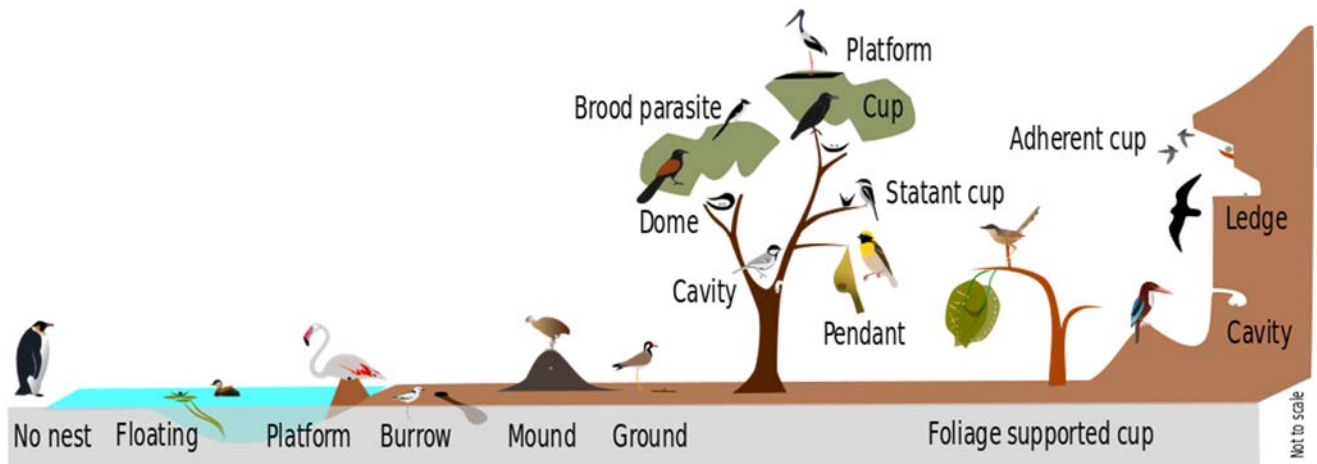


# Build a Bird Nest

## How and why do birds build nests?

A bird nest is the place in which a bird lays and incubates its eggs and raises its young. A nest can be a shallow depression in sand, a cavity in a broken tree branch, a burrow dug in the ground, a chamber drilled into a tree, a rotting pile of vegetation, a shelf of dried saliva and mud, or a cup-like structure built of natural materials like sticks, grass, and moss. Some birds don't ever build nests, and instead lay their eggs directly on the ground or rocky ledges. Most birds build a new nest each year although some birds, like eagles, will build onto their old nests.



In most bird species the female does most or all of the nest construction although the male often helps. In some species such as crows, the young from previous broods may also act as helpers for the adults.

## Nest building behavior

Building a nest takes time and is typically built to raise young or to protect the eggs during incubation. The nest provides birds with support and insulation, concealment from predators, and shelter from rain. If you watch your backyard birds outside your home you may be able to see them building their nests. Some behaviors to look for are birds gathering sticks, grasses, mosses, and other plant material in their beaks and then flying off. You may see birds pecking a hole in a tree and coming in and out of it with wood shavings or other plant materials. You may also notice a bird flying back and forth to and from one exact spot (most likely the nest site). You may even be lucky enough to see them actually building a nest where you can watch the progress!


## Build your own bird nest


Below are six common backyard birds with information about their nests such as materials, location, and size. You will be selecting at least two different bird nests to create, so pay particular attention to the dimensions and materials so you can recreate them accurately.





City of Edmonds Discovery Programs  
Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department  
700 Main Street Edmonds, WA 98020


## Common backyard bird nests


<p><b>Anna's Hummingbird</b> <i>Calypte anna</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	1.5 Inches
Nest Depth	1 Inch
Nest Material	<p>Nest Interior: cattail, willow, leaves, thistle, or small feathers and bound together by spider webs.</p> <p>Nest Exterior: lichens, mosses and even paint chips.</p>
Nest Location	Horizontal branch of tree or shrub 6-20 feet off the ground.
Number of Eggs	2

<p><b>Dark-eyed Junco</b> <i>Junco hyemalis</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	3.5-5 Inches
Nest Depth	1.6-2.8 Inches
Nest Material	<p>Nest Interior: grasses, pine needles, ferns, rootlets, hair, and fine pieces of moss.</p> <p>Nest Exterior: Twigs, leaves, and moss.</p>
Nest Location	Horizontal branches, window ledges, flower pots, tangled roots, rock face.
Number of Eggs	3-6

