

# Life in a Nest



**Explore life cycles with the Cornell Lab's Bird Cams**

Grades 3-5

The **Cornell** Lab   
**K-12 Education**

The *Life in a Nest* activities are part of the K-12 suite of educational resources from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you have questions about the Cornell Lab K-12 curriculum, please contact us.

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For additional background information, useful resources, and direct links to the resources described within this unit, please visit [Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Nest](https://Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Nest).

Direct link to the Bird Cams: [Cams.AllAboutBirds.org](https://Cams.AllAboutBirds.org).



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution whose mission is to interpret and conserve the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.

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## Welcome to Cornell Lab K-12!

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s K-12 program provides resources and training to educators. Our curriculum units and free resources focus on learning to identify birds, participating in the Lab’s citizen-science projects, getting outdoors, and conducting science investigations. Through these activities, we hope to motivate students and encourage their interest in science.

Visit the K-12 Education website at [Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Nest](https://birds.cornell.edu/K12/Nest) for resources, background information, and helpful links specifically created for *Life in a Nest*.

## Introduction to *Life in a Nest*

Every year, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Cams bring excitement to classrooms by providing live, up-close views of nesting birds. Each nesting season, and at different times, you might catch hawks, owls, or condors building nests, incubating eggs, and feeding young. These nesting birds bring a unique experience to your classroom and provide a fantastic learning opportunity for students.

This series of activities will help you make the most of Bird Cams in your classroom. If you haven’t already, choose one species’ Bird Cam to follow as you use this curriculum. Our goal is to guide you in supporting students as they watch the streaming videos (as well as archived footage and still photos), make careful observations, and collect data. As you progress through the activities, we hope you will begin to notice your students making connections to the natural world and to birds.

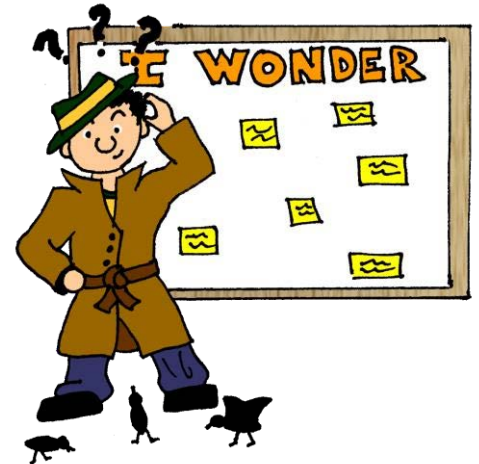
Activity Title	Key Science Content
1. Introducing Nesting Birds and Eggs	Bird Biology, Life Cycles
2. From Nestling to Fledgling	Nesting Stages, Life Cycles
3. Exploring Bird Behavior	Bird Behavior
4. Building a Nest Challenge	Habitat, Life Cycles

## Creating an “I Wonder” Board

You might be surprised by how many questions will arise as you watch and journal about nesting birds. Observation and questioning are important science practices. We want to empower kids to plan and carry out their own investigations and encourage their curiosity.

Keep track of student questions by creating an “I Wonder” Board. We recommend that you make sticky notes available so kids can write their questions as they think of them and then easily affix the notes to the board. The questions can later be sorted by topic or type, creating another opportunity for learning.

The “I Wonder” Board will grow to provide a wealth of ideas that can form the basis of independent research. Students can return to questions in which they have a genuine interest. Our *Investigating Evidence* curriculum, also available as a free download on our website, will help you lead students through their scientific investigations.



*Investigating Evidence* compliments this unit and is available as a free download on the K-12 Education website. It includes a Teacher’s Guide, Student Journal, and Resource pages. Download *Investigating Evidence* at [Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Investigating\\_Evidence](https://Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Investigating_Evidence)



**“Investigating Evidence gives my students the tools they need to do real-life science for themselves.”**

**—5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**

## Using the Bird Cams

As your students participate in the activities of *Life in a Nest*, it's important to refer back to what they have been observing on the Bird Cams. Whether you plan to use the *Life in a Nest* activities in the fall or spring, the Cornell Bird Cams likely have an active nesting camera to study. You can also use archived videos from different cams. We do provide each activity with either extension or evaluation questions that refer back to Bird Cams and relate to the information taught.

