



Engineer a Bird Feeder

Goal: To connect youth with their local environment by learning about native animals, encourage them to be more observant, and look at nature in a different way.

Science | Art

Adaptable for grades K-6


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Students will design their own bird feeder using recycled materials, and cater their design to a specific species of bird. Review the birds below: discuss their foraging habits, and their food source. Have students select their favorite bird. Aid students in designing a bird feeder that would meet their bird's needs.

Use recycled materials to create bird feeders, and discuss why it is important to recycle.

American Robin



©Ingrid Taylar

The American Robin forages for its favorite foods on the ground. It prefers to eat insects and fruits, such as berries, that it can find on the ground. American Robins are well known for being able to find worms extremely well underground.

A birdfeeder that would best suit an American Robin would be like a tray that is low to the ground.



© Retired person

Cedar Waxwing



© fishhawk

Cedar Waxwings are frugivorous, and eat berries and fruits right off of trees. When a Cedar Waxwing finds a berry that it would like to eat, it will swallow it whole!



© Bob Barber

Like Orchard Orioles, Cedar Waxwings would be attracted to fruit feeders. These are typically platforms, sometimes with roofs, that fruit (berries, halved oranges or apples, etc) can be placed.

Black-capped Chickadee



© Denis Fournier

In the summer, Black-capped Chickadees prefer to feed on insects, but in the winter these birds start looking for berries and seeds. They hop along tree branches looking for food under bark. They will often hang upside down or hover while searching.



© Tony Alter

Because Black-capped Chickadees search under and around tree bark for food, a good feeder to attract them is a pine cone feeder. Spread peanut butter in the gaps of the pinecone, then roll it in seeds for a nice Chickadee treat!

Blue Jay



© Robert Engberg

Blue Jays like to eat nuts, corn, grains, and seeds. Their strong bills allow them to crack open tough shells that other birds cannot break into. Blue Jays will search for food in trees and on the ground.



© fishhawk

Either a tray feeder or a classic bird feeder with nuts and seeds will attract Blue Jays.

American Goldfinch



© Kelly Colgan Azar

American Goldfinches are granivores. They prefer to eat seeds that they would find in tall grasses and prairies in the wild. It is common for American Goldfinches to hang from wherever they are getting seeds from.



© Frank Boston

Lots of people put out hanging feeders like this netted one. Goldfinches will hang from the sides of the feeder and pull seeds out of the netting.

Downy Woodpecker



© Tony Alter

Downy Woodpeckers, like other woodpeckers, search for insects that are hiding under tree bark and in tree cavities by drilling with their beaks or shaving bark off of trunks and branches.



© wplynn

Common woodpecker feeders are called suet feeders. These feeders have a fatty base, with other things mixed into it, like seeds, nuts, or dried insects. A suet feeder geared towards attracting woodpeckers would be filled with an insect-based suet block.