



Birds

Brilliant bird poo

Age: 7-14

Topic: Art and Biology

Time: 1 hour

plus time to dry



What should learners already know?

- Studying bird poo can be important

What equipment will I need?

- Colourful card
- White paint
- Black or grey food colouring
- Water
- Black pepper
- Turkey baster or ziplock bag.

How will learners explore this?

1. It is recommended that you do this activity outside – it could get messy!
2. In a large bowl, mix together white paint with some water. Then mix in some black pepper. Finally, swirl in a tiny drop of black food colouring.
3. Transfer this mixture into a ziplock bag (cutting a small hole in the corner) or turkey baster. Be careful not to spill it! Lay out colourful sheets of card across the playground surface, and make sure each child puts their name on a piece of paper.
4. Get children to hold the bag high up and squirt it at the colourful card. Look at the beautiful splatter it makes! Each child can do this.
5. Leave pieces of card to dry for the rest of the day. Stick a piece of lined paper onto the back of the card.
6. Once the card has dried, get children to write down some of the important uses of bird poo on the back of their creation!
7. Feel free to display the splatters alongside some of the important uses of bird poo.

How can we show the learning?

- Talk to the class about some important uses of bird poo:
- It tells us about the biology of the bird that made the poo. What has the bird been eating? Where has it been (i.e if we see fish remains in the poo, we know the bird has been in or near water). Is the bird healthy, or might it have some parasites in its gut? We can use the angle of the bird poo splatter to work out how high up the bird was and if it was in flight.
- Bird poo is a key method of seed dispersal. Lots of different species of plant, especially trees, produce seeds within a fruit (such as a berry) which is attractive for birds to eat. The seed has a tough casing, so while the rest of the berry will be broken down by the bird's digestive system, the seed will remain intact.
- The poo of coastal seabirds is called guano. When seabirds flock together on islands to breed, they create loads of poo! This poo is full of important nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen, which are important for plant growth. This means the poo can support whole ecosystems that might never have existed if birds weren't there. Guano has been used as a fertiliser on crops by humans for centuries.
- Ask children why they think the uses or functions of bird poo listed above are important. Are they important to birds, the ecosystem, to humans? How can we classify the different functions?



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