Crafting Nests for Orphaned Nestling Baby Birds

Orphaned baby birds need to be kept warm. Knit and crocheted nests provide them with warmth and cushioning while they’re cared for in our wildlife hospital. Rescuers feed them throughout the day, washing and replacing the nests with clean ones daily. Woolen nests are perfect.

Why do you have so many different patterns? We have three nest pattern sizes because fledglings come in different sizes, and babies of the same species are usually grouped together. Orphaned hummingbirds need a small nest, while orphaned fledgling doves need a large nest. A group of four baby finches will need a fairly large nest too.

Is this like penguin sweaters? Do you really need nests or are you going to sell them for money? We really need nests. Our Birdroom director at WildCare says they’re like towels in a nursery, one can never have too many. The nests will be utilized in our Birdroom or at licensed bird rescue centers across the country. Please be sure to follow the guidelines in the patterns below to ensure that your nest(s) are safe for our baby birds and useful to our bird caregivers.

Why do you need so many nests? Because bird poop happens. Nests get very dirty over the course of a day in the Birdroom. Each baby bird must be fed approximately every 45 minutes from dawn till dusk. Although the nests are lined with tissue, they still get dirty from food and poop and need to be changed. When our baby birds need to be cleaned, we just put them into a new nest and put the old one into the dirty laundry basket.

Why do you need so many nests at one time during the year? The biological cycle of many types of songbirds is such that their eggs are laid and hatched in the warm months of late spring and early summer. Baby birds can become orphaned for a variety of reasons: they fall out of trees, their mothers die or their habitats get disturbed.

There are hundreds of licensed bird rescue groups across the United States that take in these orphaned baby birds after humans have found and rescued them, and rehabilitate them until they can be released back into the wild. May and June are the start of “baby bird season” in North American wildlife hospitals. That's when the babies start arriving, and that's when the nests are needed.

Have more questions? Visit our Frequently Asked Questions page at wildcarebayarea.org/nestFAQ, email us at nests@wildcarebayarea.org. Knitting-specific questions may be best answered in our Ravelry craft-along group at http://www.ravelry.com/groups/baby-bird-nest-knit-a-long/ [free login required]

How can I help?

Using our directions, knit or crochet baby bird nests and send them to us along with your information form (see next page).

Usable nests are tightly knit (or crocheted), and are round and cup-shaped with stiff sides. Nests should be at least 4” high. Please make sure your nest(s) are tightly constructed and that they follow the guidelines below.
Baby Bird Nest Donation Information Form

Thank you for crafting nests for our orphaned baby birds!

Please fill out this form and send it to WildCare with your donated nest(s), and we’ll send you an email thank-you and a special image for your phone or computer desktop showing one of WildCare’s baby birds in a donated hand-crafted nest.

You will also receive regular updates on the campaign with additional photos and videos of baby birds thriving in their knitted and crafted nests!

WildCare will need a large number of nests this Baby Season, but we’ll also be sharing donated nests with other bird rescues as part of the Baby Bird Nest Campaign.

If you have any questions about nests, please contact us at: nests@wildcarebayarea.org.

Please complete the following information and include this form with your donated nest(s).

Nests donated: ____________________________ Date________________
# small ______ # medium ______ # large _______
____________________________________________________
Full Name
____________________________________________________
Street Address
____________________________________________________
City, State Zip
_____________________________________
Email Address
(When you include your email address, we’ll send you a thank-you email including, a photo of a baby bird in a handmade nest in our hospital and a receipt you can use for tax purposes)

Please don’t share my email address with other organizations. □

I am including a donation to feed orphaned baby birds.

YES □ NO □

AMOUNT:______________________________
Name on card: ___________________________ Visa MC AMEX Discover
Card number: _____________________________ Exp Date: ______ CVC code: _____

Send nests to:
WildCare Baby Bird Nest Campaign
76 Albert Park Lane
San Rafael, CA 94901

What does WildCare do for baby birds?

At WildCare, we help 800 – 1,000 orphaned baby birds in our hospital each year during Baby Season.

To make them healthy for their future lives back in the wild, our hospital staff and volunteers must feed our tiniest baby birds 15 times a day or more. That’s 60 servings of food for just 4 baby birds in a single day!

It costs $5 to provide 15 nutritious meals a day for one of these little patients.

Please support “5 for 15” today by making a gift in $5 increments.

$10 will feed one baby for two days.
$25 will feed a nest full of five babies for a single day.
$50 will help us feed 5 babies for two days!

