

Olive trees and birds' nests...

Today Anya brought in some olive branches from the trees where she had found some nests. She had been to Blenheim with her family at the weekend. She told us she wanted to bring them in to teach us about olive trees and the nests that lived in them. She wanted to pass on to us all the information she had learned about olives and bird nests. We were really interested to find out what Anya had learned on her holiday. We knew that this would ignite some great discussion.

I asked the children why the birds needed a nest.

Henry replied "to live in"

Anya "yeah that's what they do, it's correct"

Henry "and they lay eggs"

Louis "they live in there and when the eggs crack they come out"

Anya "yes the babies come out"

Henry "sometimes dead babies come out, they have to breath in the egg and use their beak to crack a hole to get out"

Louis "they crack the top to get out"

We talked about where the birds had gone and the children contributed ideas such as to find a bigger nest and to find a warm place. Louis thought they left the nest because they were scared of people and that they didn't like warm places. Anya found this idea hard to agree with, and told him he was wrong, "no, I'm right", he said, the two had a debate "how many times do I need to hear that", she said to him as he stuck by his theory. He explained birds fly away when they see people moving or running, Anya agreed with this idea.

There was talk about how the birds had made the nest. Henry thought they connected the twigs together by flipping them with their wings. Louis thought maybe with their feet and Anya stuck with her theory that they used their beaks. She showed us how they formed the nest shape with the straw on the table, there was some debate around this idea, and the children tried making some nests using different techniques.

I asked the children if they thought that the nest would be warm.

Henry "the grass and mud makes it warm, the sun heats it up"

Anya showed the olive branches to the children and explained that they were black and so you don't eat them and that there was juice inside. You can only eat the green olives she told us.

Louis really wanted to try the juice, Anya told him he couldn't, Henry thought it would be a good idea to squirt them into his mouth. Anya was adamant that you can't eat them, not even if you washed them, as Louis suggested.

Anya explained it wasn't good for you, and that you use the juice for salads. Louis still found this concept hard to grasp, since it was juice it had to be "yummy".

I passed around some olive oil for the children to look at and try.

They discovered that it actually wasn't that tasty. We then had a closer look at the olives and squeezed the juice out of them and discovered there were pips inside and had discussions about them and the possibility that the pips were the eggs, perhaps the birds drink the juice out of the olives. Louis also suggested that the birds might live in a nut with curtains and a door. Anya told us they weren't used for the juice, they were thrown away.

We saw a bird fly past the window and the children began talking about the possibility of it wanting to use Anya's nests and where they thought it was going. Anya still stuck to the theory that they were going to a hot place, others suggested hot places such as the desert, the beach, or possibly to where the dinosaurs live. There was discussion around that and the fact that dinosaurs weren't around anymore. Henry suggested the possibility of using a time machine to go back to where the dinosaurs are, Louis wasn't so keen on the idea and thought that they might eat the birds.

The children worked together as a community of learners putting forth ideas and listening to each other, and questioning some of the possibilities. This is how children make sense of the world around them and make meaning of it and their place within it. Their ideas were respected and valued and so they were actively involved in the discussion.

