

Bird Feeders

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Bird feeders are a great way to draw different species of birds to location where they are easy for students to view. You can use the feeders to observe bird behavior and anatomy, to identify different species, and to track seasonal shifts in local populations, all from the comfort of the classroom. This is also a great art project turned science project opportunity, if you want to build your own.

GRADE: ECE – 5th Grade

INTENDED OUTCOMES: hands, feet

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES:

- Store bought or homemade bird feeders (ideas below)
- Bird seed
- A place to hang the feeder(s) where they can be seen from the classroom windows

Suggested steps and/or focus for each grade level*:

ECE – 5th Grade:

- Consider what type of bird you want to draw into the area, then buy or create a feeder. Ask local experts (see list, filter by) if there are particular species that need support. For example, most hardware stores sell both a feeder that holds liquid for hummingbirds and birds that drink nectar and feeders that hold seed.
- With students, hang the feeder. That way they will know it is there.
- Decide how you are going to monitor the feeders and the birds that come. Perhaps you set up a chart or a space on the board where students can record when they see a bird. Maybe there are even different markers for the different types of birds that they start to see.
- Regularly check and refill the feeder.

*For more detail on the grade-level focus for natural and social concepts and sense of place, please refer to the Guidelines

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TIPS AND TRICKS

- There is some concern that feeders can increase and spread illness between birds and change bird behavior, including migratory patterns. According to the Audubon Society (<https://www.audubon.org/news/to-feed-or-not-feed>), you can help to reduce these risks by:
 - Reducing overcrowding. If your feeder gets crowded, put up another!
 - Research what your local bird species like to eat and put different types of food in different feeders to separate different species of birds, which lowers the chance of pathogens being passed from one species to one that it would not normally come into contact with. It also reduces the mess from uneaten food.
 - Cleaning your feeder with 10% bleach solution a few times a year, especially between seasons. Clean up dropped food under the feeder more regularly to protect ground-dwelling birds - and students.
 - Store food in a dry, secure container to prevent mold and reduce infiltration by rodents.
- Ideas for creating bird feeders - the internet is ripe with examples but here are a few that can be easily created with student help:
 - Tie a string to a pinecone or stale piece of bread. Cover in peanut butter then cover or roll in feeder seed mix and hang!
 - Cut a bird-sized hole in the side of a plastic or cardboard milk jug about an inch or two above the bottom of the container. Decorate with non-toxic paint then fill the bottom of the container with seed and hang it with a string



Relevant Standards

SC09-GR.P-S.2-GLE1, SC09-GR.KS.2-GLE1