With hundreds of hungry baby bird mouths to feed, every dollar counts.

Donate using this form or at wildcarebayarea.org/5for15.
LARGE FELTED NEST

Pattern for large size felted bird nest using wool that can be felted.

Pattern notes:
Please make sure your nest is tightly knit and at least 4” tall. For the safety of the baby birds, please don’t use novelty yarn (fun fur, fuzzy or metallic materials) in your nest. It doesn’t matter if the edges curl—often the woolen nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. After you knit this, you felt it, and it will become a sturdy, tightly woven shape that will keep birds warm and safe.

Finished Measurements:
Approximately 4” tall and 7” in diameter after felting.

Materials:
100 grams bulky weight wool yarn or chunky weight wool yarn held double
Size 15 circular needles, 24” length, or as preferred
Size 15 double pointed needles, set of 4
Darning or yarn needles

DIRECTIONS

Nest sides:
Cast on 48 stitches using a simple cast on. Circumference of your knitting should be at least 28” before felting. At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 5.5” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.
Row 1: *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2: *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3: *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4: *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5: *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6: *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7: *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created.

Finish by fulling, or felting, the nest. A great way to do it is to put the nest in a pillow case, tie off the end of the pillow case and wash it in the washing machine with a load of heavy laundry, like jeans, on hot with a cold rinse. Remove from laundry, shape and let dry. Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
LARGE UNFELTED NEST

Pattern for large bird nest using smooth washable yarn – cotton, acrylic or washable wool. **For the safety of the baby birds, nests must be tightly knit so that bird feet don’t get caught in the loops.**

**Please do NOT use novelty yarn (fun fur, fuzzy or metallic materials) in your nest.**

Pattern notes:
For your nest to be safe for the baby birds, it must be knit tightly. If you can push your fingers through the weave of the nest, it is too loose, and could be dangerous to the baby birds. It doesn’t matter if the edges curl. Often the knitted nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. Nests should be at least 4” tall to be useful in the Birdroom.

Finished Measurements:
Approximately 4” tall and 7” in diameter

Materials:
90 grams of bulky weight washable yarn
Size 11 circular needles, 24” length, or as preferred
Size 11 double pointed needles , set of 4
Darning or yarn needles

DIRECTIONS

Nest sides:
Holding the yarn double, cast on 40 stitches using a simple cast on.
At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 4” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.
Row 1: *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2: *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3: *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4: *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5: *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6: *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7: *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created. Weave in ends.

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
MEDIUM FELTED NEST

Pattern for medium sized bird nest using wool yarn for felting.

Pattern notes:
It doesn’t matter if the edges curl. Often the woolen nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. After you knit this, you felt it, and it will become a sturdy, tightly woven shape that will keep birds warm and safe.

Finished Measurements:
Final dimension should be approximately 4” tall and 6” in diameter.

Materials:
90 grams chunky weight yarn or worsted weight yarn held double.
Size 13 circular needles, 24” length, or as preferred
Size 13 double pointed needles, set of 4
Darning or yarn needle

Steps: Nest sides:
Cast on 48 stitches using a simple cast on. Circumference of your knitting should be about 24” before felting. At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 5.5” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.
Row 1: *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2: *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3: *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4: *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5: *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6: *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7: *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created.

Finish by fulling, or felting it. A great way to do it is to put the nest in a pillow case, tie off the end of the pillow case and wash it in the washing machine with a load of heavy laundry, like jeans, on hot with a cold rinse. Remove from laundry, shape and let dry

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
MEDIUM UNFELTED NEST

Pattern for medium bird nest using smooth washable yarn – cotton, acrylic or washable wool. **For the safety of the baby birds, nests must be tightly knit so that bird feet don't get caught in the loops.**

Please do NOT use novelty yarn (fun fur, fuzzy or metallic materials) in your nest.

Pattern notes:
For your nest to be safe for the baby birds, it must be knit tightly. If you can push your fingers through the weave of the nest, it is too loose, and could be dangerous to the baby birds. It doesn't matter if the edges curl. Often the knitted nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. Nests should be at least 4” tall to be useful in the Birdroom.

Finished Measurements:
Approximately 4” tall and 6” in diameter.

Materials:
80 grams chunky weight washable yarn or worsted weight yarn held double.
Size 10.5 circular needles, 24” length or as preferred, and/or double pointed needles, set of 4
Darning or yarn needle

DIRECTIONS
Nest sides:
Cast on 48 stitches using a simple cast on.
At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 4” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.
Row 1: *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2: *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3: *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4: *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5: *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6: *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7: *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created. Weave in ends.