We also recommend students maintain a journal documenting their observations. This journal can include recording the date eggs were laid, the incubation period and hatch date, how many chicks hatched successfully, what the chicks are fed, how often the parents feed the chicks, and when the chicks fledge from the nest. You can find this information on our All About Birds website:

[AllAboutBirds.org](http://AllAboutBirds.org). Then have students compare their observations to the information found on All About Birds. Finally, here are some sample questions you could also explore with the Bird Cams:

- Does the male or female bird build the nest?
- What is the nest made of?
- Do both parents incubate the eggs?
- Which parent brings food? Which parent feeds the nestlings?
- What kinds of foods are fed to the chicks? Does the type of food change as the nesting season progresses?
- How often are nestlings fed? Does the feeding rate change during the day or throughout the nesting season?

## A Word of Caution...

Viewing the Bird Cams is an opportunity to witness an intimate view of nature as it is, without interference. Students love the “real life” nature of the cams. But because this is a live broadcast in real time, it's possible that you will see things like mating, predation, fighting, injury, or death. If you have chosen to watch a raptor's nest, for example, you will most likely see small animals being eaten. Thoughtful preparation of your students can make the difference between a shocking sight and a learning opportunity. Discuss in advance what you may see, why these things occur, and how to respond to surprising or “yucky” things on camera.

Now, get started with Bird Cams and see what you discover! Select a species if you haven't already, and start watching. Don't forget to visit the K-12 website at [Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Nest](http://Birds.Cornell.edu/K12/Nest) for resources to help you get the most from Bird Cams and *Life in a Nest*.





## Activity 1: Introducing Nesting Birds and Eggs

**Goal:** Students confront some common misconceptions about nesting birds and eggs.

**Time and Location:** 55 minutes, indoors and outside

### Resources Needed

- A large enough space for students to move around
- Eggs and plates for each student
- Rulers and magnifying glasses, if available

### Conducting the Activity

#### Nesting Birds: Fact or Fiction

Establish “fact” and “fiction” sides of the room or outdoor space—at one extreme is the “fact” side, and at the other, the “fiction” side. You may wish to label each side to avoid confusion. As you read aloud the following statements, ask students to move to one side or the other depending on whether they think the statement is true (fact) or false (fiction). Ask several students to explain their opinion. After the vote is established, reveal the correct answers.

1. **All birds build nests.** (*Fiction. Some birds don’t build a nest. The Peregrine Falcon will lay its eggs right on a ledge; the Brown-headed Cowbird lays its eggs in the nests of other birds.*)
2. **Only the female sits on (incubates) the eggs.** (*Fiction. It depends on the species. Only the female Osprey and Great Horned Owl incubates the eggs, while both the male and female Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel sit on the eggs.*)
3. **Most songbirds live in their nests year round.** (*Fiction. Nests are mainly used for laying eggs and raising young. They are usually not used after the nesting season. The exception is some cavity nesting birds that will use the cavity year-round for shelter, such as the Barn Owl.*)
4. **Most baby birds are fed seeds and berries by their parents.** (*Fiction. Most baby birds are fed insects by their parents—insects are high in the protein they need to grow.*)
5. **Chicks can breathe inside their eggs before they hatch.** (*Fact. The eggshell is porous and the growing chick needs to breathe air. Gas exchange happens through the shell.*)
6. **Eggshells are made of the same materials as chalk.** (*Fact. Both are made primarily of calcium carbonate.*)
7. **If you find a baby bird, you should try to feed it.** (*Fiction. If you find a tiny nestling, try to put it back in the nest as soon as possible. If you find a fledgling, unless there is some immediate*

*danger, for example, if the fledgling is in the road or a predator is nearby, it is actually best to leave it alone.)*

8. **If you return a baby bird to its nest, the parents will smell your scent and reject it.** (*Fiction. Parent birds do not recognize their young by smell. If you find a nestling on the ground, it's okay to return it gently to its nest, which is almost certainly nearby.*)
9. **All birds will nest in birdhouses.** (*Fiction. Only bird species that typically nest in cavities will use birdhouses or nest boxes.*)
10. **The egg yolk (yellow part) grows into a baby bird.** (*Fiction. The yolk provides food for the growing baby bird, which is at first just a small dot of cells attached to the yolk.*)

