

The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™
ACTIVITY
FEEDING AND OBSERVING BIRDS



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Overview

Has your child ever pointed out birds he sees and hears while you are out and about? You can help your child learn about birds by making a simple bird feeder to attract them. Over time, you and your child may observe birds that live in your area year-round or birds that are migrating from faraway places.



The Science Idea

Many birds, like purple martins, migrate long distances in search of food and places to lay their eggs and raise their young. Some birds, like owls and sparrows, don't migrate. They stay in the same place all year long. By making and hanging bird feeders, you can help migrating and non-migrating birds find the food they need to survive. You can also observe the characteristics and behavior of birds that visit the feeder.

Skills: Observing; describing; comparing and contrasting

Age: 3–6 year olds

What to Do

- [Making and Hanging a Bird Feeder](#)
- [Observing Birds](#)
- [Take It Further](#)

Getting Ready

Have a conversation with your child about a bird he has seen or one you have pointed out to him. Invite him to describe what the bird looks like and to imitate the bird using his own body. He can pretend his arms are wings and his mouth is a beak. Introduce the idea of making a bird feeder to help birds find food, and, if possible, take him to the store with you to shop for any materials you need.

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Making and Hanging a Bird Feeder

What You Need:

- [Make a Hanging Bagel Bird Feeder](#) (directions below)
- Bagels (one for each feeder)
- Shortening
- Peanut butter (optional)
- Birdseed
- Foil pan, bowl, and spoons
- String or yarn

Print out [Make a Hanging Bagel Bird Feeder](#) (below) for directions to make a bird feeder with your child. As you make the feeder, ask your child what he thinks the visiting birds will look like. Make this into a game by asking questions like “Do you think penguins will come to the feeder? What about pigeons?” Talk together about why or why not. Taking a Walk at Night:

Hang the bagel bird feeder near a tree, or from one if possible. Be careful to hang it high enough (above 4') to avoid any cats that may bother the birds. Pick a spot where you and your child will see it at different times during the day. Remind him that it may take some time for birds to discover the feeder. In the meantime, you and your child can observe birds anywhere you go. Encourage him to spot birds by listening to the sounds they make.

Observing Birds

What You Need:

- [My Bird Observation](#) (below)
- Crayons or colored pencils for drawing
- Markers for writing

Notice and point out birds you see at or near the feeder. Encourage your child to look carefully at the birds. What does each bird look like and what is it doing? How do you think birds' feet help them to perch on or near the feeder? How do they use their beaks to get the seed? Invite him to tell you or show you. He can use [My Bird Observation](#) (below) to draw some of the birds he sees.

You can help your child notice other birds. You may see flocks of birds flying overhead in a “V” formation or looking for food in a park or by the side of the road. This is a good opportunity to introduce the idea of *migration*, that some birds travel long distances every year to find food or to lay their eggs.

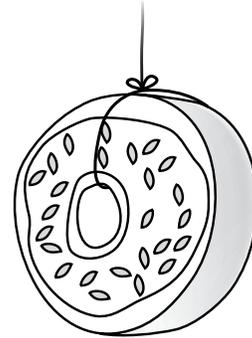
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Make a Hanging Bagel Bird Feeder

What You'll Need:

- Bagels (one for each feeder)
- Shortening
- Peanut butter (optional)
- Birdseed
- Foil pan, bowl, and spoons
- String or Yarn



This could be a messy activity, so be prepared with a wet cloth for clean-ups!

What To Do:

1. Invite your child to help you lay out all the materials on a flat protected surface.
2. Ask her to pour or scoop some birdseed into the foil pan.
3. Help her measure one half-cup of shortening in the bowl and add an equal amount of peanut butter if desired.
4. Mix well.
5. Invite her to use the spoon to spread the mixture on the bagels.
6. Once a bagel is covered with the shortening mixture, she can roll it in the pan of birdseed, using the spoon to get as much birdseed on the bagel as possible.
7. Once this is done, you can help by tying the end of a two-foot piece of string or yarn around the bagel.

Help your child hang the bird feeder outside in a protected place. You and your child can watch the different kinds of birds that visit the feeder and talk together about what you see.

