



Content Strand: Living things, Environmental awareness & care

Cross-curricular relevance:

- SESE - Living things, environmental awareness & care, recording, observing
- Maths - Counting, estimating, recording, active learning
- Geography - Maps, globes and graphical skills, recording and communicating
- History - Cause and effect, using evidence
- Literacy - Writing, spelling
- Art - Construction

Title: Make a Bird Feeder Christmas Tree

Class: 4th, 5th, 6th



Background Information

Citizen science is where ordinary people help scientists to answer ‘real-world’ questions. People do this by volunteering their time and noting down observations of a particular thing, such as birds, frogs and flowers. These observations are then sent to the scientists who analyze the results. Without ordinary people scientists wouldn’t have the time to collect the information themselves and so many of their questions would never be answered. For this reason citizen science is very important, as well as being fun!

BirdWatch Ireland depends on citizen science for many of its surveys. Their most popular citizen science project is the Garden Bird Survey. This helps them to monitor Irish garden birds across the whole of Ireland. The results of the survey are compared to previous year’s results and often this can indicate if certain bird populations are declining or increasing. Gardens are becoming ever more important for many species, and it is vital to know how their populations are faring.

In addition birds are a great indicator species. This means that they act as an early warning system. This is similar to the caged canary in the coal mine. If dangerous gases such as carbon monoxide leaked into the mine, the gases would kill the canary before killing the miners, therefore providing a warning to exit the mine immediately. So as an indicator species, any changes in bird populations (increases, decreases, absence) may indicate that something is happening in the environment and so scientists are alerted to this.

The BirdWatch Ireland Garden Bird Survey takes place from December through to February each year. BirdWatch Ireland are now encouraging schools to take part and become citizen scientists! This survey can be done at school by filling in a form or online. This is an excellent school project, especially for those schools that are on the Biodiversity theme of the Green Flag programme. The best way to encourage birds into the school grounds is to feed them. For additional information on birds see November’s activity sheet. These bird feeders are also great gifts for Christmas or for a school Christmas sale.

Additional notes

1. Some children may be allergic to peanuts. To avoid this replace the peanuts with other bird seeds and the peanut butter with lard. Lard may be more difficult to clean off hands and clothes.
2. Make sure to remove any leftovers after the birds have eaten the food, e.g. wool, thread.

Popcorn tinsel

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| Equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Popcorn (plain, not salted or sweetened) - Strong thread - Sewing needles - A towel |
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| Activity | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thread 50cm of the strong thread onto the sewing needle. 2. Carefully thread a couple of pieces of popcorn onto the thread using the needle. Do this by placing the popcorn onto the towel, hold it steady with one hand, push the needle and thread downwards towards the towel. Once the needle has gone through, pick up the popcorn and push the needle through the rest of the way. This stops any fingers getting pricked! Also try to thread the popcorn through the softest part (avoid the dark brown kernel). 3. Push the popcorn down to the end of the thread. Make a small loop around this popcorn and tie the thread to itself, so that there is now a loop at this end of the thread. This will be used to hang the popcorn from a branch and stops the popcorn falling off the end of the thread. 4. Continue to thread popcorn onto the thread. Don't pack the popcorn on too tightly. 5. Once full tie the string back on itself in a loop, like the other end. Hook these ends from the branches of the tree. For extra strength loop the popcorn tinsel around extra branches as you decorate the tree. |
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Pinecone baubles

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| Equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pinecones - Knitting wool - Peanut butter - Spoon / Butter knife <p>(Optional extra: bird seed or uncooked porridge oats)</p> |
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| Activity | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using about 20cm of wool, knot some tightly around the middle of the cone. Make sure to leave extra twine so the pinecone can be hung on the tree. 2. Fill the gaps in the pinecone with peanut butter (using a spoon or hands!). 3. The pinecone can be rolled or decorated in the additional seeds/oats. 4. Hang on a tree. |
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Apple lanterns

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| Equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apples - Knife (for cutting the apples) - Raisins, cranberries or sultanas - Knitting wool - Large sewing needle (such as one used in knitting) |
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| Activity | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut an apple into circles but cutting it vertically (so the apple core can be seen at the centre of every circle – see the picture on page 1). Each apple should give at least four circles. 2. Thread the large needle with approximately 40cm of wool. Tie a knot in one end. 3. Thread some cranberries and raisins onto the wool. Push these down to the knot. 4. Then thread the apple circle through its centre (the core). Push this down towards the other cranberries and raisins. 5. Thread on more cranberries and raisins, followed by more apple. Repeat this until the entire apple has been used or until the wool is nearly all covered. 6. Tie a knot in the wool the top end of the decoration. Tie the extra wool into a loop to hang off a tree branch. |
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Bread baubles

Equipment

- Bread (brown bread is best for the birds)
 - A mixture of different bird seed (e.g. nyger seeds, peanuts, sunflower seeds)
 - Peanut butter
 - Butter knife
 - Scone or cookie cutters (different shapes, e.g.. Christmas trees, Gingerbread men, stars).
- Note: An empty glass will do if there are no cutters available.
- Knitting wool
 - Knitting needle



Activity

1. Gather up old pieces of bread. Stale bread is ideal but if there is only fresh bread available toast it and then let it cool.
2. Cut the bread into various shapes (in this case Christmas trees – see picture on page 1).
3. Using a knitting needle pierce the bread and push some wool through the hole. Tie the thread so that it is a loop.
4. Butter the pieces of bread with peanut butter. They can be hung out like this or decorated with bird seed.
5. Hang on a tree.

Safety

- Activities involving any needles are only suitable for older children.
- Only adults should use sharp knives.

Follow-up Activities

See Novembers activity sheet for follow up activities relating to birds.