<p><b>Spotted Towhee</b> <i>Pipilo maculatus</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	4.5 Inches
Nest Depth	2.5 Inches
Nest Material	<p>Nest Interior: grasses, rootlets, pine needles, and hair.</p> <p>Nest Exterior: dry leaves, stems, and bark strips.</p>
Nest Location	On the ground or near it in a thicket.
Number of Eggs	2-6













<p><b>American Robin</b></p> <p><i>Turdus migratorius</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	6-8 Inches
Nest Depth	3-6 Inches
Nest Material	Nest Interior: fine dry grass. Nest Exterior: dead grass, twigs, paper, feathers, rootlets, moss and mud.
Nest Location	Horizontal branches on the lower half of a tree.
Number of Eggs	3-5

<p><b>Steller's Jay</b></p> <p><i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	10-17 Inches
Nest Depth	2.5-3.5 Inches
Nest Material	Nest Interior: pine needles, soft rootlets, or animal hair. Nest Exterior: stems, leaves, moss and sticks held together by mud.
Nest Location	Horizontal branches close to trunk near the top of a conifer.
Number of Eggs	2-6

<p><b>American Crow</b></p> <p><i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i></p>	
Nest Diameter	6-19 Inches
Nest Depth	4-15 Inches
Nest Material	Nest Interior: pine needles, weeds, soft bark, and animal hair. Nest Exterior: medium sized twigs.
Nest Location	Horizontal branch close to the trunk of the tree, preferring to nest in conifers.
Number of Eggs	3-9

In order to build your nests, you'll also need to know what materials birds use for construction.

**Common construction materials**

<p>Animal Hair</p> 	<p>Moss</p> 	<p>Grass</p> 
<p>Lichen</p> 	<p>Leaves</p> 	<p>Small Twigs</p> 
<p>Medium Twigs</p> 	<p>Pine Needles</p> 	<p>Small Feathers</p> 
<p>Bark</p> 	<p>Rootlets</p> 	<p>Ferns</p> 

## **How to build your bird nests**

### **Materials you'll need:**

- Bird nest information
- Ruler or tape measure
- Small cup of water
- Scavenged nest materials
- Salt dough (recipe below)

### **Instructions:**

1. Read about your selected birds and their nests.
2. Collect the nest materials they use from your backyard or surrounding neighborhood.
3. Make a batch of salt dough.
4. Use the dough to create the structure of your nest, making sure that the nest is the proper depth and diameter.
5. Press in and weave the gathered nest materials. For this you may need to wet your fingers, rub the dough and then press your nest materials into it. Some nesting materials are only used on the outside of the nest while other materials are used to line the inside of the nest. It is okay if you cannot find all the nest materials the bird uses, do your best and work with what you have.

## Salt Dough Recipe:

1 Cup Salt



2 Cups Flour



$\frac{3}{4}$  Cup Water



1. In large bowl mix salt and flour together.







2. Gradually stir in water. Mix well until a doughy consistency forms.



3. Use your hands to knead the dough until smooth and combined.



## Hummingbird Nest Example:

<p>1. Roll a ball of dough out roughly the size of the nest.</p>	
<p>2. Press and shape with your hands until you get a cup. Measure to see if it is the proper nest diameter and depth.</p>	
<p>3. Once the nest is the proper depth and diameter use the collected nest materials to press into the dough. You may need to wet your fingers and the dough for materials to stick.</p>	
<p>4. Now you have a completed bird nest. You can leave it out and in a week the dough will be dry and you'll have your very own bird nest!</p>	

## Glossary

<b>Broods</b>	A group of young birds or other animals hatched or born at the same time to one mother.
<b>Concealment</b>	To hide or keep hidden from sight.
<b>Diameter</b>	A straight line from one side of a circle or sphere to the other that passes through the center, the length of this line or otherwise known as the width of a circle, sphere or cylinder.
<b>Exterior</b>	On or having to do with the outside.
<b>Incubate</b>	To keep warm until time to hatch.
<b>Insulate</b>	To cover, line, or surround with a material that reduces or stops the movement of heat, electricity, or sound.
<b>Interior</b>	Being inside or within.
<b>Lichen</b>	A living thing that is a fungus and a form of algae or special bacteria living together. The algae or the bacteria use photosynthesis to make food for the fungus. There are many kinds of lichens with different colors, such as green, gray, black, or red. They can look like scales, crusts, or branches. Lichens live on rocks and other places where there is no soil.
<b>Nest</b>	A structure used by a bird to lay eggs and rear young. Other animals also make nests to raise young.
<b>Predator</b>	An animal that hunts other animals for food.
<b>Rootlet</b>	A small root or branch of a root.