This learning experience is an example of how one service supports one of the learning goals in *Aistear’s* theme of *Exploring and Thinking*.

As winter arrived we spoke to the children about feeding the birds. We asked them if they ever feed the birds. Leanne said, *I feed the robin*. We explained how birds find it hard to dig for worms in the cold weather. We asked the children what could the birds eat instead of worms during the winter. Katie suggested *seeds* while Holly said *nuts*. So we decided to make some pine cone feeders for the birds. The following day we supplied the children with pine cones, peanut butter and seeds. They spread some peanut butter on the pine cones and then rolled them in the birdseed which was a very sticky activity!

We hung the feeders outside the playschool window and kept watch for when the birds came for food. Our perseverance paid off as after only three days we spotted a bird eating from the pine cones. Breeda ran quickly for the camera and captured a beautiful bird enjoying the seeds!
As the children didn’t know what kind of bird it was we went on the internet to look it up and discovered it was a blue-tit!

The blue-tits visit us regularly and when the snow came in March, we took a picture of one of the blue tit’s little footprints in the snow-covered playground. The children were fascinated with the size of the tiny footprint and compared it to the size of their big footprints!

The children are very familiar now with this lovely bird and we have the blue-tit as the screensaver on the laptop in the playschool. During the spring we watched the blue-tit ‘nest watch’ on the internet and waited everyday for the babies to be born. There was such excitement when the little heads appeared through the
Ideas to extend the children’s learning

- Plan some small group activities around making models of birds, for example, a Paper Mache activity to make robins or blue-tits or provide some materials to make nests – twigs, straw, leaves, wool.

- Take the binoculars, the camera and some note-books and pencils outside and see what other wildlife is in the local area.

- Arrange for a local expert on nature to come to talk to the children, for example, a bee-keeper or someone from Coillte.

This experience also links to:
- *Identity and Belonging*, Aim 2, Learning goal 5
- *Exploring and Thinking*, Aim 1, Learning goal 4
The play leader’s reflections

We were amazed by the interest the children showed in this topic. Through it they became very interested in and respectful of the birds and wildlife around us. Now every week we focus on a new aspect of nature. We have learned about the trees in the local area that the birds live in. We have also learned about nests and how birds hatch their eggs.

Sharing our interest in the topic, many of the parents bought birdfeeders to have at home while others looked for the recipe to make their own.

One of the children asked for a pair of real binoculars for his 4th birthday so he could watch the birds from his bedroom!