

ACTIVITY: FOR THE BIRDS

Birds use found objects to build their nest, and you can help them out by making a Nest Building Supply Bag. Providing materials for birds in the wild helps them to get the things they need, and it will attract them to your yard so that you can learn about them too. Create your own Field Journal to draw and write about the birds you observe.

Supplies Needed:

- Used mesh bag (the type that produce such as potatoes or onions are packaged in)
- A variety of found materials that birds could use to build or insulate their nests. Some ideas include short pieces of string or ribbon, filling from old pillows, dryer lint, or even hair from a hairbrush or haircut.
- Field Journal made with reusable paper (paper with printing only on one side) stapled together
- Colored pencils or other drawing or writing supplies

Process:

1. Fill the mesh bag with the materials. Hang it somewhere where you'll be able to check on it regularly and where birds will be likely to visit it such as a tree or a fence.
2. Watch for birds using items from the bag and record your observations in your Field Journal. You can record your observations using words, pictures, poetry or even songs:
 - What do the birds you see look like?
 - Imagine how you think the birds might use the materials. What might their nest look like?
3. Most birds build their nests in the spring and early summer. You can leave your bag out year round and refill it next spring or take it down at the end of the season.

Suggested Adult Interactions:

- Talk about what is the same and different about the birds you observed.
- Talk about how some materials are woven together to build a nest and other materials are for insulating it. Discuss how houses also have insulating materials and materials that hold them together.
- Take a walk and look for birds' nests. Discuss what the birds constructed their nest out of and where they might have found the building material. See if any of your materials were used!
- Set out other materials such as old boxes and tubes as well as some tape, glue and crayons. Challenge children to build a home for their stuffed animals or just see what they can create with the supplies.

Skills Developed:

- Social emotional skills in connecting and empathizing with other living things
- Early math and science skills of observation and sorting

Reading Books:

Ages 4-8:

- *Birds, Nests and Eggs (Take-Along Guides)* by Mel Boring
- *The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Auduborn* by Jacqueline Davies
- *About Birds: A Guide for Children* by Cathryn Sill

Ages 9-12:

- *Because of Anya* by Margaret Peterson Haddix
- *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr, paintings by Ronald Himmler

Adult References:

- *Attracting Birds to Your Backyard: 536 Ways to Create a Haven for Your Favorite Birds* by Sally Roth
- *Fun With Nature* by Mel Boring

Next time you are here:

Check out the *Earth World* gallery look for bird nests in the trees or put on one of the bird costumes and "soar" around the gallery.

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