

Bird-friendly Crafts

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Last week at Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, I hosted a week-long day camp for children focused on nature and birds. We had a very full schedule, including birding walks, a beach day, and bird ecology lessons. But some of my favorite activities were the bird-friendly crafts! I always enjoy seeing the kids' creativity and how passionate they are about protecting birds. I thought, since it's the summer and families might be looking for some craft ideas to fill their days, I would share some of what we did here.

My favorite craft was creating window stickers. Birds often collide with windows because they don't perceive them, or they see only a reflection on the pane. Placing stickers on your windows can help birds see the obstacle more easily, and prevent collisions.

For this craft, the kids drew a design on a sheet of paper, then taped a clear laminate sheet over top. Then they poured glue over the laminate in the shape of their design. When the glue dried, we were able to peel it off and decorate it with markers. Then we put them on the windows (with the side with the ink facing away from the glass) to help the birds. The stickers are easily able to peel off the windows without leaving a residue.

Another project was making pollinator watering stations. Bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators are incredibly important for our environment, but they sometimes struggle to find clean water to drink, especially during dry spells. And if they do find a water source, bees and other insects can often fall in and drown. Pollinator watering stations can help solve this problem.

For this craft, we made a shallow bowl, similar to a bird bath, for them to drink from. We glued together a flower pot and saucer, then painted them. Then we placed pebbles and beads in the bottom for the pollinators to stand on while they drank.

In previous years, we've also made "bug hotels" where bugs can stay. This might sound like an unnecessary craft (aren't bugs everywhere?) but I can vouch that insects really do like these little hotels. And since insects are a vital part of a bird's diet, this craft also helps birds!

To make a bug hotel, cut both ends off of a plastic bottle, creating a tube. Then go around and gather sticks, twigs, grass, and other natural elements. You can then stick all of your natural debris inside the plastic tube, stuffing it full. When you can't fit any more in, tie a string around the middle of the tube and hang it in a tree, on your patio, or wherever a bug hotel needs to be. With any luck, you'll soon have a thriving bug hospitality business.

The kids at camp loved making these crafts. They're great environmental stewards who want to save animals and bugs, so these activities were perfect for them. We had quite a few artists in the group as well, so their creations were impressive. I hope that some other children will get to try these crafts and have a fun day while helping birds!

Photo caption: Campers painting their pollinator watering stations.

Photo credit: Ana Jaramillo