

Discover Primary Science

Mini Projects for Primary School Children.

The following projects have been designed for Primary school children by the NPWS Education unit of the North Midlands Region and with the support of Discover Primary Science so as to:

- (a) Foster a sense of responsibility and
- (b) Encourage active and ongoing participation - in the care and conservation of our natural environment.

Each project is linked to the NPWS / DPS Education Centres five conservation education programmes but can be undertaken by any school as support activities to the SESE curriculum and the DPS programme. One project will be launched onto the DPS website each month over the following five months as appropriate to the time of year as follows.

January - **Milk Carton Bird Feeder**

February - **Mini Beast Haven**

March - **Willow Tree Dome**

April - **Window Box Wild flower Garden**

May - **Kitchen Basin Pond**

The projects can each be completed in an hour or so, once the materials have been collected, but will provide ongoing opportunities for children to observe, learn about and enjoy nature at close hand. In addition the children will be able to gain, not only a sense of ownership of the project, but an understanding that they can participate in the creation of positive outcomes, through their own positive actions.

The Conservation Mini Project for January:

Milk Carton Bird Feeder:

The Milk Carton Bird Feeder will provide a very welcome source of food for garden birds, during the winter months, when their supplies are particularly difficult for them to find.



Conservation Value:

Provision of a food supply for birdlife:

Many of our garden birds are struggling to survive due to the continued loss of their natural habitats by our actions such as forestry and hedgerow clearance for building of roads and buildings or by allowing some farming practices such as replacing hedgerows with fencing or the use of pest control systems that are particularly damaging to wildlife. Once the hedgerow and woodland are removed, so to are the protection and the food source that they provided for wildlife, including birds.

Recycling of waste:

Milk cartons take a number of years to break down and become soil once they are dumped. The recycling of a milk carton helps to reduce the amount of material going into dumps (landfill sites).

Age suitability:

Suitable for 6 - 12 year olds to make but all children will need adult assistance to start cutting with the scissors.

Children under 6 or with special needs can decorate the feeder with acrylic paint, and with adhering nature collage pieces such as leaves, sticks etc to the side of the feeder with PVA glue.

How to make and use a Milk Carton Bird Feeder

Step 1:

Collect the following equipment and materials:

- ✓ A used, clean, milk carton (any size will do)
- ✓ Twine
- ✓ Acrylic Paint (small, student quality tubes are relatively cheap to buy)
- ✓ Paint brush
- ✓ Permanent Marker
- ✓ Ruler or measuring tape
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Stapler and staples
- ✓ Twigs

Step 2:

Measure, mark and cut out the feeding holes on each side of the milk carton

- A. Measure and mark in 2 horizontal lines, parallel to the base of the carton on each of its four sides - the first line should be at least 4 cm and the second at least 10cm up from the base of the carton.
- B. Measure in 1 cm from each of the 4 vertical corners, so that a rectangle is drawn on each side of the carton.
- C. In each of the four rectangles, draw a line to connect opposite corners so that an X is created. The point at which the two lines of the X meet is the centre of the rectangle and this is where the point of the scissors is inserted (Ask an adult to do this first cut into the carton with the scissors as it can be dangerous to do).
- D. Ask the adult to also cut a small central hole half way between the base of the carton and the lower edge of the triangle on each of the four sides of the carton for the twigs to fit through.
- E. Carefully cut away from the centre point towards each of the four corners of the rectangle. Turn back each of the four triangles and cut them off the carton to leave 4 rectangular feeding holes.



Step 3:

Decorate your Bird Feeder.

You can use any colour or colours of acrylic paint to cover up the design on the milk carton and to make your bird feeder really different. Acrylic paint is great to use because it will cover over even the very waxy coating on the carton but mind your clothes because it becomes waterproof and does not wash out once it dries!

You could also glue on leaves, moss, twigs, bits of bark with PVA Glue (PVA Glue will also be reasonably waterproof once it dries fully and can give a nice shine to your work).

Step 4:

Put on the feeding perches.

Insert some long pieces of twigs through the holes near the base of the feeder so that they go through from one side of the feeder to the other.

Step 5:

The Bird Feeder Roof

Use PVA glue or a stapler to close the top of the milk carton to create the roof of your bird feeder. Cut a length of twine and double it over. Securely attach the cut ends of the twine to the middle of the roof ridge of the feeder with a staple or two.

Step 4:

Feeding time

Place a small quantity of any of the following or a mixture of them into the base of the feeder: peanuts, sultanas, stale bread, mixed seeds, sunflower seeds etc. You could make a second feeder and fill the base with water because birds can have difficulty finding water to drink when the weather is very dry or icy.

Step 5:

Enjoy observing birdlife

Hang out your bird feeder well above the ground in a safe and sheltered location. It will take at least a half an hour before the birds will be brave enough to give your new feeder a go. If you have a bird identification book, it can be really interesting to try and find out the names of the different birds that are using to your feeder. Don't forget to top up the feeder with food on a regular basis.