



## How to make a Trumpeter Swan Nest:

by [GroveCanada](#) on December 15, 2011

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I am a self-employed visual artist working full time since 1993, after universities & 4 years of studio training...My husband Joseph Grove works with me...I have two intact lady bengal cats named B'Elanna & Jadzia...

## Intro: How to make a Trumpeter Swan Nest:

Ok...After writing this Instructable, I feel I have a somewhat easier description on How to make the trumpeter swan nest, or a nest of this type for any other type of bird (this can be strung into the crotch of a tree for tree nesting birds, & of course diameter made smaller)...

Here is the "easy" instruction: For a 43 inch diameter nest you need 750 feet of rope...I like 3/8" size rope...The cheapest rope is Sisal (also called manila) which can be rough on the hands (wear gloves while weaving) & biodegrades quicker...Twisted or braided nylon lasts longer & is nice on the hands while weaving...You can also find a cotton poly rope which is natural but the poly part helps it to last longer...You will find that birds are more attracted to natural fibres, so a blended rope might be the answer...A pure poly rope can be in a watery area & last a long time...

Use a hula hoop to weave on to get the nice round shape...Mine is 43 inches in diameter...

Weave using the very very simple "Monkey Chain Knot" shown below...(there are other instructional videos online that show more explicitly this very simple knot...)

It will take you two days to weave the nest...leave long strands at the edges if you want to strap the nest to rocks or branches or objects...

It is far easier to weave with a rope that is 3/8" at least...A 1/4 inch Sisal rope is very cheap (the whole nest can be done for \$45), but you will labour much more to try to fill in any gaps to avoid tripping hazards...)

There are great deals on Ebay for bulk rope...You need 750 feet of rope for a 43 inch nest...So check the diameter of your hula hoop & order accordingly...

This nest for Trumpeter swans is more intended so they don't have to sit on the ice in winter, than as a breeding nest...The best way to get them to the nest is to cover it with wild bird seed...They will eat it all, then sit down...

Ok, here are my previous notes:

<http://sarigrove.weebly.com/1/post/2011/12/how-to-make-a-trumpeter-swan-nest-this-is-prototype-number-8-in-progress-now.html> Here is a step by step on my blog, with some more detail...

Background: From November to April here in Toronto, Canada, it is pretty cold...We have Trumpeter swans who were released into the wild in 2007, who stay along our Lake Ontario shore in the winter months...Joseph & I joined the Waterbird Society & the Trumpeter Swan Society so we could feed them without getting lectures...(The Trumpeter Swan Society feeds them daily, so we thought that we could do it too if we joined...) We feed them wild bird seed...Not every day...But it makes the winter go faster for us & for them too...They eat out of our hands...It is thrilling...I noticed they were sitting on the ice...No nests...The swan people said yes, they weren't migrating nor building nests...

So I decided to design a nest for them to sit upon in winter months...It can be used as a feeding station- bring it along, lay it on the ground & pour your wild bird seed on top- so when they come over to eat, they warm their feet...I changed my prototype eight times so far, bigger diameters each time, then finally from Sisal rope to Poly & Nylon rope...The Sisal biodegraded too quickly...Also the poly rope floats & is easily washable & reusable...

I have been thinking of making the nests heated- which involves a rechargeable portable pocket handwarmer & a conductive fabric so that when you stick the handwarmer into a gap in the nest face up, you lay the silver mesh fabric on top, then the whole nest would get warm...That is just an idea though yet...But more ideas on heating the nest are most welcome...

The nest can be strung into the crotch of a tree too, for an eagle or hawk or falcon...You can fill it with straw to make it more comfy...For younger birds you have to weave the rope tighter, no gaps...

Materials: I used 3/8 inch Twisted Nylon in white to begin with...100 feet total...(it came in bags of 50 feet)...Then I switched to a 500 foot spool of 3/8 inch braided red & white poly rope (which floats)...Trumpeter swans are attracted to the colour red, which is why the wild bird seed we use is called "Red Ribbon", because birds see a red ribbon well, if you put it near where there is food...

I have a 43 inch diameter hula hoop...(I got it custom made on ebay.ca for a reasonable price...Not for weaving, for hula hooping, but when I was designing the nests, I found if I wove freehand, it didn't come out in a nice circle shape- so then I thought of using my hula hoop...That makes it way easier to weave)...