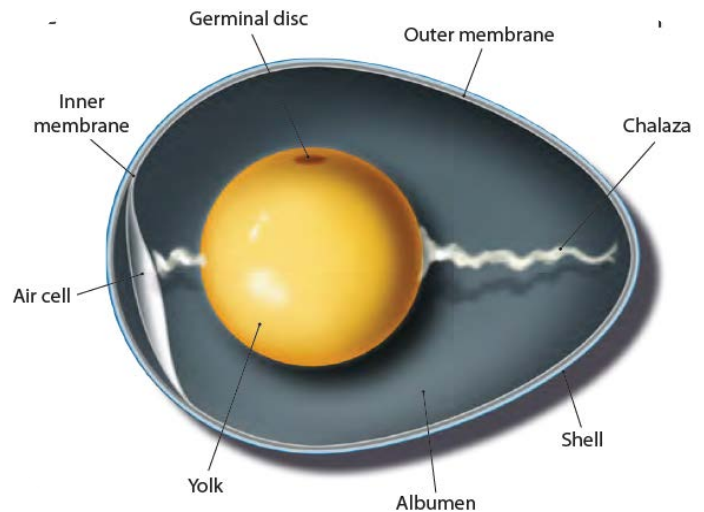
You may want to privately note any widely held misconceptions for further discussion.

### Egg-sploration

Provide each group or child with one plate and one egg. (Be sure to cover safety and sanitation while handling eggs; be sure that everyone washes their hands thoroughly before and after the activity.)

Invite students to examine the different parts of the egg, from the shell to the yolk. Have students gently pick up their egg and take a close look at the outer shell. Ask:

- What color is the shell?
- What does the shell feel like? Is it rough or smooth?
- How would you describe the shape of the egg?
- Are all of our eggs the same size and color? Use rulers to measure the length, height, and circumference of the eggs.
- When we crack the egg, how do you think the inside of the shell will look?



Next, show students how to gently crack open the eggs, being careful not to break up the yolk, and keeping the shell as intact as possible. Use this as an opportunity to remind students that the yolk is not a baby bird, but in fact food (and a good source of vitamins and minerals!). After eggs are cracked, look at the inside of the shell. Ask:

- Does the shell look and feel the same as the outside? What is similar/different?
- What color is it?
- What do you notice about the inner shell? (Be sure to point out the air sac created by the membrane that lines the egg.)

Then have students look at the inner egg. Ask:

- What is the texture of the egg white, or albumen?
- What color is the yolk? What shape is it?
- What other features do you notice? (*Students may notice the chalaza—the white stringy part that anchors the yolk in place, the “thin” and “thick” albumen—the thick albumen is closer to the yolk, or the germinal disc—a small light spot or depression on the egg yolk where the mother bird’s genetic material is located.*)

Invite students to break the yolk and carefully observe what happens.

## **Reflect and Evaluate**

1. What facts surprised you about nesting birds?
2. Why do birds build nests? (*Nests protect eggs and young and help keep them warm.*)

## **Extensions**

1. Challenge students to come up with their own “fact or fiction” questions about birds and then research the answers. Give each student a chance to question the class.
2. Ask students to research, draw, and describe “cool facts” about nesting birds, for example, extreme birds (largest/smallest egg, nest, and clutch size). Share these stories, drawings, and interesting facts with the class.
3. Have students research the size of their Bird Cams species’ egg on the All About Birds website. How does this size compare to the size of the chicken egg they dissected? Why do they think the size may vary?



## Activity 2: From Nestling to Fledgling

**Goal:** Students learn about the structure and functions of birds' nests. They will also learn the stages of nesting and how birds behave in each stage.

**Time and Location:** 55 minutes, indoors

### Resources Needed

- Nesting Cycle Charades cards (depending on the size of your group you may need to copy and cut two sets)
- Internet access

### Conducting the Activity

#### Life Cycle Discussion

Review the following vocabulary found in the glossary with students:

- Nestling
- Altricial
- Territory
- Fledgling
- Precocial
- Mate
- Chick
- Incubate

Lead a discussion of students' previous experiences with bird nests to help you gain insight about what students already know so you can build on prior knowledge, as well as correct any misconceptions.

Consider asking the following questions:

- **Why do birds build nests?** (*Nests provide a protected, hidden place for eggs and young.*)
- **What does the nest of our Bird Cam species look like? What is it made of? Where is it?** (*Answers will vary according to Bird Cam species you have chosen. Students can research nesting information and then compare that to what they observe on the Bird Cam.*)
- **What do other bird species' nests look like? Where are they found?** (*Bird nests are diverse; some are shaped like a bowl, others like a hanging sock, still others take the shape of the tree cavity where they're built. Nests can be found high up in tree branches, in low bushes, in tree cavities or nest boxes, or even on the ground. Keep in mind, the large leafy nests we see in trees during the winter are squirrel nests called dreys, not bird nests.*)

- **What kinds of materials might a bird use to build a nest?** (*Sticks, leaves, moss, vines, feathers, lichen, spider webs, mud, bark, and human-made materials such as string, plastic, or fabric scraps.*)
- **Have you seen a bird build a nest? At what time of year?** (*Almost all North American birds build their nests in spring, although some like the Barred and Great Horned Owls begin nesting in late winter.*)
- **At what time of year have you seen a nest? Did it have eggs in it?** (*Nests are used during the breeding season. Most birds don't live or sleep year-round in their nests; nests seen at other times of the year may be abandoned or will not be used until next year. An exception is cavity-nesting birds, which may sleep in their nest cavities year-round.*)
- **Have you seen a baby bird (nestling)? Where was it? What did it look like?** (*If students haven't seen chicks before, show them a picture. At hatching, some young birds are entirely dependent on their parents (altricial), such as songbirds, woodpeckers, and hummingbirds. Other chicks are able to leave the nest and begin finding their own food within hours of hatching (precocial), for example waterfowl and shorebirds.*)
- **Most birds only breed in the spring and summer rather than throughout the year. Why do you think that is?** (*Food availability is highest during the summer.*)

### **Nesting Cycle Charades**

Breeding birds behave in different ways during each stage of the nesting cycle. To help students understand what they might see on the Bird Cams, play the Nesting Cycle Charades game using the cards. Write the following stages of the bird nesting cycle on the board:

- |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Find and defend a territory | 4. Incubate eggs           |
| 2. Find a mate                 | 5. Feed and raise nestling |
| 3. Build a nest and lay eggs   | 6. Fledge from the nest    |

Divide students into groups of two to four students and ask each group to select one card. (What is written on the card should be shared only with the other members of the group.) Then have each group attempt to act out the stage that is described on the card. The rest of the students refer to the nesting stages listed on the board as they try to guess which stage is being depicted by their classmates.

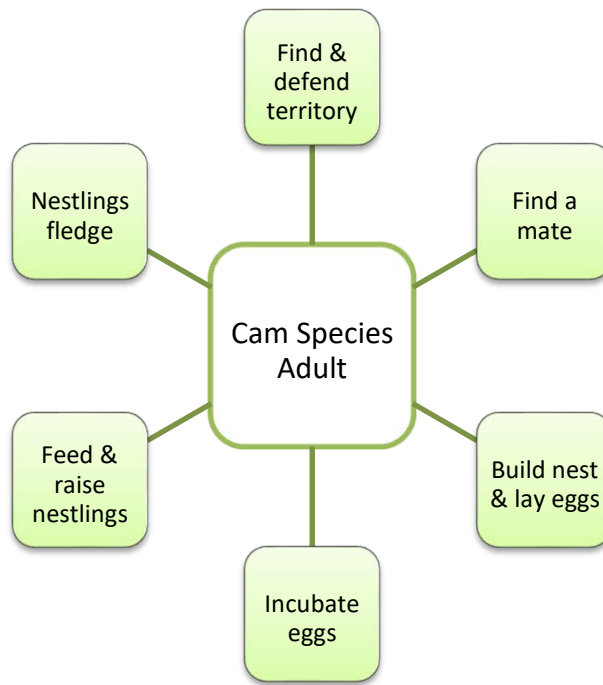
### **Reflect and Evaluate**

1. How does the behavior of birds change during the breeding season? (*Students might consider when birds are more/less active or quiet, what the young are doing, what the parents are doing.*)

2. At which nesting stage do you think birds are most vulnerable and why? *(Have students use their knowledge of the species they have viewed on the Bird Cam to discuss the challenges of each stage. With further research students can compare their species to other species' experiences during the nesting stages.)*

## Extensions

1. Ask students to predict when the eggs will hatch in the Bird Cam nest you are monitoring and/or when the young will fledge from the nest. Older students could research the length of each nesting stage and make informed predictions. Younger students could make predictions after a short class discussion. Students whose guesses are closest to the actual hatch date could be rewarded in some way.
2. Build nest boxes to house cavity nesting birds. See the K-12 website for links to plans. Monitor your nest boxes with the NestWatch citizen-science project.
3. Provide students with a blank piece of paper to draw and describe the nesting cycle of your Bird Cam species. Have them draw a circle in the middle big enough to sketch an adult bird inside. Then have them draw lines from the circle to the edge of their paper to form six, fairly equal sections around the circle. You may wish to have a model for them to copy. Students then label each section, in order, with the six stages of nesting behavior. In the circle, have students sketch and label an adult bird of your Bird Cam species. Then in each section around the circle using a combination of pictures and words depict the behaviors they might observe during that stage of nesting.



## Activity 3: Exploring Bird Behavior

**Goal:** Students observe different bird behaviors and search for birds outdoors.

**Time and Location:** 55 minutes, indoors and outside

### Resources Needed

- Bird Observation Journal Page, one per student
- “Dance Like a ‘Tross” Video form the resource website

### Conducting the Activity

#### How to Dance ‘Tross Style

Watch the “Dance Like a ‘Tross” video. Share with them that Albatross pairs tend to form lasting bonds. They perform elaborate courtship displays that include coordinated movements in which the birds touch bills, spread one or both wings, bob their heads, place their bill under one wing, and pause with their bill pointed at the sky.

After watching the video from the Albatross cam, have students choreograph their own albatross dance. Encourage them to include movement and sound. What music or song do the students think would go well with this dance and why? After practicing their dance a couple of times, ask students how long they think it would take to get really good at it. Might it take many years, like it does for the albatross?

#### Bird Behavior Walk

Discuss with students any behaviors they have noticed while watching the Bird Cams. Share with them that they will try to find different bird behaviors in their schoolyard. Give students a copy of the Bird Observation Journal Page on a clipboard or other hard surface. Tell them they are looking for birds in order to record any behaviors or sounds they may notice. If they know the species, they should record that as well. If they don’t know the species, that’s okay. They can record information such as size, shape, and color if they wish to identify the bird later.

Now, take your students outside on a bird behavior walk. Remind them to move quietly using their eyes and ears to collect information. Using the Bird Observation Journal Page, have students record the behaviors and sounds they notice. Be sure to make note of the date and time you are observing birds, and approximately how far you walk.

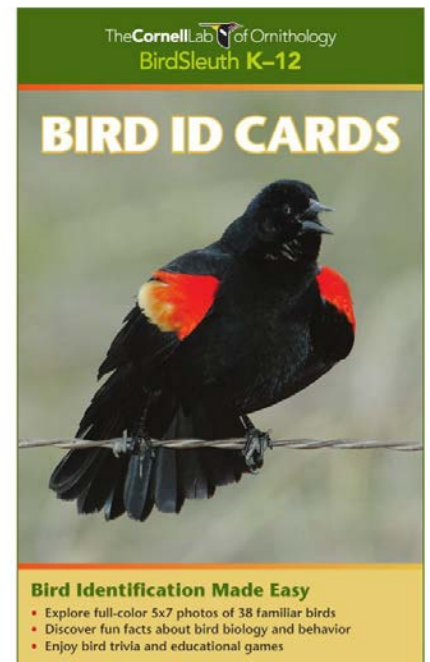
When you return to the classroom (or during a later class period), give students the opportunity to share their observations.

Ask:

- What are some behaviors we saw?
- Were more than one species observed doing the same behavior?
- What sounds did you hear birds making? Could you identify the species making the sounds?
- Do you think you have heard these sounds before? When? Where?
- Are any of the behaviors you observed ones that we have discussed as being part of the nesting cycle? Which ones? What behaviors are not part of the nesting cycle? *(Depending on the time of year you go on your walk, you may or may not see nesting behaviors. That's okay! Have students describe the observations they made and make inferences of why they think the birds were displaying these behaviors.)*

## Extensions

1. Take students on a bird behavior walk every month or two to document seasonal changes.
2. Take students outside to look for nests and have them try to determine the species of bird using the nest. You might want to scout for nests beforehand, as they can be difficult to find. Prior to heading outside to look for nests with your students, be sure to set some guidelines so that you don't disturb the nesting birds as you observe them. Visit the Cornell Lab's NestWatch website at [NestWatch.org](https://www.nestwatch.org) and review the Code of Conduct to help. If you find a nest or build a nest box, consider monitoring it through the NestWatch citizen-science project.
3. Use the K-12 Education Bird ID Cards (which feature 5x7 images of common birds and lots of information about each one) to teach bird ID and facts about local birds. Order your Bird ID Cards through our online store at [Birds.Cornell.edu/K12](https://birds.cornell.edu/K12).



## Activity 4: Building a Nest Challenge

**Goal:** Students will explore the diversity of nests that birds build and then try to create their own.

**Time and Location:** 55 minutes, indoors or outside

### Resources Needed

- Natural materials that can be used to build nests (sticks, grasses, leaves, rocks, mud)
- Nest images from the resource website

### Conducting the Activity

#### Discussing Nests

A nest is a place where parents incubate and care for eggs and young, rather than a year-round “home” for birds. Ask students:

- Why do you think birds build nests? (*To hold their eggs and young.*)
- Have you seen a nest before? Where was it? What was it made out of? (*Answers will vary, but likely will include nests made of sticks, mud, grass placed in trees, on buildings, or in nest boxes.*)
- Do all birds build nests? (*Though most bird species build some kind of nest, not all bird species. The Brown-headed Cowbird lays its eggs in other birds’ nests. The Emperor Penguin carries its egg on its feet.*)
- When do birds build their nests? (*Birds in North America generally build their nests in spring and raise their young during spring and into summer.*)

Share images of different types of bird nests found on the resource website and have the students describe each nest and guess what kind of bird made them. For example, compare the nests of a hummingbird and a Bald Eagle. Several hummingbird species build nests that are only an inch in diameter, or about the size of a nickel. Bald Eagles, on the other hand, make enormous nests the size of minivans—the largest recorded nest was measured 9 feet wide and 20 feet tall! Chat about the similarities and differences in nests, creating a Venn diagram if desired.

Together, make a list of locations where nests are found (in trees, under the eaves of buildings, on the ground, in nest cavities and nest boxes, etc.) as well as a list of nesting materials (sticks, small twigs, mud, grass, spider webs, etc.). When both lists are complete, emphasize the great diversity of nests and the fact that birds nest in many locations on land, both in natural and man-made structures, and that nests are like a crib or a nursery for bird young, rather than their permanent home.



## Build a Nest

Have students build their own nests by using materials from outside or that you provide. Some ideas include sticks, grass, twigs, leaves, pinecones, or even popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, and string. Ask students to think about the different ways in which nests can be made:

- Are they woven or knotted?
- Are they held together by a sticky substance, like mud or spider webs?
- What's the benefit of using one method over another?

Explain that birds design nests in different ways and for different environments, so there really is no wrong way to build a nest. When all the crafts are complete, test each nest's ability to hold "eggs" by placing a handful of small rocks inside and setting it on a tree branch or other prop. Do the nests pass the sturdiness test? If not, maybe they are designed for ground-nesting birds! Note: please do not leave students' nests outside, especially if they have human-made materials.

## Reflect and Evaluate

1. What can vary between different nests? (*Bird nests are highly variable and can be found on the ground, in bushes, high in the branches of trees, in nest boxes, or tree cavities. The materials birds use to make their nests vary from species to species, and include sticks, leaves, moss, vines, feathers, spider webs, mud, bark, and human-made materials such as string, paper, or fabric scraps.*)
2. If you were a bird, would you rather nest in a hole (cavity) of a tree or on a branch? What challenges and benefits might you have in each place? (*A hole is warmer and safer from predators, but there is intense competition for tree cavities, and nest boxes. Eggs and young can't easily fall out of a cavity nest, but there is only one way out. A cup nest on a branch is cooler, offers more escape routes, and fewer parasites; however, it is more visible and vulnerable to predators and is not as weatherproof.*)

## Extensions

1. Have student research the nesting material used for the Bird Cams species. What is the estimated size of the nest? Have students try to build a model of the Bird Cams nest.
2. Review the "I Wonder" Board and investigate any scientific questions the students would like to address. K-12 Education's *Investigating Evidence* free curriculum can help.

## Glossary

**Altricial**—describes young, sometimes blind; birds without feathers that cannot move around or care for themselves after hatching and need full parental care

**Breeding**—mating and producing offspring

**Breeding season**—the period of time during each year when a species reproduces (mates and has young)

**Brood**—all the chicks in a nest

**Brood patch**—an area that develops on the lower abdomen of birds, where the feathers drop off and the skin thickens and becomes densely populated with blood vessels; used in incubation to keep eggs and young warm. Also known as incubation patch.

**Cavity**—hole in a tree where a bird can build its nest; cavity-nesting birds may also use these cavities as a roost for sleeping year-round

**Chick**—baby bird

**Clutch**—all the eggs laid in a nest

**Courtship display**—specific bird behavior intended to attract a mate or to bond with a mate when both sexes display together

**Egg**—an oval or round object laid by a female bird, reptile, fish, or other animal, containing the embryo; bird eggs are covered by a hard shell

**Field guide**—a book with illustrations, range maps, and descriptions of various species; most bird field guides group birds according to their taxonomic order, with related species nearest each other, instead of alphabetically

**Fledge**—to leave the nest

**Fledgling**—chicks that have started leaving the nest for short periods, or have just left the nest; usually still get parental care; starting to fly

**Habitat**—the area in which an animal lives; can be described by the sources of food, water, shelter, and space availability found there

**Incubate**—to sit on eggs to warm them while the chicks inside are developing

**Mate**—(noun) a breeding partner of the opposite sex; two mates together produce offspring; (verb) to breed and produce offspring

**Migrate**—to move regularly from one part of the world to another, usually in spring or fall

**Nestling**—chicks that still live in the nest and are fed by their parents

**Nest box**—a box, usually made of wood, constructed as a place for birds to build their nest and/or lay their eggs, sometimes called a birdhouse; only birds that naturally nest in cavities will use nest boxes

**Plumage**—a bird's feathers, including the colors and patterns

**Porous**—having small holes, not visible to the human eye, that allow liquid or gas to pass through

**Precocial**—describes young birds that are able to move around shortly after hatching and have some feathers and sight; some may be able to feed and take care of themselves

**Predator**—an animal that eats another animal

**Resident**—a bird that lives in the same place for the entire year and does not migrate

**Species**—the most specific classification of organisms; birds grouped in the same species can breed with each other and generally share common habitats, appearance, and behavior

**Territory**—an area that an animal or group defends from other animals of the same species and uses for breeding

**Yolk**—the yellow part in an egg that provides nutrition for the growing chick

## Bird Observation Journal Page

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Habitat Description:

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Species name	What am I doing? (eating, singing, perching, etc.)	Number seen/heard

## Nesting Cycle Charades Cards

### Find and Defend a Territory

Before laying eggs, some birds find a nesting territory and defend. They defend it from other birds of the same species. Good territories have the food, water, and cover. Birds defend their territory by singing loudly. Birds may puff up their feathers if another bird gets too close.

### Find a Mate

Birds attract a mate by singing, drumming, or calling. For most birds the female chooses a mate. This is one reason why males are often more colorful than females. Some males will also do special flights, displays with their tails or wings, and dances to attract a mate.

### Build a Nest and Lay Eggs

Nests provide a safe place for the eggs and young. Birds build nests out of all sorts of things—sticks, leaves, moss, vines, mud, animal hair, and their own feathers. Nests can be found almost anywhere: on the ground, in trees, on the sides of cliffs, on buildings, and bridges. Most songbirds lay between 3-6 eggs. Some birds lay more, and some less.

### Incubate Eggs

Bird sits on eggs to keep the eggs warm. This is called incubation. Usually the female incubates the eggs, or the parents take turns. The parents have a “brood patch” on their belly, where there are few or no feathers, so their skin warms the eggs. Parent birds are usually quiet while they incubate so they don’t draw attention to the nest.

### Feed and Raise Nestlings

Nestlings must be kept warm and fed. The parents feed the chicks constantly. The parents fly back and forth with food for their young. The young birds open their mouths wide and cry out loudly for food whenever their parents are near.

### Fledge From the Nest

After leaving the nest, young birds usually stay close to parents. These young birds must learn to survive on their own. They are vulnerable to predators. Many fledglings continue to beg for food from their parents. They might open their mouths, flutter their wings, and call for food.