

Three Crafts for Beginning Birders

Just because you don't always see them, doesn't mean that all the birds have flown the coop. Bird watching is a fun way for you and your kids to get some quality time with Mother Nature. Birds teach all kinds of biology lesson to kids of any age--from learning about different species to understanding evolution! Now all you have to do is attract the birds and watch in wonder. Here's how:

Feeding your Feathered Friends

What You Need:

- Large pine cone
- Yarn
- Peanut butter or vegetable shortening (if allergies are a concern, you can use shortening, but it won't be quite as sticky)
- Bird seed
- Bowl
- Spatula

What You Do:

1. Knot a length of yarn around the pine cone so you'll be able to hang it outside.
2. Spread peanut butter all over the pine cone, then roll it in bird seed until it's well-coated.
3. Hang outside in a squirrel-hostile spot. Voila! Lunch is served!

Build a Better Birdhouse

What You Need:

- Half-gallon paper milk carton, washed and dried
- Scissors
- Masking tape
- Long straight stick or twig
- Brown marker or brown shoe polish
- String
- All-weather glue, strips of bark, and popsicle sticks (optional: these are decorative materials that will make your birdhouse more house-like)

What You Do:

1. Use the scissors to poke several holes in the top and bottom of the milk carton to allow condensation and water to escape.
2. Cut a hole in the front of the house (decide what kind of bird you want to attract, and size the door accordingly).
3. Use dull masking tape to cover the entire carton, sealing the top.
4. Have your child use the marker to color the taped exterior brown to look like natural wood, or glue strips of bark to the carton. No marker or bark? You can also use brown shoe polish for that lived-in weathered look! Popsicle sticks make a nice shingled roof, if your child is feeling industrious. And a simple perch is easy to add-- just poke a small hole on each side of the carton, about an inch below where the large opening is, slide the twig or stick through so it pokes out of each side, and *voila!*
5. Finally, poke a hole in the top, tie a loop of string through it, and hang in a quiet place where residents will be safe from predators like squirrels and snakes. Be sure to spread some seeds in the bottom to keep feathered friends feeding all year long.

Binoculars for Beginners

What You Need:

- 2 cardboard toilet paper tubes
- Yarn
- Glue
- Hole punch
- Crayons
- Stickers

What You Do:

1. Glue the two rolls together side by side. Let dry.
2. Stand the rolls upright; punch one hole on each exterior side of one end.
3. Cut a length of yarn long enough to loop through the holes and go around your child's neck. Thread the yarn through each hole and tie a knot.
4. Decorate the "binoculars" with crayons and stickers, then bring them out on a bird-watching expedition.

