

# There's No Place like a Nest

## THEME

Nests make warm, cozy homes for birds to raise their young.

## SUB THEMES

1. Nest building is an important bird activity.
2. Nest construction is not a quick and easy process.
3. Different birds make different types of nests.

## VOCABULARY

Nest, predator, brood, incubation, hatchlings, fledge, habitat

## ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Felt-covered board, 'nest puzzle' pieces, binoculars (if needed), located nest(s) prior to trip, brightly-colored yarn, nest making materials (twigs, leaves, string, yarn, glue, scissors, mud, paper, etc.)

## INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and state the title of the activity. Preview the main points of the activity and give students an idea of what they will be doing. Conversationally state the theme and sub themes. Explain that everyone has a home of some type. Ask: **Why do you live in a home? What is your home like?** Explain that no matter how big or small, every home's purpose is to keep its inhabitants safe.

## ACTIVITY

Explain that nests have four main purposes, regardless of what type of bird makes the nest. Ask: **Why is it important for birds to make nests?** Explain that the four main purposes are: safety from predators, protection from the elements for egg incubation, a cradle for hatchlings, and a hang out (called a 'roost') for the adults to rest. As the students bring up these points, have them come up to the front to put together a piece of the 'nest puzzle' diagram until all the pieces are in place (the completed diagram will have a nest on a branch with eggs, a hatchling, and an adult). Explain that when one of these pieces is missing, the bird and its young may be at risk.

Next, allow the students to look at some nests around the area. Have them use binoculars if needed. Explain that a lot of time and energy goes into building a nest. Ask: **What materials were used to make that nest?** Explain that birds use a variety of materials, including twigs, grass, leaves, mud, rocks, tinfoil, ribbons, string, and even animal hair. Have the students point out where birds may get these materials from and some places that might be good to build a nest around the property. Hand out a piece of brightly-

## Teacher's Corner

### Grade Level(s)

4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>

### State Performance Indicators

#### SPI 0407

-2.1: Recognize the impact of predation and competition on an ecosystem.

-4.1: Draw conclusions about the relationship between reproduction and the survival of a species.

-5.1: Determine how a physical or behavioral adaptation can enhance the chances of survival.

#### SPI 0507

-2.1: Describe the different types of nutritional relationships that exist among organisms.

-5.1: Identify physical and behavioral adaptations that enable animals such as amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals to survive in a particular environment.

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### ACTIVITY (cont.)

colored yarn to each student. Instruct them to place their yarn on a shrub or low hanging tree for birds to collect and use in nest making. Pictures of nests containing the yarn will be emailed to the teacher and/or available on the website.

Next, tell the students that they are going to make their very own “nest” to bring home. Pass around the example handmade nest for the students to get some ideas. Tell them that they can look at the pictures of nests to get some more ideas. Show the students which supplies they can use. Give them 10-15 minutes to complete their nests. Allow each student to show the group what they made.

Bring the group back together for the discussion.

### DISCUSSION

Explain the importance of nests in caring for eggs and young until they are strong enough to fledge, or leave the nest. Ask: **If a bird was not able to build a nest that could keep its young safe, what would happen to the young? What are some things that can affect how well a nest is made** (lack of habitat, abundance of predators, outdoor cats, pollution, weather extremes, etc.)? Explain that the ability to produce young helps a species survive. If birds are not able to construct good nests each year, it can impact the entire species.

### WRAP-UP

Let the group know that the activity is coming to an end. Conversationally review the theme and sub themes. Collect the datasheets. Give the teachers any of the materials that students are able to take home with them. Encourage students to ‘look but not touch’ a nest that they find around their homes and school because know they know how important nests are for birds.

### BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Bring some hard-boiled eggs from home for the students to observe and have each student draw the face of a baby bird on their egg. Explain that the egg holds nutrition for the baby bird. The hard shell keeps it safe when the mother or father bird sits on the egg to incubate it. The shell also keeps the egg at a constant temperature while the baby bird forms inside. Have the students carry their egg around for the day with the task of keeping it safe.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Copyright © 2008 Healing Stones Foundation. All rights reserved.
- Activity developed by Melissa Squirlock; February 2008.
- Gill, Frank. (1990). Ornithology. W.H. Freeman and Co. New York. pp.341-9.