

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Get the birds flocking

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) hosts an annual Big Garden Birdwatch each January. Get the children involved using these activity ideas.

Learning aims

- Develop vocabulary relating to birds
- Identify similarities and differences
- Think of ideas, make plans
- Demonstrate empathy and care for living animals
- Use fine motor skills
- Show curiosity and interest.



Resources

- Bird identification books, information sheets or websites
- Large images of common birds, e.g. Blackbird, Robin, Sparrow, etc.
- Bird seed
- Honey
- Cardboard tubes
- String
- Lolly sticks or glue spreaders
- Small container, such as a plastic box
- Shallow container for water
- Purchased bird feeders or bird table, if desired
- Binoculars.

Activity outline

1. Use a book, website or information sheet to introduce and talk about common birds most likely to be seen around your setting. These are likely to include Blackbirds, Blue Tits, Chaffinches, Robins, Starlings and Sparrows
2. Find out from the children what they already know about birds and introduce vocabulary which will support them to talk about them, e.g. feathers, wings, beak, claw, fly, peck. Use the images to support children to notice similarities and differences, e.g. a Blackbird is all one colour while a Blue Tit has different colours and markings

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3. Explain about the Big Garden Birdwatch and let the children know that you want to encourage as many different birds into the nursery grounds as possible. Ask for their ideas and see if there is anything you can do that they have suggested
4. If you are using purchased bird tables or feeders, make sure that they are in an area that is quiet, safe and sheltered. You will also want to make sure that you can see it easily from the nursery. If you don't have much space, feeders stuck to windows are a good idea as long as it's not too noisy. Don't forget to provide fresh water for the birds as well using a shallow plate or bowl. You will also need to clean everything regularly to prevent spreading diseases
5. To make hanging bird feeders:
6. Pour the bird seed into the plastic container
7. Place the cardboard tube on its side in the container
8. Pour honey onto the tube and spread using the spreader or lolly stick
9. Make sure honey is all around the tube and roll it in the bird seed. Sprinkle more on to make sure it is well covered
10. Allow to dry
11. Thread the string through the tube
12. Hang from branches
13. Encourage the children to watch for the birds by setting up a bird watching station with a view to the feeders. Provide binoculars and images of the birds they are likely to see.

Extension ideas

Create a sheet for children to record which birds they see at the bird watching station. This can be a large sheet for all children to use, with images of the birds and space to create a tally, or individual ones on clipboards with pens.

Contact a local bird sanctuary or falconry which offers visits to settings. Make sure you carry out due diligence checks and that the organisation knows the ages of children involved in the experience, space available and so on. Children will love to see the birds first hand; this will really enhance their understanding of the birds they see in the garden and give them plenty to talk about.

Extending the activity

- Blog – [Animals and pets at nursery](#)
- Course - [Little Scientists Leading the Way](#)