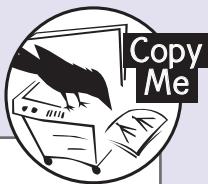


# Avian Arts and Crafts



## BARK PAINTINGS

The Maya were the first people to make paper from trees. They learned to peel bark from the fig tree and pound it very smooth using water and stones. The Mayan and Aztec people made books called *codices*. Today artisans in Mexico and Central America still make bark paper and paint designs of animals, plants, or village scenes using bright colors and fantastic designs. Now you can create a replica of a bark painting of birds with paper sacks and paint.

**Materials:** Brown paper grocery bags, newspaper, fine-line black markers, pencils, paintbrushes (fine- and wide-tipped), brown or black liquid tempera paint, bright tempera paint (magenta, turquoise, yellow-green, yellow, pink, orange, purple, white), water-based fluorescent paint. Wax paper and an iron are optional. If possible, obtain an example of a bark painting.

### Directions:

1. To prepare the paper, get grocery bags and cut rectangles (about 5" X 7").
2. Wet the sheets of paper and squeeze each piece into a wad. Open the wad and smooth out the wrinkled sheet on newspaper.
3. While the paper is still wet, brush on thin brown or black tempera paint over the entire sheet. You can crumple up the paper again and rub the paint into the wrinkles to give it more texture. Let the paper dry and iron it out if desired. You should be able to see darker paint in the wrinkles of the paper.
4. When the paper is dry, use a pencil to make a fanciful and decorative design on the paper. Outline it with a fine-line black marker.
5. Fill in the pictures with colored paint in the brightest colors available. Add fluorescent paint for detail. Keep the background (around the edges) as textured brown paper.
6. Create a nice finish by ironing waxed paper over the bark painting. *Note: Make certain an adult is present to operate the iron (protect it by covering it with aluminum foil).*

## SKETCHING AND PAINTING

Sketching and painting birds are activities that can be structured or left open to individual interpretation. Invite an art teacher or local artist to instruct or facilitate this activity. Have a variety of art materials on-hand, as well as bird field guides, bird posters or brochures, or live birds if possible. Be sure some resources are available to help participants paint the appropriate habitat surrounding the bird.

Consider the following ideas:

- Watercolors of landscapes and birds found in: wetlands, rainforests, woodlands, deserts, boreal forests, or the seashore
- Charcoal or colored pencil sketches of birds
- Acrylic and pastel paintings of birds
- Chalk drawings of birds

**Materials:** Sketch and/or watercolor paper, a variety of paints, paint brushes, chalk, charcoal and colored pencils, and other drawing and painting tools.

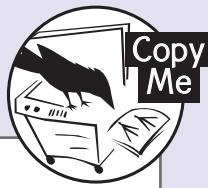


## ORIGAMI

Origami, the ancient Japanese art of paper folding, is a wonderful way to create a three-dimensional art project for your festival. Paper folding can be enjoyed by everyone and materials are cheap. Penguins, cranes, ducks, eagles, hens, and roosters are among the many origami shapes under the theme of birds. Leaders for this activity should practice making a variety of shapes before the festival so they have examples to show and know how to help participants. Find out whether your community has an origami group, with members who can offer expert assistance.

**Materials:** Provide squares of thin, strong paper.

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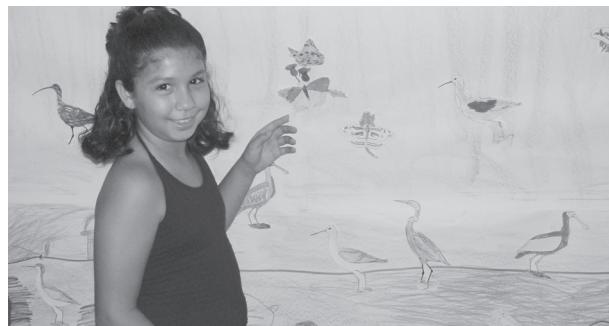
**Directions:** Cut colorful wrapping paper into squares ahead of time. The squares must be cut perfectly so the paper can be folded correctly. Provide a selection of examples and instructions for folding simple origami birds. Many excellent books and resources teach how to create origami shapes. Instructions can be found in a variety of books on origami or on various websites. (Take a look at *Paper Pandas and Jumping Frogs* by Florence Temko, China Books & Periodicals, Inc., for ideas, history of papermaking, and step-by-step instructions for origami shapes.)

## BIRD ART MURAL

For this project, participants create an original bird art mural to build a feeling of cooperation and community. Participants can look at pictures or posters of birds for inspiration. You may want to provide a theme to work with, such as “rainforest birds” or “birds in my neighborhood.” Have several large pieces of mural paper ready; as one piece gets full, you can replace it with a blank piece. Secure the mural paper to tables or a wall space with tape. If painting, provide items for clean-up on a separate table. Display the finished murals at the festival.

**Materials:** Large pieces of mural paper (butcher paper works well), paints, paint brushes, pencils, markers, and crayons, tape, wall space or a large table for mural design, one or two tables for supplies, and images of birds from posters or books.

**Variation:** Students can help to make a big sidewalk chalk bird art mural. Provide buckets of chalk and mark off a large flat sidewalk or asphalt area for participants to work on. You may want to start this project by having an artist begin the mural with a few outlines or sketches of birds for participants to color. (*Note: Most people are not concerned about writing on the sidewalk with chalk; however, be aware of where you are using the chalk and make certain to ask permission if you think anyone may be concerned.*)



## “CAKE” DECORATING

Students and festival participants will have lots of fun decorating suet cakes. (*Suet* is a nutritious mix of fat, flour, seeds, and other appetizing bird foods blended together.) Why not have a cake decorating contest and award a blue ribbon to the best cake at the festival? Have fun and be creative—the birds can take delight in your creations! Suet attracts woodpeckers and other types of birds that you might not see at a seed feeder.

**Materials:** Suet, peanut butter, cornmeal, bird seed, sunflower seeds, peanuts, dried raisins, cranberries, and plastic mesh (like the plastic mesh bags that onions are sold in.)

**Directions:** Check if your local supermarket or butcher shop will donate suet for this activity. Either cut or mold the suet into squares or rounds. The number and size of cakes depends on how many people you anticipate doing the activity.

Use the “Materials” list, above, to provide an array of ingredients that can be pressed into the cakes. Encourage participants to be creative and colorful in their decorating scheme. (*Note: Always mix cornmeal or flour with peanut butter or soft fats to absorb the grease. Peanut butter or soft fats alone may choke a bird or clog its nostrils.*)

Provide plastic mesh to transport the cakes home with participants. You can cut the mesh from potato or onion bags. Participants can then hang their suet feeders from a branch or tie them securely to the trunk of a tree. The mesh allows the birds to pull the seeds and suet through the holes.