest? Do all birds build nests? What is the nest used for? Explain that birds typically only use their nests when they are raising their young. Once chicks become capable of flight, adults and young do not usually continue to use the nest. When they aren't nesting, birds select a roosting spot to rest. They often use the same spot to roost night after night.





Start with a Book: Bird Buddies Toolkit

Nest Building

Watch:

7 NESTS THAT WILL CHANGE HOW YOU THINK OF BIRDS

youtu.be/mhWDCcBhxLQ

Discuss the requirements for a bird's nest, e.g., right size for the bird, right depth for the eggs, ways to camouflage the nest and protect the young. **ASK KIDS:** What materials do you think would make a good nest?

Let's get started!

Bird nests come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes male and female birds work together to build their nests; in other species, the male builds the nest. In some species, such as the hummingbird, only the female builds the nest — a very tiny nest! Kids might also be interested in birds who lay their eggs on the ground in scrapes, like killdeer.



HUMMINGBIRD



KILLDEER



OSPREY





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STEP 1: Provide field guides, pictures of birds and their nests, or have kids research online for a specific bird they want to build a nest for:

GUIDE TO COMMON NESTING BIRDS (THE CORNELL LAB)

nestwatch.org/learn/focal-species/

CLUTCH SIZE FOR COMMON SPECIES

nestwatch.org/learn/general-bird-nest-info/clutch-size-phenology-for-common-species/

STEP 2: When nest construction is complete, have kids share information about the bird they chose and the nest they built, explaining the nesting materials they used and what they learned about building nests.

STEP 3: For an additional challenge, see if kids' nests are able to withstand various tests. Can the nest hold the vair on the nest) or rainstorm (a deluge from a watering can or garden hose)?

More nest-building activities

STEP 4: After building nests, split kids into teams to place the nests in appropriate locations outdoors without the other team watching. Then have kids see if they can find each other's nests: dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/BirdNests.pdf

WILD AT SCHOOLS: BUILD THE BEST NEST (MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES)

dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/BuildtheBestNest_LessonPlan.pdf

dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/BuildtheBestNest_PicturePack.pdf

GUARD YOUR NEST

migration.pwnet.org/pdf/Guard_Your_Nest.pdf

LIFE IN A NEST (THE CORNELL LAB)

birds.cornell.edu/k12/life-in-a-nest-2/

