

# Bird Beaks and What Birds Eat (Washington State University Extension)

**Supplies:** Beaks: spoons, scissors, tweezers, clothespins (one “beak” per child). Stomach: paper cups. Bird “food:” cut pipe cleaners (worms), macaroni (snails), and beans (beetles), sunflower seed. Snack: blueberries, sunflower seeds, peanuts in the shell.

## Lesson Plan

Intro/Engage the Students:

Ask what they know about birds and what they eat. Why do they eat what they eat?

## Lesson Steps and Activities:

### 1. Bird beak types

Discuss what kinds of beaks have you seen (long, pointy, short, wide). Explain that bird beaks are adapted to match the type of food they eat. Explain what *adapted* means. Many birds have tweezers-like beaks so they can reach and eat animals that burrow deep. Some birds have scissor-like beaks that rip food apart into bite-sized pieces. Other birds have clothespin-shaped beaks that can crush the hard covering of seeds. Birds with spoon-like beaks can scoop up large numbers of small fish or strain plant material from mud. The different diets of birds allow them to live in the same area at the same time (coexist). This is why many types of birds feed together in one area.

Show beak types and ask children what kinds of birds have beaks similar.

*Spoon* beak-mallard duck, Pelican, Spoonbill

*Scissor* beak-perching birds, tern, kestrel, owl *Clothespin* beak-goldfinch, wren, finch, jay, chickadee

*Tweezer* beak-egret, kingfisher, heron, hummingbird

### 2. Game

Give each child a stomach (cup) and one bird beak. Explain the rules:

Children must stay put in their “nest” until allowed to feed. Birds must pick up their food using only their beaks. Foods may not be scooped or thrown.

Cups must be held upright.

Distribute one type of food (on the ground or a table) and allow birds (children) to leave the nest and feed. Give 1-2 minutes then have the children return to their nests.

Distribute the other foods in turn and allow feeding.

Have children count the number of each food and record their results in the data sheet.

### 3. Discussion

**Are some beaks better at eating a particular food?**

**What other parts of a bird are important to its feeding success? (Long legs-wading webbed feet- swimming, clawed feet-catch prey.)**

**In which habitat does each beak type forage for its food? (Tweezers-mud or field, scissors-field, spoon-slough or pond, clothespin-marsh.)**

**How could pesticides affect birds and their food?**