

Baby Bird

Hook, proddy, felt, and stitch for spring

PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GWEN DIXON

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

Tools:

- a pair of felting needles (sizes 38 and 40)
- traditional rug hook
- rug hooking frame
- needle with an eye large enough for the cotton floss
- sharp scissors
- sewing machine

Supplies:

- backing of your choice
- a piece of Styrofoam or another surface for needle felting
- wool strips (browns, white, and shades of blue)
- wool yarn (browns, white, and shades of blue)
- roving wool (browns, red, blues, white, yellow, black)
- green wool fabric and green cotton floss
- blue cotton floss
- cotton binding for finishing
- wool fabric for finishing (optional)
- 2 plastic hoops for hanging
- regular sewing needle and white or cream colored thread
- sewing pins
- paper tape or packing tape
- freezer paper

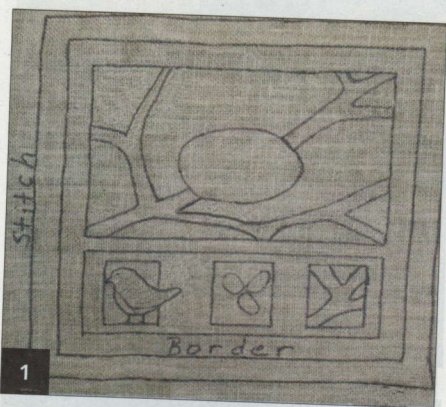


Baby Bird, 13" x 13", wool strips, wool yarn, wool roving on linen.
Designed, hooked, and stitched by Gwen Dixon, Riverview, New Brunswick, Canada, 2021.

If you are a bird lover, your favorite part of spring will include the return of the migratory birds. My friend Carol told me that each spring, her father wrote "first robin" on his calendar on the day of his first robin sighting. I love that practice.

This project was inspired by my love of nests and of baby birds. It uses traditional rug hooking, proddy rug hooking, needle felting, wool cutting, and stitching. This is a beginner-level project with photos to guide you along the way.

STEPS FOR MAKING BABY BIRD



1. Make your pattern and prepare your backing

Draw or trace the pattern onto backing, using the template. Enlarge it to the mat size you desire. The mat shown here is 13" x 13".

Prepare your backing. Stitch around the outline of the pattern itself. Then stitch another square at about 1" to 1½" out from the outline. Next stitch about ½" in from the edge of the backing. Tape the edges with paper tape or packing tape (2" wide).

2. and 3. Hook the border, middle line, and outlines of the small squares

Hook the border and middle line of the mat. I used #6-cut strips and have hooked 5 rows. Use the lines as a guide and make the border as wide or as narrow as you like.

Hook with the tails to either the front or the back. If you hook the tails to the back, there will be a bit more finishing to do at the end. I have hooked the tails to the back.

Next, hook the line in the middle section.

I have hooked 4 rows of #6-cut strips.

Then hook the outlines of the 3 small squares at the bottom, using one row only. This can be done now or later; do it before you begin working on the hooking and needle felting for the insides of the 3 small squares.

4. Hook the branches

Hook the branches with wool strips and wool yarn. The yarn adds texture to the branches. Make the branches as varied in color as you like. I have used only one or two values of brown to outline the branches in the sample and have used the yarn to fill in the branches. I have hooked 3-4 rows for the branches.

5. Hook the bird nest

Use your traditional rug hook to proddy hook the nest. To proddy hook, simply bring up one tail, then go to the opening beside it and pull up the other end. Trim off the excess and use the rest of the strip in a new spot. Hook 4 times in 4 spots to outline the nest.

Continue working around the nest. Make the nest as full as you want. Use a variety of the browns to make the nest.

If you have some scraps from your stash in yellows, oranges, golds, or another color, try those. Birds like to gather lots of things to make their nests, so use as many colors if you like.

Continue filling in your nest, toward the inside circle that holds the eggs. Hook more sparsely as you get closer to the circle with the eggs. You may decide to stop adding to the nest before you reach the inside circle.

6a. and 6b. These two photos show the nest being filled up with proddy hooking.

DEAR BEGINNING RUG HOOKER



7



8



9



10a



10b



10c

7: Remove proddy pieces if the nest is too full.

This can be done just after you finish proddy hooking. I removed some of the proddy pieces in the photo here as I worked on the sky. You may need to add more blue pieces if you remove proddy pieces from the outside edge of the nest.

8. Hook the branches in the lower right square

Use the same wool in these smaller branches that you used to make the ones in the larger square. Outline the branches with the wool strips, then fill with the wool yarn.

9. Hook the sky

Hook the sky with the tails to the front or the back. Hook it straight across or in loose areas of color. In the sample, the sky is hooked using mostly straight lines across the piece. Hook movement into the sky, or vary the color values moving up the sky.

Make the sky in the bottom section the same as the one in the top section,

a continuation of the sky above, or make it different if you prefer.

10a., 10b. and 10c. Needle felt the small squares

Start with the square on the right. Place the piece of Styrofoam under that square. Use one felting needle and needle felt with blue or white wool roving to represent the sky.

