

Pine Cone Birds

Overview:

Turn pine cones into colorful birds.

Objectives:

Understand what makes a bird a bird. Identify some common birds in North Iowa.

Links to Iowa Core:

Life Science (Grades K-2): Students will understand and apply knowledge of the characteristics of living things and how living things are both similar to and different from each other and from non-living things.

Life Science (Grades 3-5): Students will understand and apply knowledge of organisms and their environments, including structures, characteristics, and adaptations of organisms that allow them to function and survive within their habitats.

Time: About 1 hour...could be spread out among several days.

Materials:

- Pine cones of different sizes
- Acorn or other nut
- Flexible wire or long pipe cleaner
- Construction paper
- Tacky glue or hot glue (with adult supervision)
- Scissors
- Paints (acrylics work best) and paint brushes
- Pictures of birds or bird guide

Procedure:

1. Look at some pictures of birds and select a bird to use as a model. Or have students use the Lime Creek Nature Center Webcam (http://www.co.cerro-gordo.ia.us/Conservation/Conservation_NatureCenter_Webcam.cfm) to choose their bird. Jays, chickadees, cardinals, finches, and owls make good models.
2. Choose a small pine cone that matches the shape of the bird's body. Cones that are fully opened work best.
3. Wrap about a foot of wire or a long pipe cleaner tightly around the middle of the pine cone, leaving about 3 inches free on each end. Shape the two ends into feet. Make sure the feet are close to the body and that they face forward, toward the wider end of the cone.
4. Put a dot of tacky glue or hot glue where the head should be. Attach the rounded end of the acorn.
5. To make wings, break off two scales from a large pine cone, Use scissors to trim the wings into shape and then glue them in place.

6. To make the bird's tail, break off a very large pine scale. Glue it in place so that it helps the bird stand up. (The feet and tail should act as a tripod to hold the bird up.)
7. To make a beak, cut out a small construction paper triangle. Fold it in half and glue it to the end of the nut. To make a crest for a jay or cardinal, cut out a small circle from construction paper. Fold the circle in half and glue it on top of the nut. Let the glue dry completely.
8. Paint the bird, making sure that you get the paint down inside the cone scales as far as possible. Also, paint on eyes, markings, and other features.

Discussion:

Tell the students some fun facts about pine cones and birds. For example, pine trees produce two kinds of cones: tiny male cones, which bear pollen, and the more familiar female cones, which bear seeds. Jays, nuthatches, chipmunks, mice, and other animals eat the seeds that grow on the undersides of a pine cone's scales.

*From:

“Pine Cone Birds.” *Ranger Rick's NatureScope Wild and Crafty*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1998. 34-35.

