



» photos: Alison Stewart-Guinee » model: Liam

## Birdie Backpack

By Alison Stewart-Guinee



Not long ago my youngest son asked me to make him a backpack. He mentioned that he would really like it to look like an animal or character of some kind and, of course, pockets would be nice. I am always thrilled when my kids make a knitting request, and this one was especially appealing. A project that combines the practicality and function of a backpack with the whimsy of a toy is just the sort of thing that I love to knit, so I could hardly wait to cast on. But what animal should I make? Inspired by my own fledglings and their daily flights from the nest, the choice seemed obvious (plus, the bird wings would make great pockets).

### Size

One size

### Finished Measurements

14 inches high and 12 inches wide  
24 inch Circumference

### Materials

Blue Sky Alpacas Skinny [100% organic cotton; 150 yards/137 meters per 2.25 ounce/65 gram hank];

#307 Maize (MC); 2 hanks  
#30 Birch (CC1); 1 hank  
#304 Zinc (CC2); 1 hank  
#306 Squash (CC3); 1 hank

### Recommended needle sizes

US #4/3.5 mm 16 inch circular needle  
US #4/3.5 mm 24 inch circular needle  
US #4/3.5 mm dpns (set of 5)

## Notions

Stitch markers

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inch sew-through buttons for eyes - 2

1/2 inch sew-through buttons for eye pupils - 2

1/4 inch sew-through buttons for pocket closure (optional) - 2

9 inch zipper

1/2 yard lining fabric (optional)

1/2 yard medium to heavy weight fusible interfacing

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> yards of 1 inch wide non-stretch webbing for straps

2 strap adjusters sized for 1 inch straps

Tapestry needle

Sewing thread

Sewing needle

Sewing pins

## Gauge

20 sts and 28 rows = 4 inches in St st or size needed to obtain gauge

## Pattern Notes

This backpack is worked in the round from the bottom up. The wings are knitted separately (also in the round from the bottom up) and are then knitted to the body of the bag. Optional "secret" pockets (for notes and little treasures) are concealed on the underside of each wing. The top of the bag is closed with Kitchener stitch and the bottom is finished with a simple seam. Embellishments include a garter stitch beak, button eyes, knitted top feathers, and I-cord legs and feet. Adjustable straps and an optional lining complete the backpack.

As a nod to my owl-loving kids and just in time for the scholarly business of school, I made my bird a little owlish, but by making a few changes to the face and color of the bag you could make your feathered friend fanciful or realistic to suit the wishes of your own flock.

## Skills Required

knitting on dpns, knitting in the round, Kitchener Stitch, I-cord, figure-eight cast on (optional)

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## INSTRUCTIONS

### Wings (Make 2)

Using 2 dpns, CC1 and the figure eight cast on method, cast on 4 sts. Using this method, you will have 2 sts on each needle after casting on the 4 sts. This cast on technique creates a seamless beginning to the wing.

**Note:** If you are unfamiliar with the figure eight cast on or would prefer to use a more traditional cast on, that's okay too. If this is the case, you will cast 4 sts onto a US 4 dpn, using your preferred technique. Divide the sts evenly so that you have 2 sts on two separate dpns. Join the work in the round and proceed with the wing instructions. After each wing has been completed, thread the CO tail onto a tapestry needle and use it to gather up and close the end of the wing. Fasten off yarn a weave it in to the inside of the wing.

**Rnd 1:** Knit around.

**Rnd 2:** Kfb in each st around: 8 sts (4 sts on each needle).

**Rnd 3:** Knit around.

**Rnd 4:** \*K1, place marker, M1, knit to last st on ndl, M1, place marker, k1; rep from \* for the sts on the second ndl. Use a contrasting marker for the final marker. Since you cannot place a marker on the end of the dpn without it falling off, you cannot mark the true beginning of the round. To compensate for this, you will use this final contrasting marker to indicate the end of the round. When you get to it, you will know that you have one stitch remaining before the beginning of the next round 12 sts (6 on each ndl).

Divide sts evenly on 4 dpns, keeping markers in place.

Join CC2.

