

Artist Activities

Birds of New South Wales with Louise Weaver



This activity sheet is based on an 1813 etching by the artist John Lewin. It invites you to create a magical bird of your own; to colour, collage and perhaps transform it into a standing sculpture.

Birds can be difficult to see in their surroundings. Their feathers might be a similar colour to their habitat – the grasses, leaves and tree branches. This camouflage is nature's way of keeping them safe from predators. Do you notice birds when you go for a walk, or look out your window?

The blue-faced honey sucker (honeyeater) is a bird that John Lewin recorded in 1813 and drew. The bird can still be found in many regions along the East Coast of Australia and even in Papua New Guinea. Lewin's etching of this bird is accurate and detailed, the delicate black outline has been sensitively hand-coloured with watercolour.



It makes me feel as though I could pick the bird up off the page and hold it in my hand.

Throughout my career, I have made many drawings and sculptures that use bird forms. I use craft materials and techniques such as crochet to invent protective coverings or 'costumes' for birds that transform them into magical and fantastical creatures.

Portrait: Photograph by Mark Ashkanasy

Image top: John Lewin, *Birds of New South Wales and their natural history*, 1813, published by G. Howe etchings, printed in black ink, each from one copper plate; hand-coloured in watercolour; letterpress text. Purchased 1996.

You will need -

Drawing materials
Coloured paper,
Magazines or
Wrapping paper,
Scissors
A glue stick or
Tape

1. Print the bird onto
A4 Paper.

Take a moment to
notice how many birds
you can see.

Use lots of colour to
transform your bird
into a fantastical
creature.

2. You might like to
glue your template to
a piece of cardboard

cut along the dotted
lines and fold in
half to make a
standing sculpture.

3. Have fun thinking
about where your bird
might live and what
sound it makes?

Perhaps you can
experiment with your
own bird shape next.

