

My nature connection

BUILDING A BIRD'S NEST

GRADES: K+
TIME: 40-60 min.

Families will:

1. Discover ways birds build their nests.
2. Build your own bird nest.
3. Using the Scientific Method, determine if you can build one better than a bird!

ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION: BIRD TRIVIA!

Consider sharing these fun facts with family and friends.

Did you know?

- The largest bird's nest ever built was by a bald eagle. This species can add on to their nests over many consecutive years. Can you guess how large it was? Found in 1963 in St. Petersburg, Florida, this nest was 20 feet deep and over 2 tons - about 4,400 pounds!
- Some of the smallest nests in the world are made by the Ruby-Throated Humming Bird. Can you guess how small they are? These nests are about the size of a quarter.
- Similar to the Bald Eagle, the Gyrafalcon will pass on its nest over many generations rather than building a completely new one each year. Can you guess the oldest Gyrafalcon nest discovered? Found on a cliff in Greenland, this nest is 2,500 years old and the oldest raptor nest that has ever been discovered!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Branches, leaves, twigs, and other items found on the ground outdoors - get creative!

Bag for collecting

Egg or egg-like object

Optional fan & table cloth

SETTING

Park, yard or outdoor space for collecting nest supplies.

Quiet spot to build nest.

Why Do Birds Build Nests?

Nests provide a home for birds, as well as a place to keep their eggs. Some birds lay their eggs on rocky ledges or directly on the ground, but most choose a nest in a tree or large plant. Birds are safest when their nests are high off the ground, far away from predators like squirrels and larger birds. Nests are basket-like structures that prevent eggs from rolling away and breaking when they fall. The photos at the end of this lesson give examples of nest structures in the wild.

Nest building takes time! When birds build their nests, they pick up each individual stick, fly it back to their nest, add it to the nest and then fly off to find the next piece to add.

In this activity, you will have an advantage over birds because you can collect all the pieces for your nest in one trip. Either pair up with one other family member or plan and create nests individually.

BUILD A BIRD'S NEST WITH THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

By becoming scientists and using the scientific method, you can learn how your nest could be helpful in a bird's life and discover ways to make it even stronger.

1. **Ask A Question:** How can you make a creative and structurally strong birds nest?
2. **Form A Hypothesis:** A hypothesis is an educated guess that answers your question. Think about the different examples of bird nests you've seen in pictures and in nature. How do you answer your question?
3. **Experiment:** Plan out your nest by drawing it, writing down ideas, and forming a plan in your head. Collect all of the materials that will be helpful for your plan and create your nest!

REMEMBER TO RESPECT NATURE

This means only taking what you need for your nest, and leaving plants that are alive. Get creative! Birds use dead materials.

The LARGEST bird's nest in the world weighs over 4,000 pounds!

Tips: A good nest has a strong base. It could be made of many materials like twigs, moss, birch bark, feathers found from other birds, pine needles, flower stems, floss from flowers, etc. Some nests are made from 15 to 20 different materials! If this is challenging for you to do with just materials found in nature, consider incorporating cardboard as the base of the nest and glue around the base. Encourage trying to use natural materials first.

4. Nest Tests:

Egg test—Put a circular object into your nest to learn how well it would hold an egg. This could be a real egg, small ball, or anything round and small in your home.

Wind test—Add wind by blowing on the nest or starting up a fan to better understand how the nest will withstand the natural elements.

Try picking up your nest. Does it fall apart? If you can think of any other tests, consider trying them.



5. Record Your Observations:

Write down the thing you see, hear, smell, feel from each nest test.

6. Analyze:

How did your nest react to the tests?

Now that you've tested your nest, what can you do to make it better? Modify your nest and test your nest again.



7. Conclusion:

How can you use your nest to help others?

Consider finding a home for your nest outdoors. Maybe this leads to it becoming a home for a bird this spring.

Reflect on the challenges and joys of building the nest.

CONNECTING WITH QUESTIONS

What challenges do birds face when building nests?

What excites you about living like a bird?

What did you learn about yourself while trying to be like a bird?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BIRD'S NESTS



Sphere Nest



Cupped Nest



Mound Nest: Some birds bury their eggs



Saucer or Plate Nest

SOURCES REFERENCED

- <https://www.outdoorchannel.com/live/eaglecam/326707/0> -- Watch live footage of an eagle in its nest at the National Conservation Training Center

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

take a short survey at: campfiremn.org/mynatureconnection

or here: Kids Survey - [click here](#) | Teachers/Parents Survey - [click here](#)