

# Bird Buffet



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## Overview

Decorating a special class tree for birds is a meaningful activity that will grant students a valuable interaction with wildlife. Students will prepare various treats for birds either at home or in the classroom, decorate the class tree with the edibles, and then note the resulting bird sightings. This activity can be completed anytime during the year or as an ongoing project, but it will be especially exciting when birds are foraging for food before a big snow.

## Grade Levels

K-5

## Curriculum Correlation

K.L.1.2, 1.L.1.1, 1.L.1.2, 1.L.1.3, 1.L.2.2, 2.G.2.2, 3.G.1.3, 4.L.1.1, 4.L.1.2, 4.L.1.3, 5.G.1.2

## Duration

15 minutes if the bird treats are already prepared

## Location

Outdoors

## Materials

Each child should have at least one item to add to the class tree. This activity will be most meaningful if students have made the bird treat themselves, either at home or as a class.

### Assortment of bird food and treats including but not limited to:

- Suet and suet cages
- Bird feeder and bird seed
- Cheerios strung on pipe cleaners
- Popcorn and berries sewn on thread
- Orange peel halves filled with birdseed
- Pine cones or toilet paper rolls covered in peanut butter and birdseed
- Nyjer seed in mesh sacks
- Orange and apple slices covered in peanut butter
- Seed cakes made with unflavored gelatin or rendered suet
- Binoculars

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## Educators Information

This activity capitalizes on the special relationship that students have formed with their “class tree” that they have been observing weekly throughout the school year. Parents can be encouraged to create bird treats with their child at home and send them in, or this can be done as a class activity. It’s fun to see what the children bring in for wildlife and how creative some get .One of my students made a gingerbread house for the animals covered in honey, seeds, and raisins! Options could include peanut butter and birdseed covered pine cones, seed cakes made with unflavored gelatin, suet, or shortening/peanut butter, popcorn and berry strings, Cheerios strung on pipe cleaners, or fruit slices spread with peanut butter, birdseed, or meal worms. Ensure that each student has at least one object to hang on the tree. My class did this activity the day before snowfall and our tree was absolutely swarmed with birds foraging in preparation for the inclement weather.



## Procedure

1. Have students prepare treats for the birds either at home or as a class activity. Ensure that each child has at least one object to hang on the tree.
2. Have a class discussion about what wildlife the treats may be likely to attract, and why. Of course birds will be drawn to the food, but what other mammals may pay a visit? What birds is it reasonable to expect, and what birds would not be reasonable to expect? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Common Feeder Birds graphic would be useful to show students which birds prefer which foods.
3. Look up the weather forecast with students and predict how the weather may affect animals’ foraging behaviors.
4. Visit the class tree and allow students to decorate the class tree with the wildlife treats. This can be in conjunction with your weekly Project EXPLORE tree observation, or as a separate activity.

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5. Introduce common species of feeder birds depending on your location. The Wild Birds link in the resources section is a great visual.

6. Allow your students the opportunity to observe birds feeding at the class tree from a location in which they will not disturb the birds. Ideally, this would be through your class window, but this may need to be some distance from your class tree outside and students can use binoculars.



## Extensions

Depending on the age of your students, you may wish to have them record their observations by drawing their favorite bird they see, checking off bird species on a regional list the teacher has prepared, or using a bird field guide.

These findings can be uploaded to a birding Citizen Science platform such as ebird, Project FeederWatch, or Great Backyard Bird Count.

### Mathematics Extension:

You could also have students predict which bird treat will be the most popular and create a bar graph comparing how many birds were observed feeding on each treat in a given time span. Students could be organized in groups responsible for recording data for each treat category to ensure accurate data.



## Supplemental Reading

- Night Tree, by Eve Bunting
- Annie and the Wild Animals, by Jan Brett
- Birds in Your Backyard, by Barbara Herkert
- Cooking for the Birds, by Adele Porter
- Backyard Birds of Winter, by Carol Lerner
- Riki's Birdhouse, by Monica Wellington
- Crinkleroot's Guide to Knowing the Birds, by Jim Arnosky

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## Resources

- [Cornell Lab of Ornithology Common Feeder Birds ID](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation Attracting Birds to Your Garden](#)
- <http://wilderchild.com/decorating-outdoor-edible-tree-for-the-animals/>
- [Great Backyard Bird Count Printable Bird Checklist by Locale](#)
- [Identify common feeder birds](#)



## Photos