**Rnd 5:** Knit around.

**Rnd 6:** \*K1, sm, M1, knit to marker, M1, sm, k1, sm; repeat from \*: 16 sts.

**Rnds 7-32:** Continue in the pattern established on Rnds 5 and 6, increasing every other round 13 times and alternating stripes (2 rnds CC1 and 2 rnds CC2), ending with a CC2 stripe: 68 sts.

**Rnds 33 and 34:** Knit 2 rnds CC1.

**Rnds 35 and 36:** With CC2, repeat Rnds 5 and 6: 72 sts.

**Rnds 37-40:** Rep Rnds 33-36, ending with a CC2 stripe: 76 sts.

## Pocket

**Note:** The pockets on the underside of the wings are optional. If you choose not to make the pockets, continue to work strip as established, without further shaping until you have a total of 24 stripes, ending with a CC2 stripe.

**Rnd 1:** With CC1, k49, bind off next 16 sts, knit to end of round: 60 sts.

**Rnd 2:** Continue with CC1, k49, cast on 16 sts, knit to end of round: 76 sts.

**Rnds 3 and 4:** With CC2, knit around.

**Rnd 5:** With CC1, k56, k2tog, YO, knit to end of round: 76 sts.

**Rnd 6:** With CC1, knit around.

**Rnd 7:** With CC2, knit around.

Divide the 76 wing sts evenly onto two separate dpns, removing markers as you go. The first 38 sts of the round will be on c dpn and the last 38 sts of the round will be on the other. The stitches on each needle will be a little crowded but a standard 7 inch double point needle should accommodate all of the sts.

**Rnd 8:** In this round you will knit the tops of the wings together. To do this, hold the two dpns together so that the needles are parallel to one another and so that the working yarn is trailing off of the right hand side of the piece. The pocket should be on the side of the wing farthest away from you and the side of the wing without the pocket hole should be facing you. Use a thin dpn (or the 16 inch circular needle) as the working needle and the CC2 trailing from the back needle (coming from the last stitch of the previous round) as the working yarn. Insert the working needle into the first st on the front needle and then into the first st on the back needle. Wrap the yarn around the working needle and knit these 2 sts off of their respective needles as if they were one stitch. Continue in this manner, working across all of the sts. Cut yarn, leaving a tail for weaving in later.

Once both wings are complete, they will be held on two separate dpns, each with 38 live sts. Hold the wings in reserve until the bag base is complete.

## Bag Base

Using 16 inch circular needle and MC, cast on 72 sts. Join work in the round, placing st markers as follows: k18 (first half of bag front), pm, k1 (side seam), pm, k35 (bag back), pm, k1 (side seam), pm, k17 (second half of bag front), place a contrasting marker to indicate the beginning/end of round. The beginning/end of the round is positioned at the center front of the bag. Slip the markers as you work, keeping them in place until instructed otherwise.

Work in St st until piece measures 1 inch from cast on row.

Begin shaping the body of the bag by working the increase round below.

**Increase Rnd:** \*Knit to marker, M1, sm, k1, sm, M1; repeat from \*, knit to end of rnd (4 sts increased): 76 sts.

Knit 2 rounds in St st.

Repeat the Increase Rnd every third round 6 times, moving to the 24 inch needle when the sts become too crowded on the 16 inch needle: 100 sts.

Knit 1 round.

Work the Increase Rnd every other round, 5 times: 120 sts.

After completing the last Increase Rnd, knit in St st without further shaping until piece measures 9 inches from cast on edge.

## Join Wings to Bag

The wings are knitted directly to the bag body in the same way that the tops of the wings were knitted together.

Continuing with MC and 24 inch circular needle, knit the first 11 sts of the bag body.

Put one of the dpns holding a wing in your left hand. Hold it so that the pocket is away from you and so that the plain side is facing you. Place the dpn holding the wing in front of and parallel to the end of the circular needle holding the remaining bag sts, positioning it so that the wing pocket is facing the bag. Insert the working needle into the first wing stitch and into the first bag stitch on the left hand needle. Knit these 2 sts together as if they were one. Continue in this manner, working across the remaining 37 sts of the first wing, knitting each st together with its corresponding bag st and slipping markers as you go.

