



# BEAKS AS TOOLS

## USE THE RIGHT BEAK FOR THE RIGHT JOB

### Episode: "For the Birdies" (11 min.)

With winter approaching, and the neighborhood birds' food sources dwindling, Nature Cat, Squeeks, Hal and Daisy set out to build bird feeders, to give the birds a much needed food boost for the winter months. But building the feeders and setting out the food is much easier said than done!

**Episode curriculum goal:** To attract different types of birds to your backyard, think about the different beak shapes to decide what kinds of food to put out.

**Clips on PBSKids.org:** "Love Ya, Birdies"; "Let's Make a Bird Feeder!"

\*To view clips, visit [PBSKids.org/video](http://PBSKids.org/video), click on Nature Cat and select Browse.

### Goal of Activity:

Explore how birds use their beaks to get food and build a nest.



### The Basics:

**Number of children:** Any number. Younger children may need help from an adult.

**Space:** Child height tables.

**Time:** Approx. 15 minutes.

### What You'll Need:

- Tools: salad tongs, spoons, tweezers, needle nose pliers
- Plastic grass mat
- Worms and insects (fake)
- Bird food (seeds)
- 2-3 strips of tree bark (about 1 foot long)
- "Beaks as Tools" Prediction Charts (See Appendix A)
- Bird beak photos print out pictures of birds in your area.
- Pencils or crayons



### Preparation (before children arrive):









- Place the grass mat, bark and tools on the table. Sprinkle seeds, acorns, insects and worms on the grass mat and bark.



The Beaks as Tools Activity was created in partnership with Kohl Children's Museum.



## Tally Ho! Directions:

-  **Introduce the activity:** "Birds don't have hands to gather food and supplies to build their nests; they use their beaks and feet. We are going to explore how birds use their beaks as a tool to get food."
-  **Show children photos of birds' beaks and ask:** What shape is the bird's beak? Is it long or short? Is it thick or thin? Are both parts (top/bottom) of the bird's beak the same?
-  **Explain:** "Different birds have different kinds of beaks, depending on what they eat and where their food is. Birds may find food in water, soil, flowers, seeds, or wood. Looking at the beak, what do you think this bird might eat? What makes you think that? Does the beak have anything to help the bird get its food?" (harder, pointier, or curved beak)
-  **Explain:** "Today you are going to pretend you are a bird. Imagine that you don't have hands and the only way to eat your food is by using these tools (show spoons, tweezers, pliers, tongs, etc.) like a bird's beak. (Example: the hummingbird beak looks like the needle nose pliers.) Now it is your turn to try each of these tools to pick up seeds and insects and find out which one works the best."
-  **Hand out:** Beaks and Tools chart and writing utensil so children can record their predictions.
-  **Ask:** "Which of the tools here would be best to pick up the different food: seeds, nuts, worms, insects? Would that tool be able to catch insects from the air? On leaves? In the mud? Get seeds from bark? In grass?"
-  **Say:** "As you use the tool, what bird are you? What could your beak capture for dinner?"
-  **Bonus:** As the children are moving their tools as a beak, make a bug move by hopping, jumping etc.



## Onward and Yonward! Take It Further:

**Things to talk about:** As children explore the activity, ask them questions to engage them about their discoveries:





- 1) Can you describe this beak to me?
- 2) Are the beaks different? How so (size, shape, usage)?
- 3) If the bird eats \_\_\_\_\_ (seeds, nuts, insects) where do you think it finds its food? (Note the characteristics of the beak that could help it find its food).
- 4) Can you think of any other things a bird would use its beak for?
- 5) How might birds' behavior be different because of the beaks they have?
- 6) If you were building a nest with a beak like this tool, what are some materials you might be able to find?
- 7) What was the best tool to get seeds from the grass? The bark? What happened to the seeds when you used the other tools? To catch insects in the air? In the grass?
- 8) What would be a useful type of beak to get insects from the mud?
- 9) Why do you think birds that eat the same food and have the same shape beaks have beaks of different sizes?
  - a. (If birds eat the same food and live in the same environment, they will all be competing for the same food. If beaks differ in size, they will be looking for different size seeds. This way there is enough food for everyone.)



# Beaks as Tools



Predict: Which tool is best for getting seeds?  
Insects? Nuts? You can write which food by  
each tool.

Item		Best	Least
 Salad Tongs			
 Spoon			
 Needle Nose Pliers			
 Tweezers			