

Nature and Conservation



Suggested maximum, six at any one time



15 minutes

Pine cone bird feeder

(as some 'cooking' is involved, six boys at a time with careful supervision)

Equipment:

- A selection of large fir cones which are dried and fully open – one per person (These could be collected during the summer on a day out)
- String or thin garden wire
- Lard or suet (approx 100 gs per cone), raisins, unsalted peanuts, sunflower seeds (without the husks), bird seed or wild bird food. (Various types of bird food can be bought quite cheaply from garden centres or pet shops)
- A large saucepan, plastic cooking spoons and access to a cooking hob
- Large paper plates, plastic knives and spoons

Instructions:

1. Tie a loop of string, or garden wire approx 30cm long around the top of the fir cone so that it can be hung in the garden. Tie it tightly about three sections down the cone.
2. Put the lard or suet into a large saucepan and slowly melt, don't get it too hot.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the other ingredients.
4. When the mixture has cooled slightly, place the cones on paper plates and spoon some of the mixture onto each fir cone using plastic spoons making sure that the mixture is cool enough first. It is important to get the mixture down in between all the spines.
5. Place the finished feeders onto paper plates until the mixture has set.

This activity can be completed in one session. If it's done early on in the evening, the feeders should be dried enough for the boys to take home.

A bird feeder from a re-cycled plastic milk bottle

(as some 'cooking' is involved, in part two, six boys at a time with careful supervision)

Equipment:

- Plastic milk bottles, one per boy which have been carefully washed; you will need to keep the plastic screw caps too. The one-litre square bottles work best
- Scissors and a craft knife
- String
- Lard or suet (approx 200 gs per bottle), raisins, unsalted peanuts, sunflower seeds (without the husks), bird seed or wild bird food. (Various types of bird food can be bought quite cheaply from garden centres or pet shops)
- A large saucepan, plastic cooking spoons and access to a cooking hob
- Plastic spoons



Take care to find out if any of your boys have a nut allergy, the first two activities can still be done without using peanuts.

But ALL the boys should then make the first two birdfeeders without using nuts to ensure there is no danger of contact with peanuts.

Instructions:

1. Cut a small hole (approx 30mm square for small birds) in the front of the plastic bottle two thirds of the way down on the opposite side to the handle on the bottle. Leaders may want to make the first cut into the plastic using a craft knife leaving the boys to finish this off with scissors. Some extra supervision may be needed here. Don't make the hole too large otherwise the larger birds will get all the food!
2. Put the lard or suet into a large saucepan and slowly melt, don't get it too hot.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the other ingredients.
4. When the mixture has cooled slightly, spoon some of the mixture into the base of the bottle (to a depth of 4 or 5 cms).
5. Tie a loop of string approx 30 cms long around the handle of the bottle so that the feeder can be hung in the garden.
6. Put the screw caps onto the bottles, these stop the rain from spoiling the bird food.
7. Leave the mixture to set.

This activity can be completed in one session. If it's done early on in the evening, the feeders should be dried enough for the boys to take home.

A bird feeder made from threaded peanuts

Equipment:

- Darning needles and wool, enough for one darning needle for each boy
- Peanuts in their shells

Instructions:

1. Thread a length of wool approx 40 cms long onto the darning needle, tie a knot at one end.
2. Thread this through the centres of the peanut shells until you have 20 to 25 nuts threaded.
3. Remove the darning needle from the length of wool.
4. Tie a loop at the top of the string of peanuts so that it can be hung in the garden.

You could use this activity to look at the world trade in peanuts. A 'Google' Internet search on 'fairtrade peanuts' will give you some resources. The USA is the main producer of peanuts and gives valuable crop subsidies to their own farmers. Many third world producers struggle to sell their peanuts at a fair price.

The boys can take the bird feeders home and hang them in the garden; it may take a few days for the birds to feel safe with the feeders. You could do another activity in a few weeks to see what birds have been using the feeders. The RSPB web site has some downloadable material www.rspb.org.uk and an A to Z of garden birds. Alternatively, there are books in the library.

The RSBP:

The RSPB run schemes for youth and children's groups including the 'Great Garden Bird Watch' and provide free packs of information for leaders. Boys can then take part in the annual RSPB survey of garden birds.