



Birds

Bird beaks

Age: 7-14

Topic: Biology

Time: 1 hour



What should learners already know?

- Birds have beaks which cover their upper and lower jaws.
- Beaks have lots of uses, especially in feeding!

What equipment will I need?

- Tweezers, clothes pegs, and pins.
- Imaginary bird food mix, e.g: mix of pasta, oatmeal, rice, stones, cornflakes, corks, rice cakes.
- Trays or white tablecloths.

How will learners explore this?

1. Distribute a "beak" to each participant. Everyone turns into different birds depending on which beak you get: tweezers = "tweezerbeak", clothes pin = "clothespin", pin = "needlenipper".
2. Spread the bird food on the trays or tablecloths. These will be the dining tables.
3. It is best to use several small tables so 3-5 participants can fit around the bird food. At least one of each "bird" should be at every table.
4. Now it's time for the tweezers, needlenippers, and clothespinners to collect food using their different beaks.
5. Everyone 'eats' food from the tables with their beak for about 5 minutes, collecting their own small pile of food.
6. Now it's time to discuss what you have found as a class. Which "beak" collected the most food? Which "beak" collected the least food? Was there a "beak" that could only collect one kind of food?

How can we show the learning?

- Challenge children by asking them what this exercise can show about adaptation. Why might it be useful for different species of bird which live in the same habitat to have different shaped beaks?
- This is a useful time to reinforce learning about functional groups with the class. The shape of the beak determines what kind of food the bird can catch and eat.
- A bird that can eat many different kinds of food is called a **generalist**. A **specialist** is a bird that is only focused on one or a few types of food.
- Encourage children to think about how they would classify birds with the beaks they used today. Are they specialists or generalists?



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