



Word of the Day: Bird

Animal classification is when we group together animals that share similar traits into different categories. Classification helps scientists understand how different animals are related to each other. It is important for veterinarians to know the specific characteristics that define different groups of animals.

Many of the animals we see are called **vertebrates** because they have a backbone. Mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish are all vertebrates!

Birds are warm-blooded animals with feathers. Ducks, owls, parrots, and penguins are all birds!

Discussion Question

- What is your favorite bird?

Examples of Birds



Duck



Owl



Dove



Parrot



Toucan



Flamingo



Chicken



Ostrich



Penguin

Children's Resources: Birds

Bird Characteristics

How can you tell if an animal is a bird?

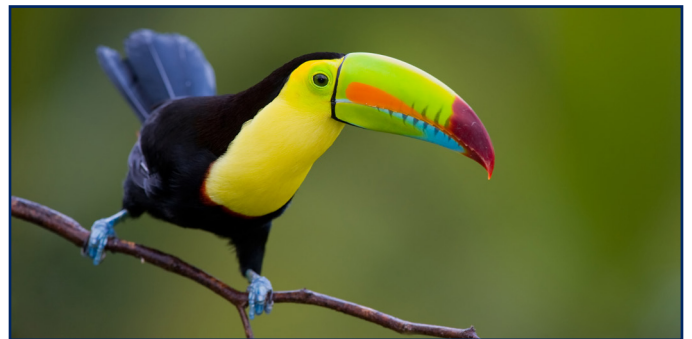


Feathers

All birds have feathers on their bodies. There are different types of feathers that have different jobs, such as flight feathers for flying or down feathers for keeping warm.

Beaks

All birds have beaks. Beaks come in many different shapes and sizes depending on what the bird eats. Some are long and thin, such as a hummingbird's, and others are big and wide, like a pelican's.



Warm-Blooded

Birds are warm-blooded, which means they can generate their own body heat. Their body temperature stays the same no matter how hot or cold their environment is.

Lays Eggs

All birds lay eggs. Birds will usually build a nest to keep their eggs safe and warm. The eggs have a hard shell that the baby bird breaks with their beak when they hatch.



Types of Bird Feathers

Flight Feathers

Flight feathers are long and stiff, which helps birds to fly. You can find examples of flight feathers on a bird's wing and tail.



Down Feathers

Down feathers are soft and fluffy. These feathers lie close to the body and help keep the bird nice and warm.



Types of Bird Feathers

Body Feathers

Body feathers are also called contour feathers. The fluffy bottom part of the feather is hidden and stays close to the body to keep it warm, while the top part of the feather is visible. Body feathers can be all sorts of colors and patterns to either help the bird stand out or stay camouflaged.



Modified Feathers

Some feathers on the body or tail are modified and used for courtship displays (to attract a mate). Peacock tail feathers are a well-known example of this.



Bird Beak Types

Different beaks can do different things! Here are a few different bird beak shapes below:



Hooked

Hooked beaks are used by birds of prey, such as hawks and owls, who hunt smaller animals. Their hooked beaks are sharp and are used to tear meat apart.



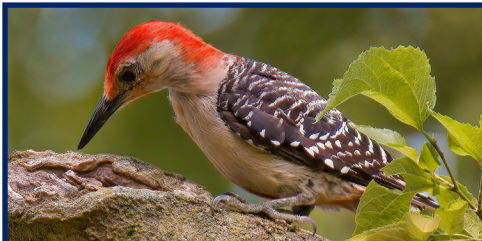
Cone-Shaped

Cone-shaped beaks are short but strong, allowing birds to break open seeds. Birds such as sparrows and canaries have cone-shaped beaks.



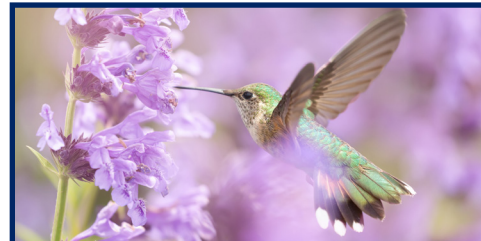
Curved

Curved beaks, such as the ones found on parrots, are great for opening hard fruits and nuts.



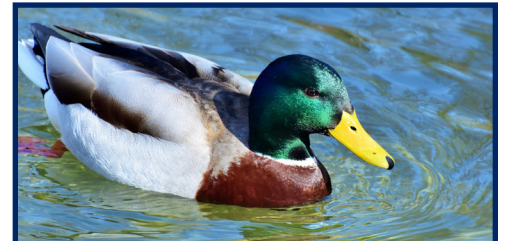
Straight & Thin

Straight, thin beaks are great for catching and eating insects. Birds such as bee eaters, robins, and woodpeckers have straight, thin beaks.



Needle-Shaped

Hummingbirds have long, thin, needle-like beaks which are used to drink nectar from the inside of flowers.



Wide & Flat

Ducks, geese, and swans have wide, flat beaks. These beaks have tiny, comb-like teeth around the edges which trap food inside while filtering dirt and water out.

Activities



PreK - 2nd Grade

Bird Dress-Up

Materials: feather boas, bird wings, bird beaks

- Dressing up is a fun way to learn more about animals! Your child can explore different bird characteristics through costume play.
- Gather different bird costume items, such as feather boas, wings, beaks, etc. You can even gather items such as sticks to build a nest and rocks for pretend eggs to enhance the experience.
- Want to have fun designing bird wings? Check out this [DIY Bird Wings](#) tutorial. You'll just need fabric, feathers, and elastic along with common household craft tools to make this cool costume!

Bird Feeder

Materials: bird seed, peanut butter/sunflower butter/vegetable shortening, cheerios, pipe cleaners, pine cones, toilet paper rolls, string, scissors

- One way to take care of the birds living in your neighborhood is to make a bird feeder. The best part is that there are different types of bird feeders you can make!
- An easy feeder to make is stringing cheerios onto pipe cleaners. Then twist into a loop and hang on a tree branch!
- Another way to create a bird feeder is to roll a toilet paper roll in peanut butter (or sunflower butter or shortening) and then covering it in bird seed.
- Replace the toilet paper roll with a pine cone for a more natural feel!
- For more details, check out this link on [DIY Bird Feeders](#).

Activities



3rd - 4th Grade

Bird Beak Challenge

Materials: Beak Items (clothespins, spoons, tweezers, toothpicks, chopsticks, straws/pipettes, scissors), Food Items (water, dried rice, nuts or sunflower seeds or dried beans, gummy worms)

- Bird beaks come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, all of which allow birds to eat different kinds of foods.
- In this challenge, lay out the different Food Items on a table. Then, lay out the Beak Items. Have your child select one of the beaks to pick up a food item.
- Certain beaks will work better with certain food items. For example, it will be very easy to pick up a gummy worm with a pair of tweezers, like a woodpecker. Spoons are better suited for picking up grains of rice floating in the cup of water, like a duck's bill. Clothespins might help break open nuts or seeds.
- Allow your child to experiment with the items and draw their own conclusions for which beak shapes are best for which foods! You can also use the bird beak chart on Page 5 for inspiration!



All Ages

Live Bird Cam

Materials: wifi, computer or tablet

- There are lots of fun animal cams that kids of all ages can tune into!
- Check out the Cornell Lab Bird Cams to see birds from all over the world!
- Visit the following link to explore:
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/>