

Eggs and Baby Birds



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All birds lay eggs.

The eggs are where baby birds grow until they hatch.

Most birds lay their eggs in nests.



A black-winged stilt standing at its nest.

Why Do Birds Build Nests?

Birds build nests to:

- Protect the eggs from enemies.
- Keep the eggs in one place so that the birds can sit on them and keep them warm.
- Keep the eggs warm when the parent birds are away.
- Protect the baby birds when they hatch.



Blackbird chicks in their nest



Some birds build their nests in holes in river banks and trees.

This kingfisher is flying to its nest in a hole in a river bank.



A common kingfisher

Some birds build their nests on the ground.

This nest was built by a malleefowl. It is a huge mound of soil, leaves and small sticks.



The nest of a malleefowl

Many birds build their nests in trees.



This is a song thrush at its nest. The nest is made of dried grass and it is lined with mud.



A hummingbird's nest is tiny. This long-tailed hermit hummingbird's nest is made from cobwebs and moss.



The weaverbird weaves a nest using strips of leaves. The long tunnel helps to protect the eggs and baby birds from snakes.



An emperor penguin and its egg

Some birds do not build nests.
The emperor penguin lives in the Antarctic.
It does not build a nest because there
are no sticks or plants to make the nest.
The female penguin lays one egg.
The male puts it on his feet and tucks it
under his feathers to keep it warm.

Many cuckoos do not build nests.
The female lays her eggs in the nests of
other birds. Can you spot the cuckoo's
egg in this figbird's nest?



*The Koel cuckoo's egg is pink. It is the same size and shape
as the figbird's eggs.*



Eggs

Look at the shape of a hen's egg. Many birds lay eggs that are this shape. Some birds lay eggs of a different shape.



A hen's egg



A guillemot's egg

A guillemot's egg is a very strange shape. Guillemots live on narrow cliff ledges. They do not build a nest. The female lays one egg that is pear-shaped so that it will not roll off the ledge.

Some birds lay coloured eggs. Birds that nest on the ground, such as the fairy tern, lay speckled green or brown eggs. This makes it hard for the bird's enemies to see the eggs.



Eggs of the fairy tern

Did you know ...?

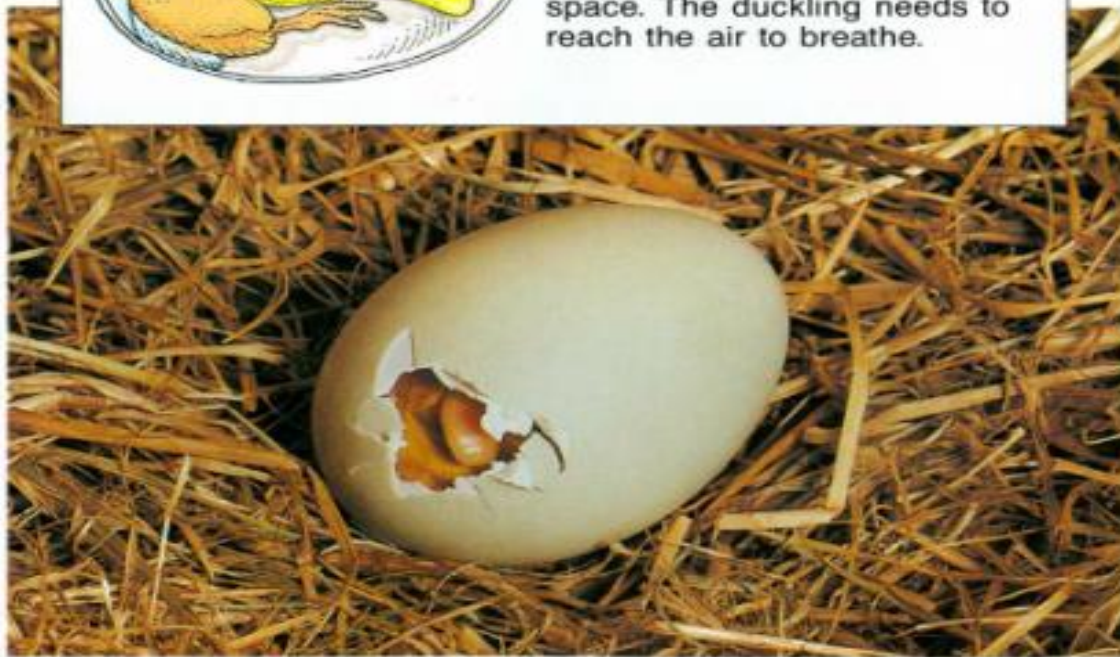
Birds that nest in holes lay white eggs because the eggs are hidden.

Hatching

It takes a lot of time and hard work for a baby bird, like a duckling, to hatch.



Before it hatches, the duckling turns so that its beak points towards the round end of the egg where there is an air space. The duckling needs to reach the air to breathe.



The duckling breaks through the shell using its "egg tooth". The egg tooth is a sharp bump on the duckling's beak. It falls off after the duckling hatches.



The duckling cuts a circle all around the shell.



The duckling then pushes the shell apart and tumbles out. The duckling has hatched!



Baby Birds

Look at these song thrush chicks.
They are born very helpless.
They grow very quickly in the nest.
When they hatch, song thrush
baby birds have no feathers.
Their eyes are not open.



These song thrush baby birds are begging for food from their parents. They have brightly coloured mouths so that their parents can see them. They have small feathers.



These nine-day-old song thrush baby birds are growing feathers.



These thirteen-day-old song thrush baby birds are covered with feathers. They are fledged. The baby birds will leave the nest in the next five days.



Look at these baby birds.
They are covered with soft fluffy
down feathers when they hatch.
Their eyes are open and they can
find food for themselves.



These pheasant chicks will be able to fly in two weeks.

