

WELCOMING BACK THE BIRDS

Celebrating spring with bird watching & nest building!

Introduction:

Spring has Sprung, and as the weather warms this is a great time to head outside together and celebrate the seasonal changes. Springtime is all about new beginnings and the rebirth of the Earth as sleepy winter fades and growth is everywhere. This activity is a lovely way to kickstart a new habit of spending more quality time outside in nature!

Recommended Grades: K-6

Materials for bird watching:

- Binoculars
- Print out of the observation chart, or just paper and pencil
- Timer (or an adult with a watch)

Vocabulary:

- ♦ **Environmental Scientist:** A person who studies how nature works and how humans impact the Earth.
- ♦ **Observations:** Watching and measuring an object or pattern.
- ♦ **Migrating:** When an animal journeys from one place to another with the seasonal change.

Science starts with watching

The first thing environmental scientists do to learn about something new is make observations, taking time to watch nature is the best way to learn about the environment around you!

As spring is upon us and the weather is beginning to warm, this is a perfect time to head outside and enjoy the newcomers these changes bring. Some of the loveliest new arrivals are the migrating birds and their sweet sounds filling the air.

Observing the Birds:

- ♦ First start by finding a comfortable place in nature where it is safe to sit with your eyes closed and listen.
- ♦ Set a timer for a couple minutes and keep count of every bird sound you hear.
- ♦ When your timer goes off record the number of bird songs you heard, maybe even discuss which you think came from the same type of bird or what the songs might mean.
- ♦ Next, take a short walk to make some visual observations.

Recording and Reflecting:

Use the table on the next page to record the number of birds you see, what activity they are busy doing, and the color of their feathers (the binoculars may be useful for this step). Although most of the birds you'll see will be just arriving, you might be lucky enough to spot an early nester. The earliest nest builders, who often start as early as March, include Owls, Cardinals, Hairy Woodpeckers, Crows, Ravens, Eagles, and Hawks!



Next let's make a nest

Now that you have taken some time to observe the recent spring arrivals, let's think about what they will be up to next!

After migrating south, birds move onto the next step of their spring journey, building a nest. Just like flying, birds can make nest building look easy but once you give it a try you will see how much hard work goes into creating the perfect nest.

On the way back from your nature walk, gather some natural building supplies. Birds will use anything they can find in their environment to make a soft comfy home for their eggs, and it must be strong enough to hold the baby birds as they grow! You might want to pick up items like small twigs, feathers, soft moss, leaves, or string.

Materials for nest making:

- A shallow plastic or glass container (the deep lid of a jar or an empty butter container both work well)
- Building materials collected in nature
- Small stones (eggs in your nest)
- Your imagination and lots of creativity!

Building your nest:

- ◆ Use a shallow plastic or glass container to help shape your nest.
- ◆ Weave the items you found together in the base of your container.
- ◆ When you think the nest is sturdy enough, remove it from the container and find a safe space to rest your nest outside.

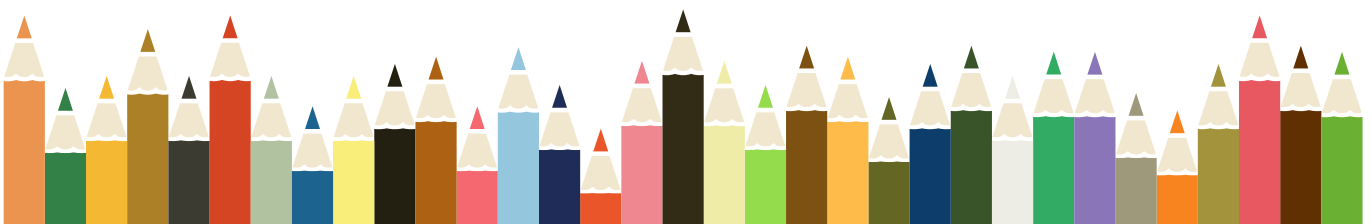
Try tucking your nest into the corner of a window sill or maybe the nook of a tree (some birds even build nests that can safely survive on the ground). Finally, find a couple of beautiful pebbles or stones that will act as your eggs and gently rest them in the safety of your nest.

The next day, head outside to check on the success of your nest!

Questions to consider:

Did your nest survive the weather? Was the nest strong enough to hold your eggs? Take some time to discuss how impressive it is that birds can build homes strong enough to survive wind, rain, and still be cozy enough for their babies. Was building a nest from things you find in nature harder than you thought? What are some changes you might make to where you put your nest or what materials you built it with?

As we welcome back our feathered friends let's also celebrate the strength and beauty of their journey through the spring transition, from migration to building nests and beyond!



Bird Watching Observations

Number of Birds I Hear	
Birds I See Sitting	
Birds I See Flying	
Birds I See Walking	
Birds I See Hopping	
Colors of the Birds I See	
Number of Nests I See	

Drawings and Notes: