

In Person Kindergarten: Winter Birds Curriculum Connections

Curriculum Connections	Notes
<p>The learning environment extends to the outdoors. A growing body of research suggests that connecting to the natural world contributes to children’s mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being (Louv, 2005). Children’s natural curiosity and sense of wonder can be fostered by providing them with many opportunities to learn outdoors. The learning that takes place in classroom experiences can be explored in the “extended classroom” that nature provides. Similarly, the natural environment can be reflected in the indoor learning environment.</p> <p>For many reasons, including the prevalence of electronic media, children today spend relatively little time in natural environments. This “nature deficit” has been linked to disturbing trends such as childhood obesity, attention disorders, and depression. Outdoor spaces offer valuable learning opportunities, and natural settings can inspire the kind of thinking, learning, leadership, and innovation that may be inhibited in children in the classroom but that, once revealed, can be incorporated back into the classroom environment.</p> <p>In the Kindergarten program, learning in the outdoors is included as part of the instructional day, and the educators play an active role, engaging with children in an inquiry stance as they play, explore, and learn together outside the classroom.</p> <p>(Page 34 of Curriculum Doc)</p>	<p>Schoolyards and kindergarten play areas are often not sites of great biological diversity. This is a result of both the high level of human traffic and the tendency to use tarmac and lawn to cover the majority of the play area.</p> <p>Despite these spaces being typically unattractive to wildlife, there are many ways to ‘tweak’ the spaces to attract wildlife, and in this case, birds in winter.</p> <p>The most effective way to attract birds is to introduce a source of food. We recommend black oil sunflower seeds as a nutrient-dense option which is appealing to many species of bird. Seeds can be placed on the ground, on stumps or logs, on windowsills or in make-shift bird feeders made from empty yogurt tubs or other containers. If your kindergarten area is bordered by a chain link fence, consider using nylon zip-ties to attach empty food tubs brought in by students to the length of the fence.</p> <p>All of the above options will also attract squirrels- another wonderful wild animal which is fun to observe. However, squirrels tend to drastically reduce the number of birds that come to a source of food over time. This is because birds learn to frequent a consistent source of food, but squirrels eat so much that your feeding area will become unreliable for the birds you are trying to attract. Unless you are willing to refill your feeding area every morning, you are better off considering a squirrel-proof option.</p> <p>We love the “Eliminator” feeder available from Wild Birds Unlimited in Kitchener as it effectively repels squirrels and holds a lot of seed, meaning you won’t have to refill it as often.</p> <p>Another option is to use a squirrel baffle. This will only work if you can hang your birdfeeder from a pole at least 2 meters away from any vertical surfaces such as fences or walls (Squirrels are great leapers!). This can be a good option if you want to offer more than one type of food, such as</p>

sunflower seeds and [suet](#). [Safflower](#) seeds are especially attractive to cardinals while corn will attract Blue Jays. If you want to see woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees, try offering a [suet cake](#) in a [suet feeder](#).

Presenting two or more types of food can be a great way to inspire student curiosity. Do some birds have a favourite food? Why might this be?

In addition to birdseed, invite students to consider other features that might help birds meet their survival needs. Creating a temporary brush pile out of sticks and cedar branches is a great way to attract birds into your kindergarten area. This can be especially effective if there are no natural hiding places near your feeding area. Coniferous trees such as cedar and spruce help birds hide from predators and take shelter during adverse conditions. A temporary brush pile can work equally well for birds seeking shelter. As a bonus, shake out some safflower seeds around your brush pile to attract timid cardinals who prefer to feed from the ground.

What about nut allergies?!

It is true that many popular bird seed mixes include peanuts and these mixes should be avoided in a school context. Here is how to avoid nuts in your bird food:

1. Stick with birdseed options that only include one ingredient such as black oil sunflower seed.
2. Suet cakes include rendered beef fat as a main ingredient, but many options also include nuts and seeds. We recommend [pure suet](#) which is available from [Wild Birds Unlimited](#) or [Valley Feeds](#) in Cambridge.
3. Valley Feeds also offers "Orchestra" a [high quality seed mix which specifically is peanut free](#).