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
SMALL FELTED NEST

Pattern for small size felted bird nest using wool that can be felted.

Pattern notes:
Please make sure your nest is tightly knit and at least 3” tall. For the safety of the baby birds, please don’t use novelty yarn (fun fur, fuzzy or metallic materials) in your nest. It doesn’t matter if the edges curl— often the woolen nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. After you knit this, you felt it, and it will become a sturdy, tightly woven shape that will keep birds warm and safe.

Finished Measurements:
Approximately 3” tall and 3” in diameter, after felting.

Materials:
40 grams worsted weight wool yarn or aran weight yarn held double.
Size 10.5 circular needles, 24” length or double pointed needles, set of 4
Darning or yarn needle

DIRECTIONS

Nest sides:
Cast on 48 stitches using a simple cast on. Circumference of your knitting should be about 20” before felting. At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 4.5” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.
Row 1:  *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2:  *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3:  *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4:  *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5:  *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6:  *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7:  *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created. Weave in ends.

Finish by fulling, or felting it. A great way to do it is to put the nest in a pillow case, tie off the end of the pillow case and wash it in the washing machine with a load of heavy laundry, like jeans, on hot with a cold rinse. Remove from laundry, shape and let dry.

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
**SMALL UNFELTED NEST**

Pattern for small bird nest using smooth washable yarn – cotton, acrylic or washable wool. **For the safety of the baby birds, nests must be tightly knit so that bird feet don’t get caught in the loops.**

**Please do NOT use novelty yarn (fun fur, fuzzy or metallic materials) in your nest.**

Pattern notes:
For your nest to be safe for the baby birds, it must be knit tightly. If you can push your fingers through the weave of the nest, it is too loose, and could be dangerous to the baby birds. It doesn’t matter if the edges curl. Often the knitted nests are put inside of plastic containers, and the curled edge folds over the plastic. Nests should be at least 4” tall to be useful in the Birdroom.

Finished Measurements:
Approximately 3” tall and 4” in diameter

Materials:
30 grams worsted weight washable yarn.
Size 8 circular needles, 24” length or size 8 double pointed needles, set of 4
Darning or yarn needle

**DIRECTIONS**

Nest sides:
Holding the yarn double, cast on 48 stitches using a simple cast on.
At end of first row, place marker and connect to knit in round being careful not to twist stitches. Knit in round for 20 rows or until piece measures at least 3” tall.

Base:
Decrease in each row as follows until a flat base has been created. Switch to DPNS if needed.

Row 1: *Knit 6, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 2: *Knit 5, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 3: *Knit 4, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 4: *Knit 3, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 5: *Knit 2, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 6: *Knit 1, knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.
Row 7: *Knit 2 together* repeat between stars until end of row.

Leaving a length of 9 inches, break off yarn. Thread needle and run needle and thread through all the stitches on the needles. Remove needles, pull tight, and sew end of yarn into stitches until tight, secure base is created. Weave in ends.

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!
CRAFT A BIRD POUCH

Baby birds need warm nests, but they also often need warm blankets. Caregivers place warm woolen pouches around the baby bird nests so that they are covered on all sides and protected from cold air and draughts.

Here is how to make one by recycling a wool sweater. Two different sizes are given.

Finished measurements: 6”x7”, 12”x9”

Materials:
Printed pattern (see below)
Recycled 100% wool sweater
Darning needle
100% wool yarn, not washable wool
Sewing pins
Felt tip marker
Scissors

DIRECTIONS
Cut out the pattern pieces for the medium pouch below.

Cut out pattern along orange lines. After pinning pattern to sweater, through both layers, cut along orange lines.

Remove pattern.

Pin both layers of sweater together. Draw blue lines from pattern onto sweater with marker.

Using darning needle, sew along blue lines.

Thread the darning needle, and sew the pieces together using the wool yarn.

Be sure to secure the yarn by weaving into the sweater on both ends.

Finish by fulling, or felting it.

A great way to do it is to put the nest in a pillowcase, tie off the end of the pillowcase and wash it in the washing machine with a load of heavy laundry, like jeans, on hot with a cold rinse. Remove from laundry, shape and let dry. Trim excess fabric beyond sewing lines with scissors.

Fill out the Baby Bird Nest Donation Form and send it in!