Method: I use a simple monkey chain knot...I first make one long piece & attach it with spare string to the hula hoop...Then I just weave all through using the same knot, until the nest is all filled- no gaps...It is about 12 hours of lazy weaving with breaks if you are slow like me...It can be done much faster...But I sort of do this when I have gaps of free time...It is not hard to do & enjoyable...

Extras: In one of the last pictures, I put a cup through a disposable dinner tray & stuck that into a gap in the nest...The idea is to have a little bird seed container with a cup of water...This is probably unnecessary, but a thought...You can really just put your wild bird seed on top of the nest & they will eat it like that just fine...When they are done they will sit down on the nest...

Knitting: Ok, here is a video when I was working with the Sisal rope (1/4 inch)...This was harder to do because Sisal is rough on the hands so you have to wear jersey gloves, plus the sisal is a little messy (the strands come off a bit while you are weaving)...But the video shows well how to loop the rope through the knots you have already made...No matter what rope you use, it is the same technique...Sisal is much cheaper than nylon or poly rope (poly is after sisal in price, then nylon after that...Twisted is cheaper than braided...Poly rope floats...Nylon is very easy on your hands...Sisal biodegrades way too quick for my tastes, but birds like it...You can put straw on top of any nest to make it more nesty...If you leave dangly ropes at the edges it makes it easy to tie the nest into the crotch of a tree, or attach it to a giant rock...)

Idea: I've been thinking of donating a nest to the Toronto Wildlife Centre to use for their rescue birds...Plus it would help me with any design issues that come up...(what kind of rope is nicest...how birds react to the nest in a tree crotch...cleaning the poly rope nest...durability...) You can do that too with the nests you make...

Mission: I think that our earth & waterbirds have been getting the short end of the stick when it comes to habitat...They were here first (pterodactyls), but seem to be last when it comes to city planning...Maybe I am being too negative...I'd like to see people around the world weaving nests for earthbirds & waterbirds, to help them out a bit...So you are free to use this design idea as a springboard...If you'd like to sell your nests, go ahead...If someone can get alot of rope at a very good price you might be able to sell them...But rope can get expensive so really think about it...Cheaper rope is harder to knot so that is a consideration...But by all means, steal this idea...(If you have success please write to me at grove@sent.com, just as a feel good email for me...No commission necessary...)

I added some things after I wrote this, which you can see at our blog at [www.grovecanada.ca](http://www.grovecanada.ca) ...(filled in gaps mostly)

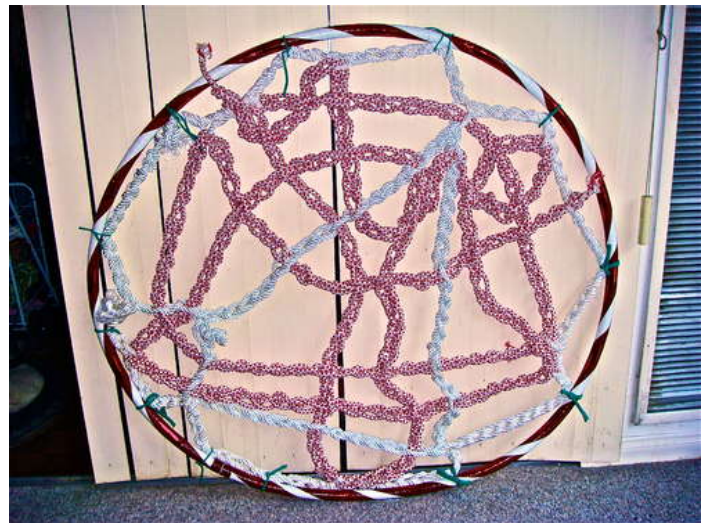
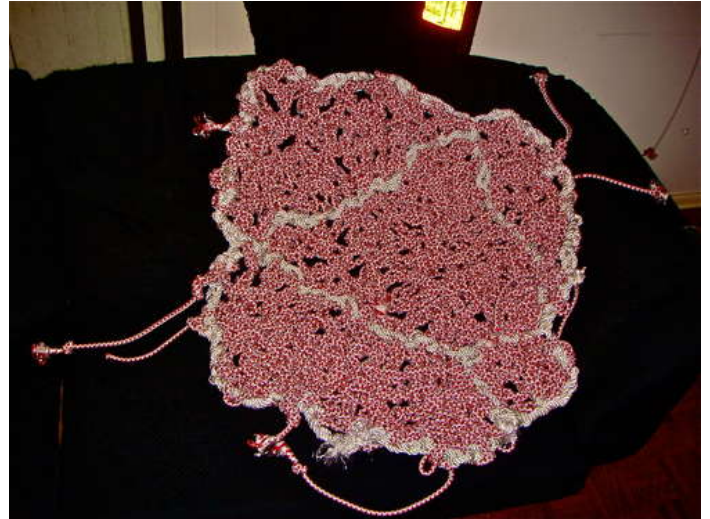
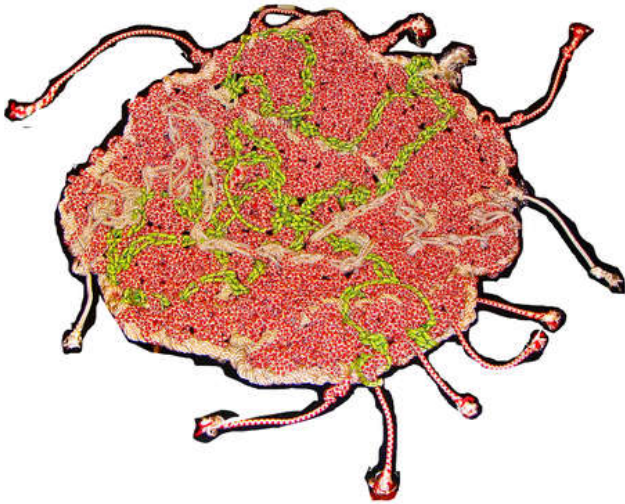
here is a video of my ameliorating:

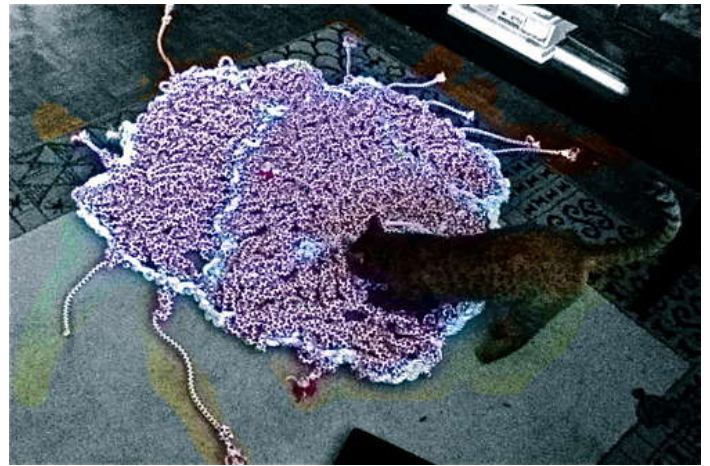
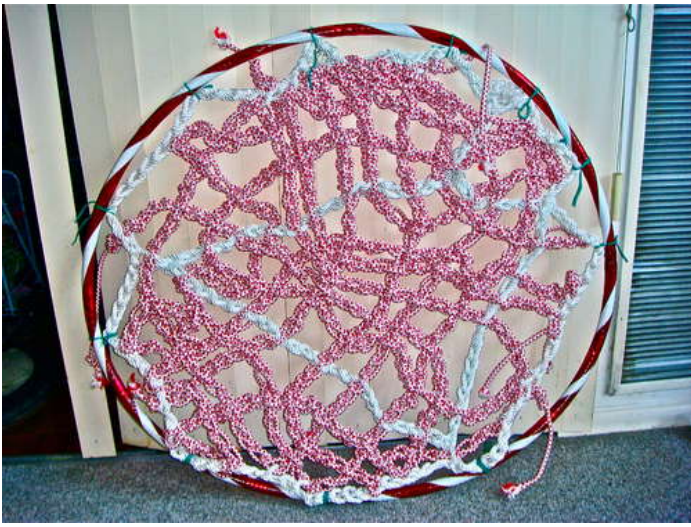
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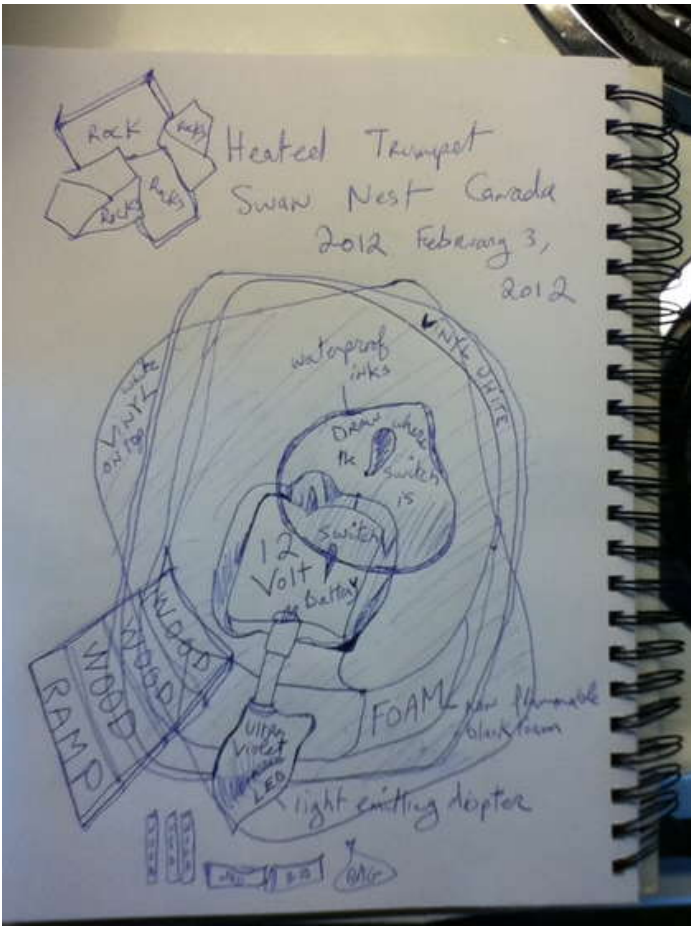
Extra Thoughts: Ok, I was looking deeply at the heated blanket (electric) which plugs in to your car lighter with a long cord...I was thinking that would make the blanket nice & toasty for a cold winter night for a Trumpeter Swan...My mum says they are dangerous & maybe I tend to agree...Still, it is a thought for an emergency situation if the Trumpeter swan got too cold & you need to transport to a far away rescue facility...(we have The Toronto Wildlife centre, & the big Veterinary facility in Guelph at the university, but those are a pretty far drive- you could have the nest in your SUV, with the electric blanket plugged into the lighter, & that would warm up the swan during transport...(or you could cause a dumb electrical fire- not sure of this though...anyways just ideas...)

