

CREA Nature Investigators

MAKING A BIRD NEST

Have you ever wondered where birds keep their eggs? Maybe you've been lucky enough to see a real bird nest up close. Birds are amazing engineers who can build homes out of all sorts of things. Bird nests may look small and fragile, but don't be fooled! Nests are incredibly strong and can withstand gusts of winds and fierce storms. Today we are going to see if we can build our own birds nests out of materials we find outdoors. See if YOU can make a strong and sturdy nest!

- Start by searching for nest making materials outdoors. Birds use many different things to make nests and you can too! Some things birds like to use are dried grass, sticks, twigs, leaves, rocks, birchbark, pine needles, moss, feathers, mud, wood shavings, or even things like dental floss, yarn, string, hair and dryer lint.
- Once you have a good range of building materials it's time to think about nest design. Birds will often use strong things like twigs and mud on the outside of their nests and line the inside with soft materials like grass, pine needles, or lint to make it cozy. You can look at pictures of real bird nests for inspiration or try and model your own new design.
- Shaping the nest can be challenging. Start with small pieces and try fitting them together. We found that dried grass held together well.
- Once you are done building, test the strength of your nest. Find a few small pebbles and place them inside. Would your nest hold eggs? Would it survive a small gust of wind? What about a huge storm?

Don't be discouraged if your nest isn't entirely storm proof. Birds have nest-building skills which humans have never learned. In fact, even scientists can't figure out how to make nests that are as strong as real bird nests. This activity may give us all a new appreciation for the amazing building ability of birds.

Now that you know what birds like to use for nesting materials you can give them a helping hand. Leaving out a pile of grass clippings, small twigs, or wood shavings can encourage birds to nest in your own backyard. If you get your haircut at home try putting the cuttings outside — a bird might use your hair in its own nest.

Remember to always observe the birds in your backyard closely. Watch them fly from tree to tree, listen to their songs, and see how many different kinds you can find. In the spring you might even be able to see them fly to their nest!

POST

Welcome back Nature Investigators! Today Lily and Alex are curious about how bird nests can be strong enough to withstand storms in the tops of trees. They decide to investigate by making their very own nests. Birds build nests out of many different kinds of materials and different types of birds use different nest building techniques. While nests come in all different shapes and sizes, they all serve a very important purpose — to protect the precious eggs. Join Lily and Alex and see if you can build a sturdy nest in your own backyard. [Watch Alex and Lily](#) build their nests then read the detailed instructions.

Happy nest building!

- Alex and Lily

Here are some great books about nesting birds:

“Mama Built a Little Nest” Jennifer Ward and Steve Jenkins

“Bird Builds a Nest” Martin Jenkins and Richard Jones

“Cradles in the Tree: The Story of Bird Nests” Patricia Brennan Demuth

To see a bird nest being dissected watch Nat Wheelwright’s “[Nature Moments: How to Build a Bird’s Nest.](#)”

For Parents:

[Here is a link to Maine Audubon](#) resources for fun bird related activities for kids of all ages.