

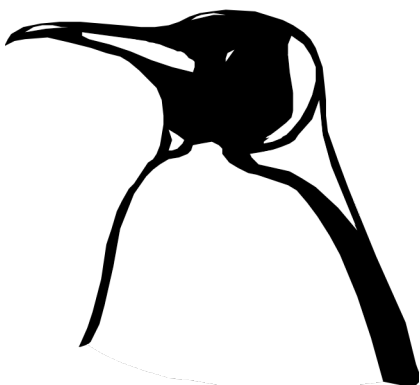
What is a Bird?

There are six types of animals: mammals, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians and birds. All of them are different from each other in many ways. Animals have special skills and tools to help them survive. For instance, they have different coverings to protect them from the cold or from injury. Fish have scales, mammals have fur or hair and birds have feathers. Feathers are not the only thing that defines an animal as a bird, they also have wings, lay eggs, build nests and have specialized beaks and feet.

FEATHERS! Birds are covered in feathers. Feathers help keep them warm and dry. They are water resistant and in some birds, like ducks and penguins, are waterproof. Underneath their outer feathers, birds have a softer layer of feathers called down. Down is soft and fuzzy and helps keep birds warm. Baby birds, called chicks, are covered with nothing but downy feathers when they hatch. This keeps them warm and protected until they grow in their adult feathers. Some birds have no feathers on their heads, while some have feathers all the way down to their toes! Feathers are very light weight but extremely strong, and they help birds do what most animals can't: FLY! What else helps a bird fly...



WINGS! All birds have wings, however not all birds can fly. Ostriches and penguins are two good examples. An ostrich's wings are too small to be of any use and are barely noticeable on the bird's body. They live on the African savannah and have long legs and necks in order to see long distances and run very fast! A penguin's wings are also small but very useful. They use their wings for "flying" underwater which is what they do when they hunt for fish. What else helps a penguin fish...



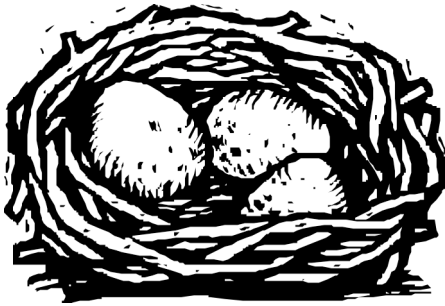
FEET! Birds have different types of feet depending on where they live and what they eat. Some birds have webbed feet for swimming, like ducks and geese, while others have powerful feet for capturing their prey, like hawks and owls. What else do hawks and owls use on their prey...

BEAKS! Birds do not have teeth. They have beaks. Beaks come in all different shapes and sizes depending on what the bird eats. Hummingbirds have long, narrow beaks to reach

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down into a flower and get the nectar. Pelicans have large pouches to scoop up fish, and parrots have strong, hooked beaks to crush nuts and seeds. What else do birds use their beaks for...

NESTS! Not all birds build nests. Woodpeckers nest in holes they drill in trees. Owls will use a tree cavity or an abandoned stick nest. Vultures will lay their eggs anywhere there is a slight hole. Some penguins lay only one egg, and they will put that egg on their feet to protect it from ice and let their body fat keep it warm! Birds do not live in their nests

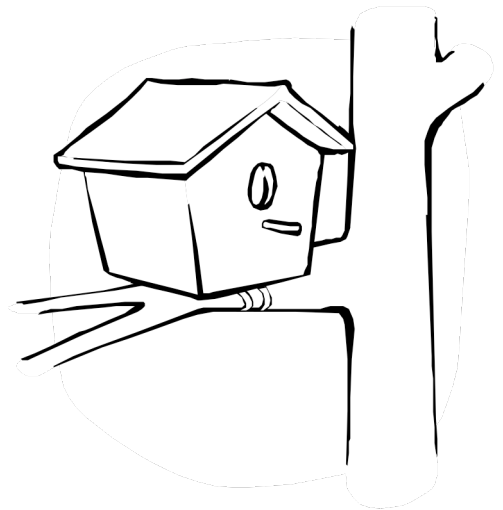


but simply use them as a place to raise their chicks. Once the chicks are full grown the nest is abandoned. When it is not breeding season, birds simply sleep while perched in a tree or while floating on the water! What do birds put in a nest...

EGGS! All birds lay eggs. There are other animals that also lay eggs like fish, reptiles, amphibians and even some mammals. Some eggs have soft shells and some have hard shells. Eggs come in

many different colors and sizes but are all basically the same shape. The shell on a bird egg is very hard and protects the baby bird until it hatches. The egg must be kept warm and when the baby bird is ready to hatch, it must peck its way out!

Birds are special in many different ways. Humans are special too. What makes us different from other animals? Sometimes humans make it very difficult for birds to live around us. We cut down trees and unknowingly take away places that birds need to sleep, eat and raise babies. What are some of the ways that we can help birds? You could plant a tree, put up a bird feeder or put up a birdhouse. The birds will appreciate this and you may find more of them singing in your backyard!



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