Knit the next 22 sts of the bag. These 22 sts form the bag center back. Join the second wing to bag as you did the first. Once both wings are attached to the bag, knit the remaining 11 bag sts.

## Bag Top

Knit 4 rounds in St st.

## Zipper Opening

**Rnds 1 and 3:** K35, p50, k35.

**Rnd 2:** Knit around.

**Rnd 4:** K35, bind off next 50 sts, k35.

**Rnd 5:** K35, cast on 50 sts, k35.

**Rnds 6 and 8:** K35, p50, k35.

**Rnd 7:** Knit around.

## Shaping

Begin decreasing the top of the backpack by working the following Decrease Round.

**Decrease Rnd:** \*Knit to 2 sts before marker, ssk, sm, k1, sm, k2tog; repeat from \* around, knit to end of round (4 sts eliminated): 116 sts.

Knit 3 rnds without shaping.

Work Decrease Rnd: 112 sts.

Repeat the last 4 rnds once more, switching to the 16 inch circular needle as needed: 108 sts.

Knit 2 rnds.

Work Decrease Rnd: 104 sts.

Repeat the last 3 rnds twice more: 96 sts.

Knit 1 rnd.

Work Decrease Rnd every other (alternating with a knit rnd) twice: 88 sts.

Knit 22 sts, slip first marker, k1, remove the next marker, k43, slip marker, k1, remove marker, knit to end of round.

**Next 2 Rnds:** \*Knit to 2 sts before the marker, ssk, sm, k2tog; rep from \*, knit to end of rnd: 80 sts.

Cut yarn.

## Top Seam

Divide the remaining 80 sts evenly onto the 16 inch and the 24 inch circular needles using the side seams as your dividing point. Remove the contrast marker and slide the first and last 20 sts of the rnd onto one needle, leaving the 40 sts for the back on the other needle. You will have 40 sts on each needle. Thread a tapestry needle with a length of MC and close the top opening of the bag with Kitchener stitch.

## Top Feather Tufts (Make 4)

Make two in CC1 and two in CC2.

You will use 2 dpns to make the top feather tufts. With CC1, make a slip knot and place it on one of the dpns.

**Row 1:** Using the backward loop method, cast on 6 sts additional sts: 7 sts.

**Row 2:** Use the second dpn to bind off 6 sts. You will have 1 st remaining on the needle in your right hand. Slide this stitch to the opposite end of the dpn and hold the needle in your left hand: 1 st on the needle in your left hand.

Repeat Rows 1 and 2 twice—3 top feathers made.

Cut yarn, leaving a 12 inch tail and fasten off the remaining stitch. Thread the tail through a tapestry needle and run it through the base of each feather to gather the tuft. Fasten off the end at the base of the tuft.

## Beak

With CC3, and needle of choice, cast on 12 sts.

**Row 1:** Ssk, knit to last 2 sts, k2tog: 10 sts.

**Row 2 and all even rows:** Knit across.

**Rows 3, 5 and 7:** Repeat Row 1: 4 sts.

**Row 9:** Ssk, k2tog: 2 sts.

**Row 11:** K2tog: 1 st.

Cut yarn, leaving a 20 inch tail, and fasten off the remaining st. You will use the tail to sew the beak to the bag front.

## Feet (Make 2)

Using CC3 and dpns, cast on 4 sts.

Work I-cord for 7 rounds.

**Next round:** K1, M1, k2, M1, k1: 6 sts.

## Toes

Each toe is made separately. As each toe is worked, the remaining foot sts will be left on the dpn and held in reserve for late

**First toe:** Knit the first 2 sts of the round. Leave the remaining 4 sts on the needle. Using a third dpn, work a 2 stitch I-cord for 5 rounds

**Next round:** K2tog: 1 st.

Cut yarn and fasten off.

**Second toe:** Join yarn and knit the 2 sts closest to the first toe. Complete as for first toe.

**Third toe:** Join yarn and knit the remaining 2 sts. Complete same as first toe.

## **FINSIHING**

Weave in all ends of bag body and block bag.