Adapted from S. Osborn, Bagel Bird Feeder, About.com Guide

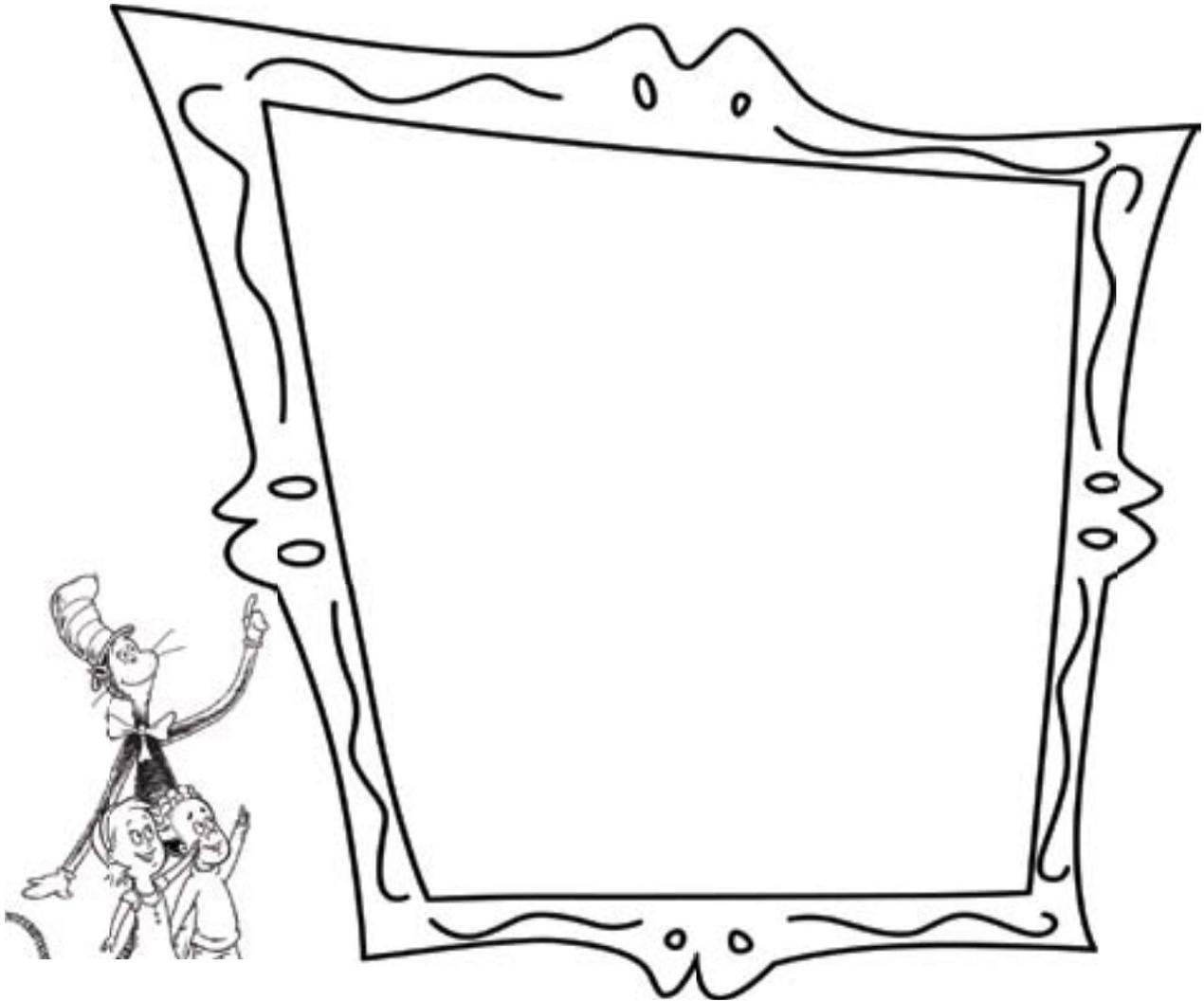
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My Bird Observation

Here's a bird that I saw!



Provide drawing materials and invite your child to draw a bird that he saw. When he is finished, ask him to tell you about it. Share what you notice about the bird, too—for example, the colors of the feathers or the shape of its beak.

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Talking About Birds:

Encourage your child to share his bird observations with other family members. Help him remember the birds he saw and describe what they looked like. Family bird observations and conversations are also a great way to introduce and use new and interesting “bird words” with your child, like *perch*, *soar*, *twitter*, *chirp*, *flock*, and *migrate*. Remember it will take time for your child to learn and use these words.

Take It Further

Replenish your feeder regularly and hang other foods birds eat like small pieces of fruit, bread, or plain donuts. Help your child compare and contrast the characteristics of different birds you see at the feeder. Which ones are bigger/smaller in size or brighter/duller in color? Invite your child to look for evidence that birds have visited when nobody is watching.

Did you know that birds need water to drink too? Supply birds with much-needed water by filling shallow containers or hanging small jugs of water. This water supply will need to be replenished frequently in areas with freezing temperatures.

More Information About Birds: National Audubon Society website “Just for Kids”:

<http://www.audubon.org/educate/kids/>

More Ways to Discover and Learn Go on an Adventure!

Visit a pond and give your child an opportunity to observe water birds. How are ducks’ bills different from other birds’ beaks? Wonder together about how the duck’s bill helps it find and eat food on and under the water. Visit a zoo or bird sanctuary to observe many different kinds of birds up close.

Literacy Connection

What You Need:

- Plain paper or notebook
- Crayons or colored pencils for drawing
- Markers for writing

Provide plain paper or a notebook and invite your child to keep a journal of his bird observations. He can make drawings of the birds he sees and you can jot down notes about how they look and behave. Encourage your child to share his journal with other family members.



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Look in a Book

Fine Feathered Friends: All About Birds (The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library™) by Tish Rabe, illustrated by Aristides Ruiz. Random House, 2010.

Lots of Flocks (The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That!™) by Tish Rabe. Golden Books, 1998.

Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey. New York: Viking Press, 1965.

New Words

Migration: The movement of animals from one place to another on a regular basis for the purposes of feeding or nesting and having young

Bird Words: perch, soar, twitter, chirp, flock

Video

Watch the related video clip at PBS Parents (www.pbsparents.org/catinthehat/)

Related Game

Play the game "Migration Adventure" at PBS KIDS (www.pbskids.org/catinthehat/games/migration-adventure.html)