

The Need for Shelter

Discuss: Birds need a warm and safe place to incubate eggs and rear chicks.

How do birds keep their eggs warm?

- *Mostly by sitting on them to transfer their body heat to the eggs.*
Experiment: Could you incubate an egg? Measure the air temperature with a thermometer and then place under your arm to see how much you can warm it up.
- *Australian Brush Turkeys build mounds of rotting leaves in which to bury their eggs, relying on the heat given off by the composting leaves to keep the eggs warm. If you have a compost heap or better still a turkey mound compare the temperature inside and outside.*
- *Cuckoos cheat! They lay their eggs in the nests of other birds for them to keep warm.*

How do birds keep safe while sitting on their eggs?

- Nests are hidden in long grass or shrubs (Black Ducks)
- Nests are positioned high in trees or on cliffs (Eagles)
- The birds are camouflaged (Quail)
- The birds are hidden inside the nest (brightly coloured Parrots in tree hollows)
- Some birds (eg Magpies) attack any other animal that comes near their nest

Make a Bird Nest

Examine the pictures of different nests on the poster and also the specimen nests

Where do birds get plans for their nests or how do they learn how to make them?

They inherit the plans and the knowledge

What materials are used to build nests?

Sticks, mud, moss, grass, hair, feathers, spider web, leaves, termite mound

What tools have the birds used to build their nests?

Only their beaks and claws

Experiment: Attempt to make a nest like those on display (from mud, sticks, grass etc).

- Start by selecting a site eg in a bush, in long grass etc
- Collect your nest building materials and assemble the nest
- Repeat the process using only a pair of forceps – just so that you know what it was like for the bird!