### **Bag Base**

Using a tapestry needle threaded with MC, sew a seam along the bag bottom. To form the rectangular shape of the bag base turn the bag inside out and fold open the bottom corners of the bag. Fold the corners of the bag down and under so that they are positioned along the seam and so that they are 1 inch in from the side edges of the bag. Pin and sew into place using a sewing needle and thread.



### **Beak**

Pin the beak to the bag front. Thread the tail of the beak onto a tapestry needle. Sew into place.

## **Eyes**

Place one  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch button on top of each of the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch buttons. Position the eyes on the face and sew in place with needle and sewing thread.

## **Top Feathers**

Pin the top feather tufts to the upper right and left corners of the bag, layering them so that you have one tuft of CC1 and C on each side. Sew in place.

## **Feet**

Thread a tapestry needle with CC3 and sew the feet to the bag base.

## **Zipper**

Pin zipper to the inside edge of the bag opening so that the right side of the zipper is facing out. With sewing needle and thread, sew in place.

## **Pocket Buttons**

Sew a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch button to pocket opening opposite the buttonholes.

## **Lining**

Lining the bag is optional, but suggested. If you wish to line your bag, use the blocked bag as a template to create the lining pattern. Adding a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch seam allowance around all edges of the bag, cut out a paper pattern for the bag front and back. You will have 1 pattern piece for the bag front and 2 pattern pieces for the bag back (one piece for above and 1 piece for below the zipper opening). Make sure that you allow a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch seam allowance at the top and bottom of the opening as well as along the bag edges.

Pin the paper pattern to the lining fabric and cut out. If you intend to use interfacing, pin the pattern pieces to the interfacing and cut them out as well. Fuse the interfacing to the wrong side of the lining fabric following the package instructions.

With the right sides of the fabric together, pin the upper and lower pieces of the bag back together along the flat edge for the bag opening. Using the knitted bag as a guide, mark the area required for the zipper opening. Sew a seam from the left side of the zipper opening to the left edge of the bag. Repeat for right side of zipper opening. Press the seam allowance open.

Place the lining back on top of the lining front with the right sides of the fabric together. Sew a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch seam around the top, bottom and side edges of the bag. Trim seam.

To form the rectangular bag base, fold the bottom corners of the lining open, bringing the point of the corner down along the bottom seam of the bag. Pin in place. The corner should be about 1 inch from the side of the bag. Sew into place.

Weave in and trim any remaining loose ends on both the knitted bag and the lining. Turn the lining wrong side out and place inside the knitted bag so that the wrong side of the lining and the purl side of the fabric are together. Pin in place, matching the bag and lining base, upper corners, side seams, and the zipper opening. Using a needle and thread, tack the lining to the bag along the base of the bag, at the underside of the wings and along the zipper opening.

## **Straps**

Cut two 12 inch and two 16 inch lengths of webbing.

### **Upper Straps**

The 12 inch lengths form the upper straps. Following the instructions on the strap adjuster package, pin the end of one of the 12 inch straps to the top of a strap adjuster, folding the raw edge of the webbing under as you do so. Sew in place.

Fold the end of the webbing opposite the strap adjuster under and pin it to the back of the bag (the zipper side), positioning so that it is 1 to 2 inches below the very top of the bag and 2 to 3 inches in from the side edge of the bag.

Repeat for second upper strap.

### **Lower Straps**

Pin the 16 inch lengths of webbing to the lower right and left corners of the bag, folding the raw edges under as you do so.

Feed the opposite end of each of the lower straps through its corresponding strap adjuster. Adjust fit and reposition straps if needed.

Sew all straps in place. If your bag is lined, make sure that the straps are sewn to the lining fabric as well as to the knitted bag. Trim the 16 inch strap to the desired length. Fold the raw edges under and sew in place to prevent fraying.





Alison is a knitter, weaver and teacher of textile classes and workshops. She has designs published in several knitting collections and is the author of *Fairy Tale Knits: 32 Designs to Knit Happily Ever After*. Currently, she is working on her own line of patterns for [knittingbyhand.com](http://knittingbyhand.com). Alison makes her home in the middle of the midwest along with her yarn tolerant husband, three busy kids, multiple furry friends, and embarrassingly large stash. You can follow her adventures with sticks and string at [her blog](#), and Ravelry.

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