

Bird Beak Buffet

Explore the ways in which bird beaks are adapted to their diets!



Directions for Set Up:

Select two or more types of birds from the chart below. For each type of bird selected, set up a station with the corresponding Bird Beak Tool, as listed in the chart. Each station should also include samples of ALL the different *Model Foods* for the birds you choose. This will allow participants to try each tool on multiple foods to see which “beaks” are adapted for each type of “food”.

Exploring Stations:

1. As participants explore the stations, encourage participants to try “eating” all the various foods at the station with the “bird beaks”.
2. After participants have had time at each station, discuss each of the “bird beaks”. Which “food” was easiest to eat with each beak? Which was the hardest? Show the photographs of the birds. Notice the different shapes and sizes of the beaks. Discuss what foods each of these birds eats and how their beaks help them to catch and eat their preferred foods.

Common Birds, Beak Types and Foods, and Station Materials

Bird Type	Adaptation and Food Advantage	Bird Beak Tools	Model Food
Pelicans	Use pouch-like beaks to scoop fish from the water	Cups or other scoops	Small toy fish in a bowl of water
Hummingbirds	Use long, slender beaks to probe flowers for the nectar they eat	Turkey basters or eye droppers	Tall vase or cylinder with coloured water
Shorebirds	Use long, thin beaks to probe shallow water, mud, and sand for small invertebrates	Tongs	Toy worms or other materials (such as twist ties or pieces of rope) buried in soil or sand
Woodpeckers	Use strong, pointed beaks to chisel into wood and probe for insects	Tweezers	Long, narrow beads or rice tucked into the bark of a log
Owls, Hawks, and Eagles (Raptors)	Use sharp, curved beaks for tearing meat from mice and other animals	Scissors	Play dough wrapped around a stick
Hérons and Egrets	Use long, sharp beaks for spearing fish and amphibians	Chopsticks	Recycled styrofoam pieces (fish) floating in water
Sparrows and Finches	Use short, stout beaks to crack open seeds and nuts	Nutcrackers or pliers	Pecans, peanuts, almonds, or other nuts and/or seeds such as pumpkin and sunflower <small>*Ensure that no one has allergies to nuts or seeds if you use this station.</small>
Dabbling Ducks and Swans	Use blunt, spoon-like bills that have fine combs along the edges to strain aquatic plants from water	Strainers	Tea leaves in water

Please note that the tools listed are intended to represent the shape and general use of the beak. A real beak may not function in quite the same way.

Source: Growing Up WILD: Exploring Nature with Young Children © 2009 Council for Environmental Education

Birds and Beaks



Pelican



Hummingbird



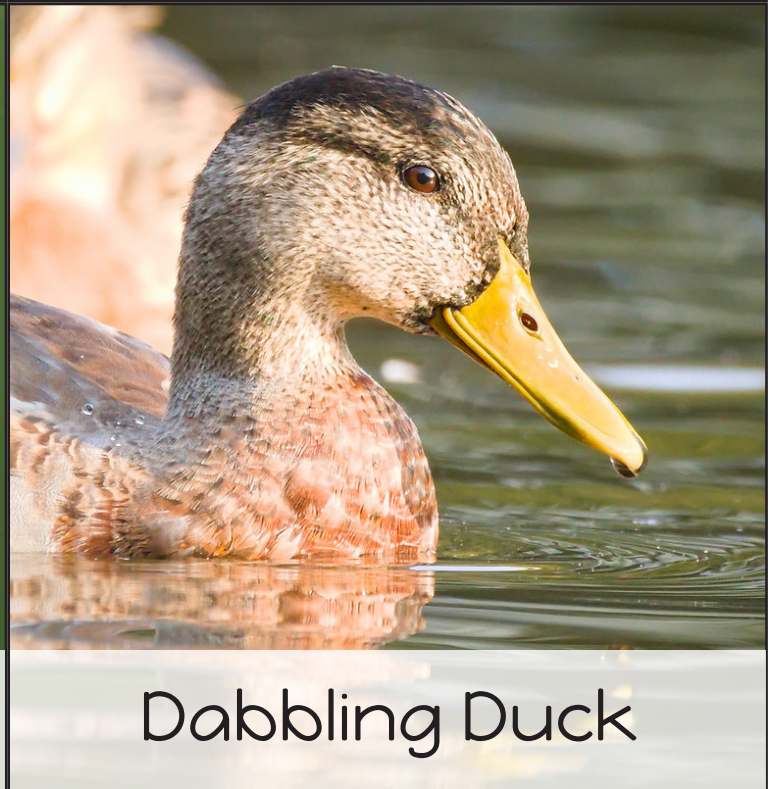
Shorebird



Woodpecker

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