

Birds of a Feather

A Play

9 & Up

Birds of a Feather explores the nesting behavior of various birds found in our area. This script may be performed as a play, a puppet show or a dramatic reading. See the *Birdsong Puppet Show* activity for performance ideas. Turn your backyard into an outdoor theatre!

Birds of a Feather

Characters: In order of appearance



Also mentioned the

Opening scene: in an old farm meadow at the edge of a woods. Mr. & Mrs. Bluebird are sitting in their nesting box.

Mrs. Bluebird: Well, that's the last straw!

Mr. Bluebird: What is it, my dear? Is something the matter?

Mrs. Bluebird: The matter? No, I just said that's the last straw. I've just added the last piece of straw to our nest, and now it's done.

Mr. Bluebird: And a more beautiful nest I've never seen. I always admire your great talent in nest building. It must have been hard to learn.

Mrs. Bluebird: Why no, not at all. I just seemed to know what to do. It must be instinct.

Mr. Bluebird: And I suppose now you'll be starting to incubate our eggs.

Mrs. Bluebird : Well, not just yet, dear. After all, I'll only lay one egg a day until I have a full clutch – say three or four eggs – and then it'll be time to incubate. That way, all our babies will arrive at the same time.

Mr. Bluebird: And they'll all be ready to learn to fly at the same time. That's what I call good planning. (tapping noise). Uh oh, sounds like an intruder looking for a nest box just like ours. Well, he'd better look somewhere else or he'll have me to deal with! (exits)

Mrs. Bluebird: There's so much competition for nest cavities. It's nearly a full-time job for my mate just to keep intruders away.

Mr. Bluebird: (returning) Well, I took care of him!

Mrs. Bluebird: Who was it this time, dear?

Mr. Bluebird: That was a house wren trying to bring a twig in here to start his nest.

Continued

Birds of a Feather *continued*

Mrs. Bluebird: The idea! Do the male house wrens build the nests instead of the females?

Mr. Bluebird: Not really. The males start nests of twigs wherever they can find a good cavity. When the female comes along, she'll pick one of his nests and then rebuild it to suit herself. She adds feathers and grasses and even spider egg cases.

Mrs. Bluebird: Such clutter!

Mr. Bluebird: Some birds put all kinds of things into their nests, like hair, bark, spider silk. Why, the Great Crested Flycatcher often puts in a snake skin!

Mrs. Bluebird: (shudders) Oooh! Makes my feathers stand on end. I think I need a bit of fresh air. Is the coast clear?

Mr. Bluebird: All clear for take-off. (Mrs. Bluebird exits; Vireo enters)

Red-eyed Vireo: Did I hear you mention spider silk-*eo*?

Mr. Bluebird: Who are you? I haven't seen you in these parts before.

Vireo: If you want to know me, dear-*eo*, then come a little near-*eo*. Look at my eyes, and not at my ear-*eos*!

Mr. Bluebird: You've got red eyes – hey, you must be the red-eyed vireo.

Vireo: Hear, hear, hear-*eo*, I am a vireo! I'm not much to look at, but my nest is very dear-*eo*. I hang it from a branch with spider silk, and cover it with birch bark curl-*eos*.

Mr. Bluebird: Sounds very fancy. You must hate to leave behind such a nice nest every fall.

Vireo: Yes, I shed a tear-*eo*. But those old nests might have parasites in them. And, besides, after the winter, they're very mess-*eo*. It's better to start fresh-*eo*. So, cheerio, Mr. Blue, I must get right to work! (exits)

Mr. Bluebird: Cheerio, Vireo. (Phoebe enters)

Mr. Phoebe: Phoebe, Phoebe! Phoebe, Phoebe! Now where is she?

Mr. Bluebird: Hello, are you looking for someone?

Phoebe: Well, what do you think, buddy. I'm looking for my wife, Phoebe. Phoebe! I've got a great piece of real estate I want to show her.

Mr. Bluebird: Not this real estate! This is my house!

Phoebe: Hey, don't get all ruffled, Feathers! I'm not looking for a cavity. We phoebes build our nests on ledges – in barns, on houses, and if we're really lucky, we get a spot under a bridge.

Mr. Bluebird: I've heard you called "bridge birds."

Phoebe: Sure, and it's not because we play a lot of cards!

Mr. Bluebird: How do you phoebes get your nests to stay up there?

Phoebe: Oh, that's easy. We start with a little mud. Dries hard as cement and sticks like glue.

Mr. Bluebird: I've heard of birds using mud for nest-building – like robins and wood thrushes.

Phoebe: Don't forget barn swallows. Sometimes we build our nests on top of old swallows' nests, and sometimes they use ours. Hey, I'd better stake out my territory before someone else gets there first. Phoebe, Phoebe! (exits; goldfinch enters)

Mr. Goldfinch: Potato chip, potato chip.

Mr. Bluebird: Hello, Goldfinch. You don't seem to be busy defending a nest.

Continued

Birds of a Feather *continued*

Goldfinch: Nah, competition for nest sites is too high in the spring. You ought to do what we Goldfinches do.

Mr. Bluebird: What's that?

Goldfinch: Well, we wait until later in the summer when the thistles bloom and go to seed. Then we have plenty of thistle seed to feed our families, and we can line our nests with thistle down. It makes a fine, soft cradle.

Mr. Bluebird: Well, that may be a great idea for goldfinches, but we bluebirds don't eat thistle seeds. We eat insects. And we don't line our nests with thistle down. We prefer grasses.

Goldfinch: Well, guess you'll do what works for you. I've got to fly! (exits)

Mr. Bluebird: Good bye! (Mrs. Bluebird enters)

Mrs. Bluebird: Hello, dear. You look troubled. What's the matter?

Mr. Bluebird: Barns and bridges! Spider silk, snake skins, and thistle down! What a bunch of bird-brained ideas!

Mrs. Bluebird: What are you talking about?

Mr. Bluebird: Feathering the nest, that's what! But I think we should stick with our plain nest of grasses. It's simple but elegant.

Mrs. Bluebird: I'm happy you like it, dear. I guess you and I are just birds of a feather.

Mr. Bluebird: That we are, Mrs. Blue. That we are!

The End

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Natural cavities are scarce. Our forests are disappearing and old or dead trees are removed from the remaining forests. Building nesting boxes can help ease the competition for a cavity to nest in. Check out our *Nesting Boxes* activity and visit <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/>



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