



Bird Feeder Experiment

A simple experiment to encourage scientific thinking, observation and recording skills, whilst engaging pupils with nature. It can be pitched at various levels and include thoughts about what an animal needs to survive, identification, or even adaptations.

1. What you'll need

- A range of bird feed types (e.g peanuts, fat balls, seeds, mealworms) – you could also include something that birds do not eat as another comparison
- Bird feeders (you could make your own!)
- Recording sheet or field book (an example is provided below)

You could also have an identification sheet, such as an FSC card if you wanted to look at identifying the birds that visit as well.

2. Set up

- Fill the feeders with the class, each with a different type of feed. Talk about fair tests (should each feeder contain the same amount of food?)
- Hang the feeders in a suitable area (this could be visible from the classroom window, or a quiet area of the school grounds)

Length, timings, and other logistics of recording sessions are obviously context dependent, but ideally the feeders should be given a few days to become established.

3. Recording

- Pupils watch the feeders and mark a tally for each bird that visits each type of feeder (these can then be converted into graphs or pie charts)
- If looking at identification, the type of bird can also be noted
- Encourage general observations about the way the bird appears and its behaviour (e.g. colours, beak shape, size)

4. Ideas for Discussion

- Why do birds need food? What else needs food? What other things do living organisms need to function (e.g. move, grow) and survive?
- Which feeder was visited most often/ least often? Did different types of birds prefer different types of food? Are they herbivores, omnivores or carnivores?
- What types of birds did you learn about? What did they look like? What adaptations did they show? (e.g. flight, beak shape, pretty colours to show off, camouflage)

Example Science Curriculum Links:

KS1

Working scientifically: observing closely, performing simple tests, identifying and classifying, using their observations and ideas to suggest answers to questions, gathering and recording data to help in answering questions.

- identify and name a variety of common animals including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals (Year 1)
- identify and name a variety of animals that are carnivores, herbivores and omnivores (Year 1)
- find out about and describe the basic needs of animals, including humans, for survival (water, food and air) (Year 2)

KS2

Working scientifically: setting up simple practical enquiries, comparative and fair tests, making careful observations, gathering and recording data, using drawings, labelled diagrams, keys, bar charts and tables, draw simple conclusions, raise further questions.

- identify that animals, including humans, need the right types and amount of nutrition, and that they cannot make their own food, they get nutrition from what they eat (Year 3)
- explore and use classification keys to help group, identify and name a variety of living things in their local and wider environment (Year 4)
- give reasons for classifying plants and animals based on specific characteristics (Year 6)
- identify how animals and plants are adapted to suit their environment in different ways and that adaptation may lead to evolution (Year 6)

Example Table

Bird Feeder	Number of Bird Visits	What Birds?	Notes and Observations
1 (Peanuts)			
2 (Suet Balls)			
3 (Seeds)			
4 (Empty)			
5 (Grass)			

