Bird-friendly School: Provide, Protect, Care

Badge overview:

Students and teachers make the school grounds more welcoming for birds by providing food and nesting places, while learning how responsible action can support local wildlife.

Badge goals:

By the end of this activity, students will:

1. Recognise ways in which school grounds can provide food and nesting opportunities for birds
2. Select suitable locations for bird-friendly features using observations and guidance
3. Build and install a bird table and suitable nest boxes with guidance
4. Take responsibility for the regular care of a bird table throughout winter
5. Observe and record how birds respond to the food and nesting opportunities provided
6. Use observations as evidence when considering possible explanations
7. Communicate what they did and what they discovered to others

When & Where to use this badge:

Teacher Tip

This activity can link with

· Science (birds, habitats, food and shelter)
· Environmental Studies (local biodiversity and caring for wildlife)
· Mathematics (counting birds and representing observations)
· Languages (writing and presenting findings)
· Design & Technology (planning and building)
· ICT / Media (digital communication)

Flexibility

· The bird table and nest boxes can be built and installed as separate sessions, depending on the time, materials and facilities available.
· Students can take different roles within each project, such as building, recording, checking food supplies, monitoring nest boxes, observing birds and communicating findings.
· Teachers can adapt the number and length of sessions and the recording methods depending on their school context, while keeping the core flow: Learn & Plan → Bird Table → Nest Boxes → Tell the Story.

Steps to complete:

Step 1 Learn & Plan

Teacher Instructions

1. Explain that before building anything, students need to find the best locations for the bird table and sparrow nest boxes.
2. Walk around the school grounds and identify places where birds already spend time. Look for trees, shrubs, walls, roofs, window ledges and other places where birds perch, feed or seek shelter.
3. Discuss what makes a good location for a bird table. It should be in an open area without overhanging branches or other structures above it, but conveniently close to a suitable perch, such as a tree, shrub or windowsill, so that birds can approach and move away safely.

4. Discuss what makes a good location for sparrow nest boxes. Boxes should be positioned at least one storey high and north-facing, following the fixing guidance provided. Students should consider whether the location is sheltered from disturbance and suitable for sparrows.

5. Ask students to compare possible locations and agree on the most suitable places for each feature.

6. Introduce the two parts of the activity: providing winter food through a bird table and providing nesting opportunities for sparrows through nest boxes.

7. Use the **Making a Bird Table** and **Making a Nest Box** resources to help students plan what they will make, where it will go and what materials they will need.

Step 2 Bird Table

Teacher Instructions

1. Follow the Making a Bird Table guide to build the bird table.

2. Install the bird table in the agreed location.

3. Add the recommended winter food according to the guide.

4. Agree on a regular checking and restocking routine and assign students different responsibilities.

5. Students record:

a. Date the bird table was installed

b. What food is provided

c. Dates when the bird table is checked and restocked

d. Birds observed using the bird table

Step 3 Nest Boxes

Teacher Instructions

1. Follow the Making a Nest Box guide to build suitable nest boxes for sparrows.

2. Fix the nest boxes in the agreed locations, following the fixing guidance provided.

3. Make sure students are supervised when using tools and when working in or around areas where equipment needs to be fixed at height.

4. Observe the nest boxes from a suitable distance. Do not open, touch or disturb them while they may be in use.

5. Students record:

a. Date each nest box was fixed

b. Location of each nest box

c. Any signs that the nest boxes are being used

d. Dates and observations from monitoring

Step 4 Tell the Story

Students bring together what they did and discovered through the bird table and nest box projects and create a simple piece of communication about how they made their school more bird friendly. Students should include what they did, why they chose the locations, what they observed, what they discovered and any questions they still have.

They could:

· Create a “Bird-Friendly School” display showing the bird table and nest boxes

· Make an infographic comparing the two projects and what students learned

· Create a winter bird-feeding diary showing what food was provided and which birds visited

· Make a short report showing where the bird table and nest boxes were placed and why those locations were chosen

· Produce a short video or podcast documenting the building, installation and monitoring

· Present their findings at assembly, including what worked, what they observed and what they would do next

· Create a “Did you know?” awareness message about how schools can help birds