



**Playdatebox**

MARCH 2024

# BIRDWATCHING

PLAYDATEBOX.COM NEWSLETTER



## CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

APRIL 20-22

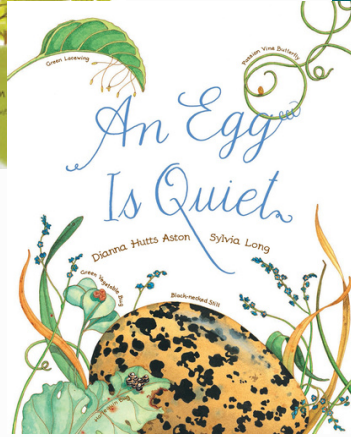
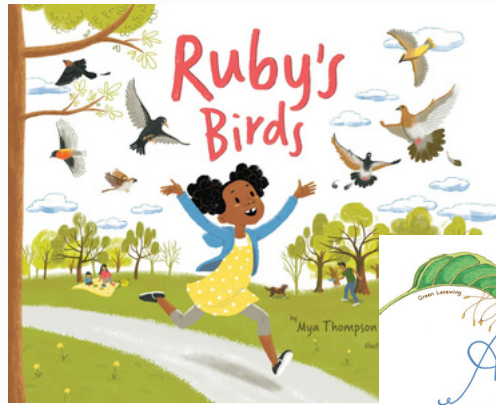
LOOK FOR AN OUTING TO AN AVIARY OR BIRD REFUGE YOU CAN ENJOY WITH GRANDKIDS. MOST WILL HAVE SPECIAL EXHIBITS AND ACTIVITIES IN HONOR OF EARTH DAY.

## THIS IS FOR THE BIRDS!

A MONTH OF FUN WITH  
BIRDWATCHING

The Birdwatching Playdatebox Newsletter includes enough fun for several playdates, so make sure you spread them out:

- 4 Recommended Read-Aloud Picture Books
- Birdseed Cookies recipe
- Birdhouse decoupage art project instructions
- Our favorite children's binoculars
- Free Birdwatching Journal - Download a copy and go birdwatching to find birds that live in your neighborhood
- Bird Nest Game - Move the eggs into their matching nests in this cooperative counting and color matching game
- Our Favorite Bird ID App - Merlin Bird ID



## FAVORITE READ-ALOUDS

BIRD-THEMED BOOKS TO SHARE WITH YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

### Playdate #1

Read these fun books about birds, nests, and eggs via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another videoconferencing app. Click the links to be directed to a YouTube version and share your screen if you aren't in the same location.

*Feathers For Lunch*: A sly cat sneaks out and goes looking for lunch. He finds 12 beautiful backyard birds, but only gets feathers for lunch. ages 2-5 years.

*You Nest Here With Me*: Mama birds make all kinds of nests, and human mamas have a cozy place for children to rest at night too. Ages 4-8.

*Ruby's Birds*: When Ruby discovers there are birds in her own urban neighborhood, her "spark moment" turns her into a lifelong birdwatcher. Ages 3-7.

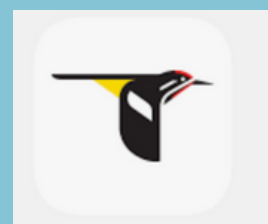
Try a free 14-day subscription to Readeo (see [Readeo.com](https://www.reeado.com)). "*An Egg is Quiet*"--a book about all kinds of eggs, is one of the titles currently available to read using this fun shared-screen technology. This title is appropriate for older readers ages 5-8.

## Merlin Bird ID App

There are several free bird identification apps available, but we've had a lot of fun with Cornell University's Merlin Bird ID app.

The easy-to-use interface makes identifying a bird simple, and we've had great success using it with kids.

Download the app at <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/download/>





## Playdate #2

### Set up a birdhouse



#### **Create a Bird Habitat in your own backyard:**

The Birdwatching Playdatebox includes two clear acrylic birdhouses and a starter supply of birdseed. One birdhouse is for you and one is for a grandchild. These attach easily to an outside window (moisten the suction cups slightly before attaching to help them adhere better). Once in place, it may take a few days for birds to discover yours. Be patient!

#### **How to Do This Remotely:**

Ship your extra birdhouse to a grandchild with instructions for how to mount it. Once your birdhouses are in place, you can text each other photographs of birds who visit.

It's tricky to get close enough for a good photo, but once your birds start to visit regularly, you can sit quietly in a chair near the window and wait for a moment to grab a photo.

## Playdate #3

### Make Birdseed Cookies



#### **Birdseed Cookies:**

Visit the website for a recipe and instructions for making these fun cookies you can hang outdoors for the birds.

