

NATURE ACTIVITIES

BIRD NESTING MATERIAL BOTTLE

Have a lot of recycled material and need an activity to do with your children in hopes to connect to nature?

This project involves creating hanging objects that provide natural nesting materials for birds to build nests using a recycled plastic bottle.

PART ONE - GATHERING THE MATERIALS

Getting outside at this time is an uplifting thing to do. Spring is starting, the weather is warming up, and the snow has thawed. Birds are chirping and are busy preparing their nests and gathering food. This activity helps the birds gather materials for their nests. With the time we have spent at home, it is a good opportunity to help them out.

Resources/materials needed: Outdoor space, twigs, leaves, dry grass (make sure the grass hadn't been treated with pesticides) feathers, Plant fluff or down (milkweed & cattail fluff, cottonwood down), moss, lichens, bark strips, pine needles, straw, hay, alpaca or sheep wool, twigs 1/2" diameter X 6-8" long

Skills: Cognitive, Motor Skills, Outdoor Appreciation, Responsibility, Respect for Others, Hand-Eye Coordination, Bird ID and Plant ID

DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Pick an outdoor space that would be safe for social distancing such as your backyard or a less populated park or trail. Bring bags to collect leaves in as well as gloves, boots and any other outdoor items you may need. Also, be aware of ticks. Check for them after you return home.

Step 2: Instruct children to keep their safe distance from others and get ready to find some natural materials for birds to make their nests!



Photo Credit: Wildlife Gadget Man



Photo Credit: All About Birds



Photo Credit: All About Birds

Guide them to find materials that would be good for birds to carry and make their nests. These materials are feathers, leaves, twigs, dry grass,

While you're outdoors, have your kid's walk like a Woodcock while they are looking for nesting materials. Maybe a Woodcock will show itself to friends! Woodcocks like living in brush filled open spaces with room to move around at ground level. They nest on the ground. Maybe you will be able to find one!

Instruct your kids to listen to the birds and watch their movements. If you know your bird identification or have a field guide handy, bring it along.

Kid's Reflection: What did you experience in the outdoors? Did you enjoy the sensation of the natural materials you gathered. Did you notice certain textures? Did you find any nests? What nesting material do you think will work best for the birds? What birds did you see? What do you like about the forest?

PART TWO - PREPARING THE BOTTLE

Creative Reuse with recyclable materials is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and help the earth, especially when it's being used to help the birds. As the recycle pickups have been halted lately due to current events, finding ways to reuse your recyclables helps pileup and promotes more sustainable living practices for the future.

Resources/materials needed: Plastic Bottles, Soap, Water, Exacto Knife/Utility Knife, String, Awl (if you have one), Large Plastic Cap (juice and milk jugs) and a Permanent Marker

Skills: Creative Problem Solving, Creative Reuse, Cognitive, Responsibility, Respect for Others, Hand-eye Coordination, and Technical Skills)

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Wash the bottle with soap and water and let dry. When the bottle is dry, Use a large circular cap or something that is around 2" diameter. Have your kids trace the cap on multiple spots around the bottle keeping at least 1/2" between the circles. Try to keep the circles in a pattern and in rows around the bottle ending in an even number.



Photo Credit: Canva



Photo Credit: Canva

Step 2: After the circles are traced onto the bottle, it is time for the adult to cut out the circles with an Exacto knife and scissors after you made the puncture if you are more comfortable that way. You can let your kids observe your cutting so they can understand safe practices for later when they are older.

Step 3: Puncture two holes right below the cap on the neck of the bottle with an awl. If you do not have an awl, you can puncture the holes with the Exacto or regular knife and push a nail through to increase the size of the hole.

Kid's Reflection: What other ideas do you have for recycled bottles to be reused creatively? What did you learn about safety of cutting from observing an adult? Did you enjoy tracing the circles?

PART THREE - DECORATING THE PIECES

Add a little flair to these bird bottles! Get colorful!

Resources/materials needed: Plastic Bottles, markers(permanent works best on plastic), stickers, paint, crayons, etc.

Skills: Hand-Eye Coordination, Technical Skills, Individual Craftsmanship, Creative Problem Solving, Self-Expression, and Whole Brain Development

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Invite your children to decorate the bottle in any creative way they would like and you see fit! These will be out in the weather, so if you put on sticks, you may want to cover with a layer of school glue. Washable markers don't bond well to plastic, so if you are using markers, permanent is the best bet. Crayons do well with textured plastic. After your done, let the bottle dry completely before moving onto the next step.

Kid's Reflection: What art medium worked best with plastic? Any challenges? Anything you want to share?

PART FOUR - STUFFING THE BOTTLES

Bring out the natural collected materials. It is time to start stuffing the Bird Nest Material Bottles

Resources/materials: Collected natural materials and twigs/sticks around 6-8" long & 1/4" diameter for holes



Photo Credit: Mess For Less



Photo Credit: Wild Bird Care Centre



Photo Credit: Wildlife Gadget Man

Skills: Cognitive, Motor, Hand-Eye Coordination, Technical Skills and Aesthetics

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Start stuffing all of the natural materials into the bottle starting at the bottom holes and working your way up. The material should be fully packed in there coming out of the holes but not so tight that they birds can't get it out. Make sure some room at the top is left so the small holes by the cap can be accessed.

Step 2: After the bottles are stuffed, it's time to insert the sticks for the birds to stand on. Each stick should go in one hole and out one as close to directly across from it on the other side of the bottle as possible.

Kid's Reflection: Did you find this part of the activity fun? Do you think the birds are going to be able to take the material out?



Photo Credit: Canva

PART FIVE - HANGING THE BOTTLE

It's time to bring out the art supplies and start adding color to your creations!

Resources/materials: Stuffed bottle, string or jute twine, tree branch/outdoor hanger/Shepherd's Hook

Skills: Cognitive, Motor Skills, Creative Problem Solving, Environmental Appreciation, Stewardship

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Find a reachable branch or somewhere on your porch to hang the bottle to be accessible to birds. If you have a Shepherd's Hook, you can stick that into the ground and hang it off of that as well.

Step 2: Cut the string or twine as close to the appropriate length depending on what you are hanging on and string it through the two opposite holes. Tie this in a loop around the branch or rod you chose.

Step 3: Watch and observe the birds taking the material for their nests! Encourage your children to draw the birds and their movements. When you run low on material, you can replenish the bottle repeatedly.

Kid's Reflection: Talk about your experience. Hope you had a great time!



Photo Credit:



Photo Credit: Canva