



Make a Bird Feeder

What will you do?

In this activity you will make a bird feeder filled with a 'fat ball', and then learn how to identify some of the birds you might see in your garden or around your home.

In springtime many birds are beginning to look for a mate or are already in the middle of building nests, laying eggs and raising chicks. It's a very stressful time, so to do this, they need lots of energy.

A 'fat ball' or 'bird cake' is something full of energy that can help you to give the birds in your garden, or local green space, a helping hand.

What will you need?

This activity uses or may have been in contact with some foodstuffs - including nuts, seeds, dairy and peanuts - that in some people may cause an allergic reaction.

Like all experiments, ensure you have permission from an adult and their supervision before starting. This experiment can be messy. So, it is best NOT to do it on the living room carpet!

To make your bird feeder and 'fat ball' you will need:

Lard (alternatives include beef or vegetable suet, peanut butter, or almond butter mixed with flour)

Bird seed

Some chopped apples, bananas, sultanas, or raisins

A clean yoghurt pot

Some string

A bowl

A pencil



How to do this experiment

Step 1. To start, carefully make two small holes in the bottom of a clean and empty yoghurt pot with your pencil.

Step 2. Thread the string through the holes and tie a knot on the inside. Leave enough string so that you can tie the pot to a tree or your bird table.

Step 3. Allow the lard to warm up to room temperature, but don't melt it. Then cut it up into small pieces and put it in the mixing bowl.

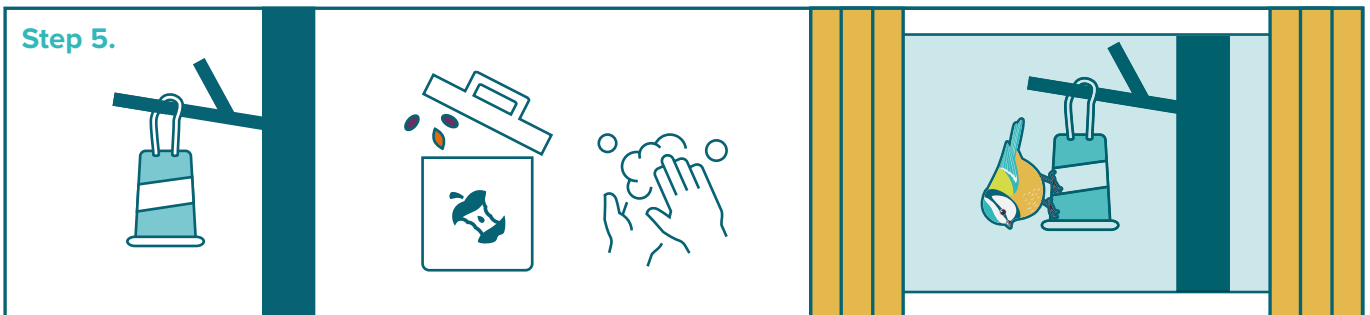
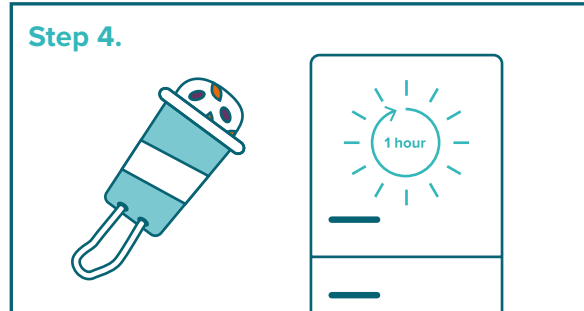
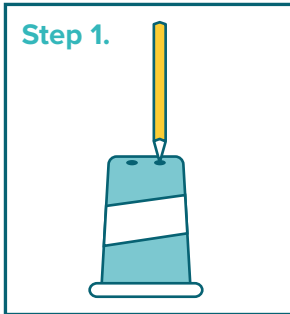
Add the other ingredients to the bowl and mix them together with your fingertips. Keep adding the bird seed, raisins, chopped apples or bananas and squidding it until the fat holds it all together.

Step 4. Fill your yoghurt pots with bird cake mixture and put them in the fridge to set for an hour or so.

Step 5. Hang your bird cakes from trees or your bird table. But do make sure to do this in your own garden or green space, and make sure to tidy up any mess after your feeder is empty, to stop birds eating rotten food and so that you don't attract rats.

You can then go back inside, wash your hands thoroughly, and watch the birds from your window.

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More to try

Count the different species of birds that you see and keep a record of them. If you can, try to figure out which family groups they are in and let us know what you have found.

Join the Garden Birdwatch, www.bto.org/gbw which is a citizen science project researching garden wildlife being run by the British Trust for Ornithology.

Fun facts

Birds belong to the class, Aves. There are over 10,000 different and very diverse species of birds alive today around the world. All of them have feathers, a defining characteristic of Aves, found on no other class of animal.

Scientists use the different characteristics of birds to identify them and put them into family groups. These characteristics could be, for example, their size, colours, or wing shape.

When the famous scientist, Charles Darwin, was trying to understand evolution, he used the different shaped beaks of finches to tell them apart. The variation he found between species across the Galapagos Islands, in beak form and function, helped him to develop his theory of natural selection.

Another useful way to identify a species of birds, especially when you can't see them, is to listen to their song. You can listen to many examples of bird song from around the world on the website, Xeno Canto: www.xeno-canto.org

Share your bird feeder with us on social media using #GSCAtHome

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