[Playdatebox.com/birdseed-cookies](http://Playdatebox.com/birdseed-cookies)

You'll need some supplies:

- birdseed
- unflavored gelatin (Knox)
- cookie cutters
- twine
- plastic straw
- bowl, spoon
- parchment paper or aluminum foil
- saucepan

#### **How to Do This Remotely:**

Have your own online cooking show. Gather ingredients in both kitchens. Set up your laptop or smartphone on a tripod to show your work surface. Schedule a video call and then walk your grandchild through the process, just as if they were in your own kitchen.



## #PlayLibrary

### Kids' binoculars

Consider adding a good pair (or two) of children's binoculars to your Grandma Play Library. These make a great birthday gift along with your Birdwatching Playdatebox! I have two sets on hand in my own Play Library.

Kids love looking through binoculars, and there are several play versions available online, but I'd recommend spending a little extra and getting a set of real binoculars made especially for kids. These are great for increasing a child's curiosity about things they see in the world around them. Find a great [review of kids binoculars on WorldBirds.org](#).

This beautifully-designed site is eye candy if you are looking for gorgeous images of birds. It's also full of helpful information for beginners.

A GREAT PAIR OF KIDS BINOCULARS IS A GOOD INVESTMENT.

TRY TAKING A PAIR ON YOUR NEXT NATURE WALK WITH A GRANDCHILD!

## Playdate #4

### Decoupage a Birdhouse

For a fun activity perfect for a Grandma Playdate, try [making a decoupage birdhouse](#). Most of the supplies are probably already lying around your house. You'll need:

- A wood birdhouse (find one at any craft or hobby shop)
- Strips of colorful paper (heavy scrapbooking paper is fabulous!)
- White glue, or Mod Podge
- A paintbrush

Just tear strips of colorful paper into pieces. Thin some white glue with water and glue paper pieces onto the wood surface of your birdhouse. Keep layering more strips until all of the wood is covered and then coat the entire thing with another coat of thinned glue or Mod Podge.

**Try This Remotely Too! The birdhouse in the photo at left was done entirely via video call!**







**Playdatebox**

VISIT

**PLAYDATEBOX.COM**

BEST IDEAS FROM OUR WEBSITE THIS MONTH



## Playdate #5 and #6

DOWNLOAD A FREE BIRDWATCHING JOURNAL AND GO BIRDWATCHING!

Once you have your binoculars in hand (make a pretend set out of a recycled toilet paper tube if needed) it's time to set out on your first birdwatching expedition!

You'll find lots of birdwatching clubs online if you're serious about having a great first experience. Know that a good pair of binoculars will be a must!

But if you are just looking for a great hike with the grandkids, dress in warm clothing in neutral colors. be prepared to listen carefully and go slowly. Make it a game and stop when the game is at its best (not after everyone is exhausted).

Download our free birdwatching journal to take along with you on your hike. It will help you teach your grandchild how to observe. Curiosity is one of the best gifts you can give!

## 2 FREE DOWNLOADS!

DOWNLOAD THE BIRD NEST GAME ABOVE FROM OUR WEBSITE!

DESIGNED BY GRANDMA RARA, IT'S A FREE PRINTABLE. YOU'LL JUST NEED A FEW MINIATURE EGGS OR SOME STARBURST JELLY BEANS CANDIES TO PLAY!

FIND THE DOWNLOAD HERE



## VISIT THE PLAY LIBRARY

A NEW SECTION OF OUR WEBSITE SHOWCASES OUR BEST TOY INVESTMENTS

Like many Millennials, my children have managed to afford raising children of their own only because they are diligent minimalists. They are minimalists because between ridiculously expensive housing and job-hopping from state to state in an effort to find the best way to pay the bills, they have had to learn how to scale back their expectations and go without.

Consequently, stuff isn't super important to them. But giving *stuff* to their children is still important to me. The solution was to create a Toy Library. They can check out toys (including toys to borrow and take home), then return them when they are finished playing.

Each of my grandchildren has a Toy Library Card they can use to check out the Lite Brite set, or the Blue Slime Making Kit, or the any of the things their parents don't have space or patience for. They can play with it at my house if the parents have vetoed it (blue slime on white countertops is a no-go). The "Play Library" link on [Playdatebox.com](http://Playdatebox.com) will become a collection of our favorite grandma-recommended, kid-approved toys.

### Play Value

*Play Value* is a term coined by David Silverglate, who is a toy inventor and designer.

Silverglate recommends that parents and grandparents look for toys that have a maximum *Play Value*.

*Play Value* is determined by thinking about not only how "fun" a toy looks, but also how long the fun will last once a child begins playing.

Some toys are fun and mesmerizing, but only for a single play session. Look for toys that will retain their play value because they are open-ended and can be played with in many ways.