Tuck the felt into the corners and along the edges to fill the square. This will help the loops in the outline of the square to stand up. Use your rug hook to pull up the loops slightly or straighten them.

Gently poke the wool into place. You will occasionally hit some backing. It is best to poke in the squares of the backing, but this is not always possible. Use a light touch when poking so that you don't break your needle.

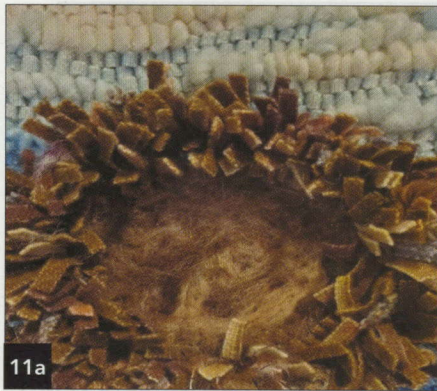
Needle felt the middle square. First felt down a layer of shades of brown wool roving. Again, work it in around the edges and the corners to give your square a good shape. To make the eggs, roll blue-green wool roving into oval shapes and begin to needle felt

them in place. Leave one end wider to get an egg shape. For a "puffy" look, felt at an angle, attaching the side fibers to the base. Tuck the fibers in and shape each egg as you work on it.

Needle felt the square with the baby bird. Start with the white underbelly, then the red breast. Add the brown feathers, beak, eye, and then legs and feet. Keep adding wool until you are happy with the fullness of the baby bird. Then do the background. You can use white wool roving or blue for the background.

11a. and 11b. Needle felt the nest and eggs

First cover the bottom of the nest by felting down some brown wool roving. Add three eggs to the nest. Make an egg by rolling the wool roving into an oval shape and needle felting it, using your Styrofoam block. Attach each egg in position in the nest by needle felting at the base of the egg through the brown wool roving that is lining the bottom of the nest. You may also stitch the eggs down using blue floss, with just a single stitch though each egg.



11a



11b



12a



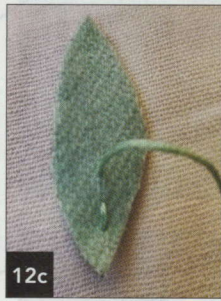
12b



13a



13b



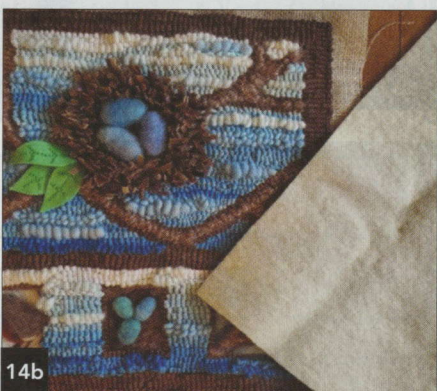
12c



12d



14a



14b



12e



12f



14c

12a. – 12f. Add wool leaves

Cut a leaf template:

Trace the leaf outline onto the matte side of the freezer paper. Iron the waxy side onto the wool fabric, then cut

out the shape and peel off the freezer paper.

Stitch the veins in the leaves with the cotton floss, using a back stitch. Position the leaves, then stitch them to the backing with one or two stitches, using the green floss. Use as many as you like to embellish your *Baby Bird* mat!

13a. and 13b. Finish the back

If you have pulled the tails to the back, the back will look like (13b). Whether your tails are on the front or back, trim the extra long pieces carefully, making sure not to trim something that you do not want to, or to make the tails too short. I trim no shorter than 1/2" to 3/4" long.

14a., 14b. and 14c. Trim off the extra burlap

I trim just inside the second stitched square, (which was stitched about 1 1/2" from the square that outlines the hooked area). The stitching that is around the hooked area is still intact.

Cut a piece of recycled wool that is about 12 1/2" to 12 3/4", (slightly smaller than your piece, which is 13" x 13"). If you cut around the corners of the square slightly, it will be less bulky.

Iron the corners of the burlap down, then fold and iron the edges of the four sides of the burlap.

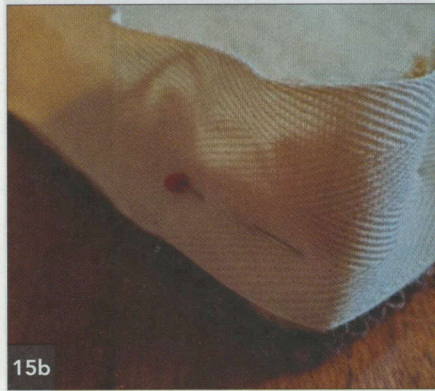
15a. and 15b. Pin the cotton binding and wool square to the back of your piece

Pull the wool snugly and tuck it under the burlap fold. Then place the cotton binding on top and pin in place. I use 1 1/2" cotton binding. Picture 15b is how the corner looks from the outside.

