Observing: A Bird's Nest

From floating platform nests to nests in the grass, observe these structures used to lay eggs and rear young.

Observing:

- becoming aware of
- watching attentively
- making a scientific observation of
- taking notice

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A Note to the Parent/Teacher...

This unit is part of the Observing Series by homeschool bits. The Observing Series will contain information, facts, photos, how to observe, projects, and activities. This unit is suggested for grades K–3 but is very flexible for higher grades.

I like to create my units and lessons by observing my own children's responses to different styles of teaching. My children seem to enjoy it when the unit or lesson speaks directly to them. When you read a lesson like this to the child, they tend to feel more 'involved'.

I hope you enjoy this unit. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or complaints, please email me at:

homeschoolbits@yahoo.com

You can also visit my blog at:

http://homeschoolbits.blogspot.com/

The 'homeschool bits' blog has photos of some units for sale, completed by my children, along with some other bits and pieces of our homeschool. Feel free to come by and leave a comment!

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Do you know that different types of birds build different types of nests? Birds build their nests in a variety of places, from on the ground to floating platform nests in wet areas. The type of nest that a bird builds depends on the surrounding habitat. A habitat is a place where animals or plants get what they need to survive: food, water, cover, and a place to raise young.

The purpose of a nest is for birds to have a protected, warm place to incubate their eggs and then to raise their young once they hatch. Incubate means to sit upon the eggs for the purpose of hatching.

Most birds start to build their nest in the spring, around the month of March, but some birds start building their nest around January of February. Large birds build larger nests, while small birds build smaller nests. You can tell how large a bird is just by looking at its nest! A bird knows exactly what size to build its nest so it will hold their eggs. There are five major types of bird nests:

cavity

cup

pendulum

platform

spherical
Five Major Types of Bird Nests

A cavity nest is a hollowed-out opening in the trunk of a tree. Some examples of cavity nesting birds are chickadees, nuthatches, and bluebirds, and woodpeckers.

A cup nest is cup-shaped. The outside of the nest is made with thick materials, and the inside of the nest is usually soft to cushion the eggs and keep them warm. Some examples of cup nesting bird are sparrows, finches, thrushes, and hummingbirds.

A pendulum nest is built into a pendulum shape, or hanging sac-like shape, usually suspended from a small tree branch. Some examples of pendulum nesting birds are Bushtits, kinglets, and orioles.
A platform nest is mostly flat and supported by tree limbs. Some examples of platform nesting birds are Scrub Jays, Crows and Ravens, and also birds in the raptor group such as hawks and eagles. Platform nests built by birds in the raptor group are very large and usually are found at the tops of large dead trees.

A spherical nest is globe or ball-shaped, with a single opening or hole on one side. Some examples of spherical nesting birds are Sedge, Marsh, and Cactus Wrens.

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**Edible Bird's Nest**

**Ingredients:**
- Chow mein noodles
- Chocolate chips
- Wax paper
- Paper plates

**Recipe:**
Place squares of wax paper onto individual plates. Put chow mein noodles in a large bowl. Melt chocolate chips in the microwave, or over low heat on stove, just until melted. Pour melted chocolate over chow mein noodles, mix together to coat.

Optional:
- Add candy 'eggs' or jellybeans!

Place mounds of chocolate/chow mein mixture on top of waxed paper. Form the mixtures into nests. Be sure the chocolate has cooled, but don’t wait too long or it will harden.
Different types of birds use different types of materials to build their nest. The materials used to build a nest depends on the bird's surrounding habitat. Some birds use twigs and sticks, while others use grasses and weed stems. Since a bird uses things it can find to build its nest, it will even use bits of trash, or mud.

In the spring, you can try offering nesting materials for birds in your area. Some things you could try leaving out (in a box, on the tops of bushes, etc.) are grass clippings, pet fur that you have brushed from your pet, small strips of cloth, yarn, or a pile of small sticks.

Another fun activity is to observe a bird's nest. Maybe sometime in late summer, you can find an empty nest outside, bring it inside and observe it. Never take a nest that is occupied or being built! Most birds do not come back to the exact same nesting spot they used the year before, but most do come back to the same area, or state. If you observe a birds nest, try to figure out if the bird that built the nest was a large or small bird. Did it build the nest to hold small eggs or large eggs? You might want to write a list of materials the bird used to build the nest.

If you cannot find an empty nest outside, you can build your own nest! Follow the instructions on the following page. Make sure you gather your materials first. Get your parent or teacher to help you. Think about the type of nest you want to make. Do you want to make a nest that resembles a cavity, cup, pendulum, platform, or spherical nest?
**Materials Needed:**

Modeling clay

Assortment of nesting materials (example list below)

- Twigs or sticks
- Dead leaves
- Grass clippings or dead grass
- Yarn, string or thread
- Human hair or animal fur
- Feathers
- Cattail fluff
- Moss or lichen
- Pine needles
- Mud
- Pebbles or small rocks
- Spider web silk
- Straw or other plant stems
- Dental floss
- Shredded paper
- Broom bristles or mop string
- Cotton balls

**Instructions:**

Shape the modeling clay into the shape of a bird's nest. This will vary depending on the style and shape that you would like your nest to be. Line the inside and outside of your nest with the items you have gathered. You may need to press some of the items into the clay, or create a type of 'weave'. Be creative!
Vocabulary Copywork

A **habitat** is a place where animals or plants get what they need to survive: food, water, cover, and a place to raise young.

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

**Incubate** means to sit upon the eggs for the purpose of hatching.

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Vocabulary Match

*habitat*  
to sit upon the eggs for the purpose of hatching

*incubate*  
a place where animals or plants get what they need to survive
Do you remember? Circle the correct answer.

1. The type of nest that a bird builds depends on the surrounding
   mountains        habitat

2. Most birds start to build their nest in the
   spring            winter

3. You can tell how large a bird is by looking at its
   feathers          nest
Would like to learn more about bird nests? If so, ask permission to view these interesting websites!

All about bird nests:

http://birding.about.com/od/birdprofiles/ig/Wild-Bird-Nests/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bird_nest

http://www.earthlife.net/birds/nests.html

Watch various birds building their nest:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuwJVPm-DhM&feature=related

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ixj7UVA8uKQ&feature=related

Bird nest photos:

http://www.50birds.com/gnest11.htm

Thank you for purchasing this unit!

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