

Bird Beaks Experiment

Overview:

Use common household tools to show how different beak shapes function to collect various kinds of food.

Supplies:

- Foods (or stand-ins) a bird might eat, such as:
 - Small cup of water (nectar)
 - Pipe cleaner (worms)
 - Sunflower seeds or any seeds
 - Pasta shells (snails)
 - Dry beans (beetles)
- Objects around the house to represent bird beaks
 - Straw
 - Spoons
 - Toothpicks
 - Tweezers
 - Clothespin

Activity Description:

In this activity, you will learn about different types of bird beaks and how different beak shapes are optimal for different food types.

With your student, use different utensils to experiment how bird beaks influence a birds diet and habitat. The four beak types will be represented by spoons (2 per beak), straw (1 per beak), tweezers (1 pair per beak), toothpicks (2 per beak), and clothespins (1 per beak). The four food types will be represented pipe cleaner segments (simulating worms), dry pasta shells (snails), dry beans (simulating beetles), and sunflower seeds.

For each round of the activity, spread the different type of bird food out on a table; have your student use one type of 'bird beak' to try to pick up as much food as they can and put it in their cup, in a time-span of 2 minutes. Then switch to a different type of 'bird beak' to pick up as much food they can in 2 minutes. After all the rounds compare which type of bird beak worked best with what type of food.



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Guiding Questions:

- Which beak worked best for each food? Why?
- Were the pretend beaks similar in function to actual bird beaks? Why or why not? (could compare to pictures on bird beak sheet)
- Why do birds have such different beaks?
- Are bird beaks used for tasks other than food collection? How? (nest building, etc.)

Match the Bird Beaks:

Can you use the graphic below to make guesses about the type of bird beak that matches the kitchen utensils used?



Meat-eater



Seed-eater



Fruit-and nut-eater



Nectar-feeder



Fish-eater



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