



Birds

Examine feathers

Age: 7-14

Topic: Biology

Time: 1 hour



What should learners already know?

- Feathers are a very important part of bird anatomy and can come in many different shapes, sizes and textures.

What equipment will I need?

- Feather
- Oasis ball
- Magnifying glass

How will learners explore this?

1. As a class, go outside to look for feathers. Collect any you can find.
2. Study the feathers more closely, preferably through a magnifying glass.
3. Ask children to describe what they can see:

Prompt questions:

Do all feathers look the same? What shape do they have?
 How long is the longest feather?
 How does it feel if you stroke one of your feathers against your hand?
 Is it stiff or soft?

4. Collect the feathers in an oasis ball and hang it in a place in your classroom or school grounds to display it.
5. Continue filling the oasis ball when you find more feathers.

How can we show the learning?

- Use this as an opportunity to discuss the importance and diversity of feathers with the class. Ask children to describe how the feathers you found look different from one another. Might they serve different purposes?
- Challenge children by asking them whether they are able to identify any of the species that the feathers you have found may belong to. Can they recognise some of the outermost feathers by colours or markings?
- A bird's body is covered with different kinds of feathers such as down, tail feathers and wing feathers. The feathers have different functions for the bird. The outermost feathers should keep the bird dry if it rains.
- The down that sits closest to the bird's skin should keep the bird warm. Some feathers are used to steer and balance in flight. Some birds have feathers that are extra long or colourful to impress and show off to a partner or rival.
- On some feathers there are small hooks that hook into each other. They can be connected, closed and opened, like a zipper.



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