DEAR BEGINNING RUG HOOKER



15a



15b



16a



16b



16c



16d



16e



16f

16a. – 16e. Stitch the outside edge of the cotton binding to the backing

Stitch between the first and second rows of brown loops—be careful not to pull any loops out as you stitch. Picture 16a is what the stitching looks like close-up.

Picture 16b is what the back of the piece looks like once you have stitched all the way around.

Picture 16c is what the pieces that join will look like, after you have stitched all the way around.)

Fold the edges under and stitch these pieces in place, where they meet. Now stitch the inside edge of the cotton binding to the wool square.

At the corner, fold the cotton binding to make a mitered corner. Picture 16f shows the finished back.

17. If you have pulled your tails to the front, you do not need to use a wool square on the back

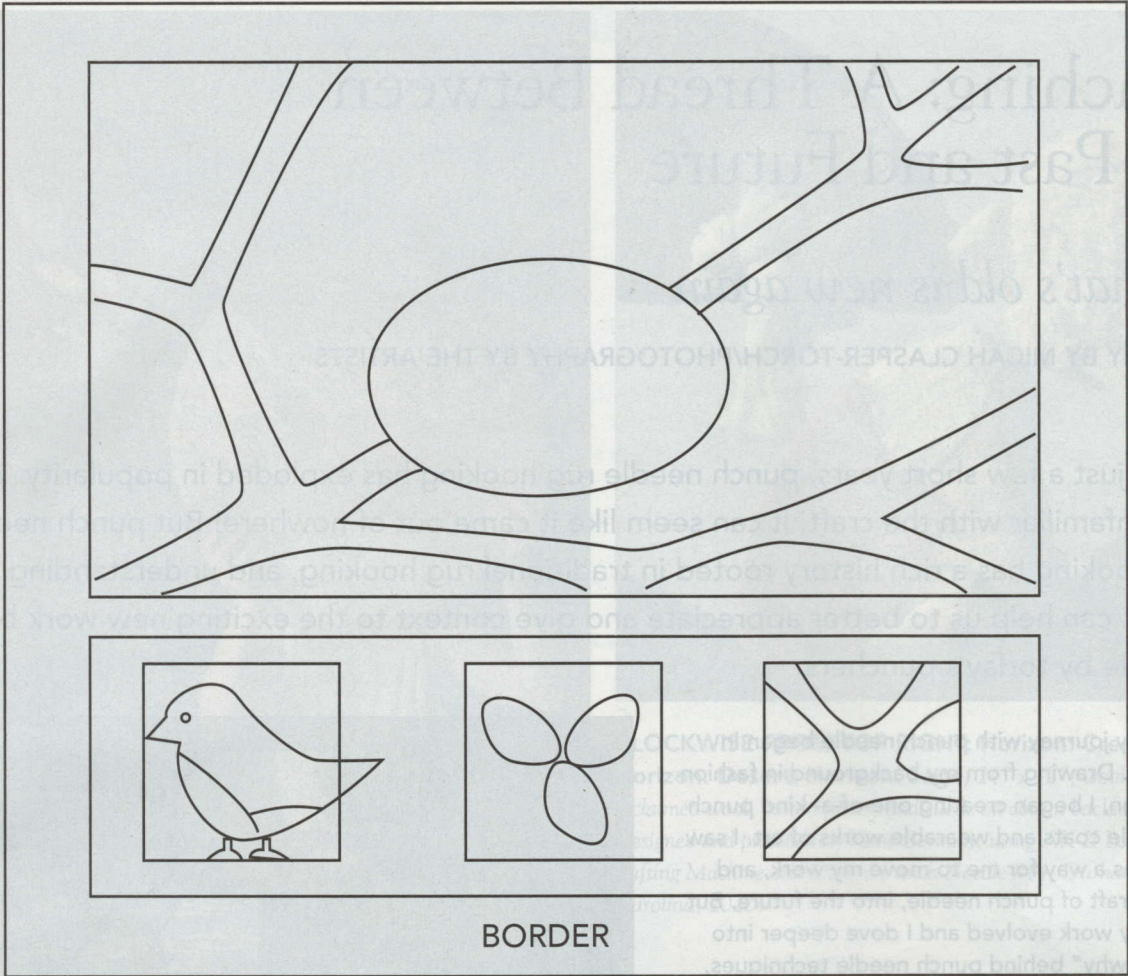
In this case trim and fold the backing, then sew the cotton binding in place, over top of the backing. Stitch the inside edge, mitering the corners.

To hang your piece, sew two plastic hoops to the cotton binding on the back of your mat. Hang it and enjoy!

RHM



17



Baby Bird, © Gwen Dixon, 2021. For a mat approximately 13" x 12", enlarge this pattern by 200%. For personal use only.

Gwen Dixon is a fiber artist and adult educator from Riverview, New Brunswick, Canada. You can find her on Facebook (Gwen Dixon), email (gwendixonwoolarts@gmail.com) or on her website (Gwen Dixon Wool Arts). If you want to connect, to ask questions, or to view your finished Baby Bird, please be in touch.

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