

Bird and Wildlife Rescue Nests

Crochet



At wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centers all over the world, dedicated staff and volunteers care for injured and orphaned birds and wildlife, with the goal of eventually releasing them back into the wild. Many of these centers appreciate hand-crafted “nests,” ranging from tiny nests for a single baby hummingbird to larger nests that can hold a litter of orphaned baby rabbits, as well as all sizes in between.

Since knitting creates a more flexible fabric than crochet, crochet nests made with tight stitches, flat bases, and double-walled sides provide better stability, so the nests won’t tip over as easily when occupied by active nestlings.

Here’s an easy pattern for these nests, in various sizes. Included are notes and tips, so that even a beginner can create well-crafted nests. Also included are links to relevant tutorials, for those of you who’d like to refer to them.

Skill Level: Easy

Materials Needed:

- Yarn, worsted weight, machine washable and dryable, non-fuzzy acrylic, such as Red Heart Super Saver, 100% acrylic (7 oz/198g, 364 yds/333 m), two skeins. I like to use the color **Cafe Latte**. (*Tip: Since this pattern uses two strands, held together, throughout, I think it's easier to work from two skeins of yarn, rather than from both ends of one skein.*)

Two skeins will allow you to create several nests in various sizes. (*Note: If you'd like your nests to “nest” inside of each other, crochet only the even- or only the odd-numbered bases in the*

(chart below.) The approximate weight of each finished nest is also included on the chart, so you can estimate how many nests you will be able to make with your yarn.

Injured and/or orphaned babies don't care what color their nests are, so feel free to use your leftover yarn. Just be sure it's 100% acrylic and not fuzzy. For example, I used Caron Simply Soft, 100% acrylic (208 yds/190 m, 4 oz/113.4 g) for the nest in the above photo, because that's what I had in my stash at the time. (*Note: Please don't use fuzzy yarns. Apparently, fuzz can come loose and get caught in little mouths, or even be swallowed, potentially causing life-threatening gastric problems.*)

- Crochet hook, size H (5.00 mm)
- Stitch marker (*Tip: A running stitch marker of contrasting yarn works best for spiral-crochet projects, like this one. I like to use dental floss.* <http://www.littleowlshut.com/#How-to-use-running-stitch-marker/cn43/565dcfe10cf2099ad66eef92>)
- Measuring tape
- Scissors
- Blunt yarn needle for weaving in ends.

Gauge: Approximately 14 stitches x 15 rows in 4" x 4", double stranded. Exact gauge is not crucial for this project. It's more important to create relatively tight stitches, to minimize holes and achieve a sturdy nest.

Stitches Used: Chain stitch, single crochet, slip stitch, and how to crochet through the back loop. You can review stitch instructions here: http://www.craftyarn council.com/tip_crochet.html

You'll also need to know how to create a magic ring, also known as a magic loop: <http://www.planetjune.com/blog/tutorials/magic-ring-right-handed> or <http://www.planetjune.com/blog/tutorials/magic-ring-left-handed>

Abbreviations:

inc	increase, by working two single crochet stitches into one stitch
sc	single crochet (called double-crochet in the UK)
st	stitch
pm	place marker
()	work the instructions between the parentheses as many times as indicated

Notes:

- These nests are worked with two strands of yarn held together, throughout. This creates a stiffer, sturdier fabric and minimizes holes between the stitches. The nests are worked in continuous spirals, so there's no need to join or turn your work, once your magic loop is created.
- Try to keep your stitches relatively tight, so your nest won't be soft or floppy. We don't want active babies tumbling out of their nests! Tight stitches will also help prevent tiny feet and

claws from getting caught in holes in the fabric, which can cause serious, even life-threatening, injury to fragile little legs and feet.

- I find it saves a lot of time and frustration if I use a running stitch marker and count my stitches after every row of the base and every few rows on the sides.
- Caregivers often line nests with Kleenex or paper towels, to catch droppings. This takes up a bit of room, so if the nest sides seem a bit tall to you, that's why.
- Nests with sides that can be partially or fully folded are helpful for all but the tiniest nest. Double-sided nests that can be folded all the way down to the base are the most stable, so they better contain active occupants or older nestlings, who like to perch on the sides of the nests, as they would in the wild. (*Note: Please don't stitch the double-sides to the base of the nests. Sometimes, caregivers like to have the option of a very deep nest, e.g. for cavity nesters.*)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Creating the base of the nest:

Make a magic ring: (Also called a “magic loop”.) The magic ring helps prevent the center hole left by other methods. Refer to the section “Stitches Used” (above) for link to a tutorial. Be sure to work it with two strands of yarn, held together.