This nest makes a nice gift for the holidays for the people who have everything...p.s. other animals really like them too! Makes a nice wall hanging if you want to store it that way...) Happy Holidays, Sari

Oh: the last picture is a 5 foot Ferrocement outdoor sculpture of a Trumpeter Swan that I made to put in the nesting area...The idea is that the sculpture says: "This is Trumpeter Swan nesting area & you other predators or nest borrowers should know that- & humans too!" ...I made the sculpture because TRCA (Toronto Region Conservation Authority) said that I could get permission to put a Trumpeter nest out (on their property) as long as I had a wildlife professional come daily to harass any Canadian geese who might like to sit on the nest...Well, I happen to know it is Federally illegal to harass a Canada goose, so I built the giant sculpture instead...(I suppose that could be my next Instructable, if I find the time...)







**Related Instructables**



**Modular Origami Swan**  
(Photos) by T\_T\_



**How To Make An Origami Swan**  
by Comp101



**White Swan**  
(Photos) by jelenamitic77



**Bjork Swan Dress (2001 Oscars), bumble bee, and Hagrid costume**  
(Photos) by



**Swan Double Egg - Fabergé! WannaBe**  
(Photos) by AnneB



**How to make a paper Swan**  
(video) by crush\_crash

## Comments

1 comments [Add Comment](#)



**GroveCanada** says:

Dec 20, 2011. 2:40 PM [REPLY](#)

I have added 100 feet of green glow in the dark 3/8 of an inch poly rope to fill in the gaps...(for safety)...I also added another 50 feet of braided 3/8 of an inch white nylon rope to correct any tripping hazards in already knotted rope & reinforced some areas...(Might as well do it really right)...You can see these ameliorations at our website [www.grovecanada.ca](http://www.grovecanada.ca) ...In the blog section I added another video showing how I fill in gaps & make tripping hazards safe again...So it turns out I ended up using 750 feet of 3/8 of an inch rope for the nest...You can use any rope you like, & any colours too...The glow in the dark is neat for nighttime seeing, & I must say the braided nylon is lovely to work with, so soft...The poly rope is very waterproof, & the twisted nylon is quite fluffy for the edge...I used the red & white colour because birds see red easily & are attracted to it...The green is a nature colour...The white because Trumpeters are mostly white, but do have a black nose...