

How to Make a Bird Bag

Instruction Manual for the Iona Island Bird Observatory



How to Make a Bird Bag

Thanks for helping to make bird bags for the Iona Island Bird Observatory (IIBO)! Your bag will be used to keep birds warm, dry, and calm while they wait they turn to be measured and banded. For optimal comfort, bags should be made out of lightweight, non-stretchy, light-coloured, breathable fabric. Old, white cotton bedsheets are perfect! At IIBO, we sew our bags with hidden seams (“French” seams) so that we can turn our bags inside out and use each one twice before washing.

Thanks for all your hard work! Your help makes it possible to run our training and bird monitoring programs at IIBO.

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1. MATERIALS & EQUIPMENT

Each bird bag consists of:

- A rectangle of light-coloured cotton fabric 15” by 22”
- A 28” length of paracord or similar weight cord
- Thread (white looks best)

In order to make your bird bag, you will need:

- A sewing machine
- An iron
- An ironing board
- Scissors
- A butane lighter

2. PREPPING YOUR MATERIALS

Before you start sewing, you’ll need to get a few things ready.

2.1. Cut your fabric

Cut your light-coloured cotton into a rectangle 15” tall and 22” wide.

2.2. Cut your cord

Measure out a length of paracord 28” long and cut it. Cauterize the ends with your lighter so they don’t fray. The cord will be hot! Be careful not to burn yourself.

3. IRON YOUR BIRD BAG SEAMS

3.1.1. Iron the hidden seam along the bottom

- Fold it over once approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Iron it down.



- Fold it over again approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " to completely hide the raw edge of the fabric. Iron it down again.



3.2. Iron the hidden seams along the sides

- Follow the same steps as above to iron the hidden seams along both sides.



- Make sure your corners are square!



3.3. Iron the top seam with the cord inside

- Fold the top once approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Iron it down.
- Place your length of cord along the top just below your first fold.



- Fold the top seam over the cord approximately 1". Iron it down so the cord is inside the top fold.



4. SEW YOUR BIRD BAG

4.1. Sew the top seam to encase the cord

- Using straight stitch, sew all the way along the top seam approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the bottom of the fold.
- Make sure you don't sew over the cord and attach it to the bag!



4.2. Fold the bag in half

- Ensure all your seams are still folded over and pressed. Line up the sides.



4.3. Sew the bag together - bottom

- Start on the inside corner of the bottom of the bag.
- Sew the bottom together approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge.
- Make sure you're sewing the hidden seam.



4.4. Sew the bag together - sides

- Stop sewing the bottom seam when you get approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge of the bag.
- Lift the foot of your sewing machine and turn the bag 90° .
- Put the foot back down so you're ready to sew the sides of the bag together.
- Continue sewing approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge of the bag to sew the sides together.
- **STOP** approximately 1" from the top of the bag. **Don't sew all the way to the top or you will sew the cord into the bag and the bag won't close!**



5. FINISHING TOUCHES

5.1. Tie the drawstring

- Even out the two ends of the cord and tie them together with a simple “granny” knot.



6. ADMIRE YOUR HANDIWORK

A job well done! Take a moment to inspect your bird bag:

- Trim all the extra thread.
- Turn the bag inside out to check your hidden seams. Trim any fabric poking out.
- Double check your cord isn't sewn to the bag: pull the drawstring to close the bag.

Add it to the pile. **Thanks again for all your hard work!**