Round 1: Work 6 single crochet (sc) stitches into the center of your magic ring. Be sure to crochet over the tail yarn and the ring yarn (all four strands), so that the magic ring will close properly. When you finish, you should have a total of 6 sc stitches. (*Tip: Be sure to count only the sc stitches. Don't count the stitch on your hook or the chain stitch that secures the beginning of your magic ring.*)

Pull the tail yarn to close the ring as tightly as possible, so there won't be a hole in the center of your ring which might catch little feet or claws. It should close easily and completely. Join your work with a slip stitch and then place your marker (pm). Don't weave in the tail ends until your nest is complete.

Round 2: Beginning with the first sc of your previous round (Round 1, above) (*not the chain stitch that secures the beginning of the magic ring*), inc (2 single crochet in each stitch) all the way around, being sure to always catch both strands of yarn. When you finish this round, you will have a total of 12 sc stitches, not counting the stitch on your hook or the chain stitch that secures your magic ring. Place your marker (pm).

Continue with the following rounds, always starting in the first sc of your previous round. (*Tip: When you reach your desired base diameter, slip stitch the final stitch of your final row, before proceeding to the First Round of the sides. This will minimize the “jog” that happens in spiral crochet and make your base a bit more stable.*)

Round 3: (sc in next sc, then inc in next sc) six times (18 stitches), pm

Round 4: sc in next sc, then (inc, sc 2) five times, inc, sc 1 (24 stitches), pm

Round 5: (sc 3, inc) six times (30), pm

Round 6: sc 2 (inc, sc 4) five times, inc, sc 2 (36), pm

Round 7: (sc 5, inc) six times (42), pm

Round 8: sc 3 (inc, sc 6) five times, inc, sc 3 (48), pm

Round 9: (sc 7, inc) six times (54), pm

Round 10: sc 4 (inc, sc 8) five times, inc, sc 4 (60), pm

Round 11: (sc 9, inc) six times (66), pm

Round 12: sc 5 (inc, sc 10) five times, inc, sc 5 (72), pm

Creating the sides of the nest:

First Round: sc in the back loop of every stitch, for this round only, being sure to catch both strands of the back loop. This round will create a ridge that will help keep the base of your nest flat and the sides upright. (*Note: At first, the ridge may seem to pull the walls inward. This is normal. Just keep the front side out, throughout the project.*)

Subsequent Rounds for sides: sc all stitches until the sides are approximately the height appropriate to the base. It's helpful to count your stitches, every few rows.

Final Base Round #	Base Diameter (inches)	Side Height Unfolded (inches)	Side Height Folded (inches)	Number of Side Rows <i>(including First Round)</i>	Approx. Yarn Required (grams)
3	1.75	1.25	n/a	4	6
4	2.25	3	1.5	9	20
5	2.75	4	1.5	10	26
6	3.5	3.5	1.75	12	38
7	4	3.75	1.75	13	49
8	4.25	4.25	2	15	63
9	5.25	4.5	2.25	16	75
10	5.75	5	2.5	17	91
11	6.5	5.25	2.75	18	106
12	7	5.75	3	19	120

Finishing:

Fasten off. (*Tip: I like to slip stitch the final stitch of my last row, to minimize the jog created by spiral crochet. Then I proceed to the “invisible finish”: <http://www.planetjune.com/blog/amigurumi-help/fastening-off> Scroll down to section “Finishing an open piece that will be visible (Invisible Finish)”).*)

Weave in ends. Tighten your magic ring again, to be sure it's as tight as possible and has no center hole, before weaving in the ends.

Your nest will be machine washed and dried over and over again, so carefully weaving in your ends and using a back weave will keep your yarn ends secure and help keep your nest useful for a longer period of time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyvdsTz9Jso> (*Tip: To avoid unsightly and unnecessary bulk, separate the two strands of yarn and weave each strand into different stitches.*)

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Thank you for supporting your local wildlife rehabilitation center. Here's a website that can help you find a rehabilitation center near you:

http://wildliferehabinfo.org/Contact_A-M.htm

http://wildliferehabinfo.org/Contact_N-Z.htm

This site also has listings for Canada and other international locations.