

WILDLIFE: BIRDS



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Birds are warm-blooded, covered in feathers and lay eggs. All birds have wings, a beak and stand on two legs. Most birds fly, but some cannot. Some species, particularly penguins and members of the Anatidae family, are adapted to swim.

Some birds eat only seeds and berries. Some also eat insects. Birds of prey eat small animals.

Male birds are usually more brightly colored than females, while females have better camouflage which helps to protect their nests.

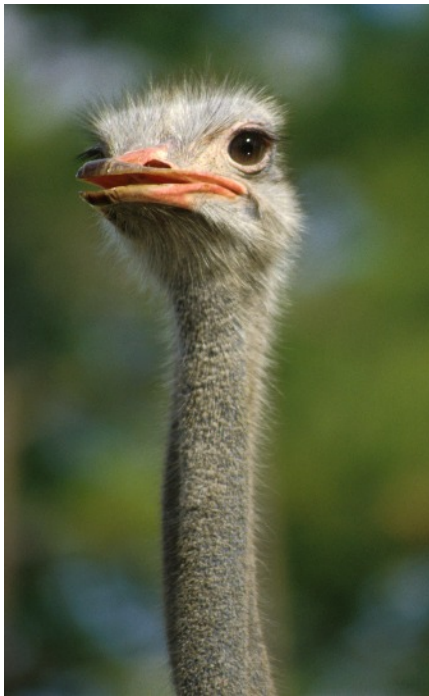
Birds are incredibly intelligent animals. They make and use tools and culturally transmit knowledge across generations.



will help with the raising of the young.

They are social, communicating with visual signals, calls and songs, and participate in such social behaviors such as cooperative breeding and hunting, flocking and mobbing of predators. The vast majority of bird species are monogamous, for one breeding season or for years. Eggs are usually laid in a nest and incubated by the parents. Most birds have an extended period of parental care after hatching. In some species, both parents care for the babies, or close relatives

FASCINATING BIRD FACTS



THE BIGGEST

The tallest bird is the ostrich at around 9 feet tall. The ostrich is also the heaviest bird, at about 345 pounds. The heaviest flying bird is the mute swan at about 40 pounds. The largest wingspan of all birds belongs to the wandering albatross at 11 feet 10 inches.

THE SMALLEST

The smallest bird is the bee hummingbird measuring in at only 2.2 inches from beak to tail.

THE FASTEST

The fastest bird is the spine-tailed swift, traveling at speeds of over 106 mph.

THE LONGEST LIVED

The longest living bird is thought to be the sulfur-crested cockatoo, able to live well into their 80's.

SMARTER THAN KIDS

Crows' intelligence rivals human children. They use tools to get food, have exceptional memories and anticipate future events to help them solve problems. They have learned to use bread crumbs as fish bait. They can count, distinguish complex shapes and perform observational learning tasks. Crows are extremely social creatures. They have been observed creating knives from leaves and stalks of grass and using advanced plucking, smoothing and bending to fashion twigs and grass into a variety of substances. Caledonian crows remember specific people, cars and urban situations. They also develop grudges against specific people and cars that last for years.



WINGED WONDERS

Ravens push rocks on people to keep them from their nests, steal fish by pulling a fisherman's line out of water and play dead beside an animal carcass to scare other ravens away from the food. Ravens are known to steal food from other birds and mammals. They can act in pairs: one individual captures an animal's attention, while the other steals its food. They pretend to hide food in one place while really hiding it somewhere else to fool other animals. Ravens can learn to talk better than many parrots and mimic other noises. They imitate wolves or foxes to attract them to carcasses that the raven cannot break open. They roll around in anthills so the ants swarm on them, or they chew the ants up to rub their guts on their feathers as an insecticide and fungicide or to soothe molting skin. Ravens point with their beaks to indicate an object to another bird and hold up objects to get the attention of other birds. They will console other birds and remember friends and family for years. They live complex social lives and express happiness, tenderness, surprise, emotion and rage through their own language. Ravens are very playful and play with other ravens, other animal species and humans. They mate for life and live in pairs. When children reach adolescence, they join gangs until they mate and pair off.



BIRDS PLAY

Many birds have been known to play. Ravens and crows love to play and have been observed sliding down snow banks on their backs, cavorting in updrafts and sliding repeatedly down sloping church windows.

BIRDS GRIEVE

Jay birds have been observed grieving, including an entire group of birds sitting for 48 hours near a dead brethern.



HOLDING GRUDGES

Swans are highly intelligent and social animals. They remember who have been kind to them, and who have not. They usually only show aggression to those who have upset them, and will remember them. They have sharp vision and hearing and use a remarkable assortment of sounds to convey a broad range of emotions. Swans usually mate for life, with occasional "divorces" occurring. Male swans will occasionally baby sit an egg so the expecting mother can take a break.

AMAZING MEMORIES

Pigeons are actually domesticated rock doves who were set free. They are marvelous parents: the father builds the nest, and both parents take turns incubating the eggs and even making milk in their crops for the young. Pigeons remember dozen of routes to find their way to familiar places, and can recognize their faces in mirrors. They can remember hundreds of photographs and images, are able to differentiate between photographs, and even differentiate between different human beings in a photograph. They have been known to be able to distinguish between Van Gogh and Chagall paintings. They can count, order items in ascending order and understand math rules. They have an amazing ability to remember people and places throughout the course of their life. Pigeon can recognize all 26 letters of the English language, be taught complex actions and response sequences, and can make responses in different sequences.

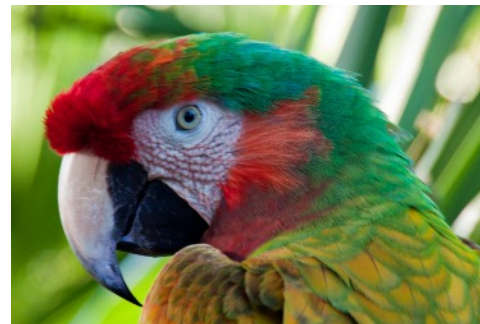


BIRDS HAVE NAMES

It has been discovered that birds name their offspring. They use smell memories to travel thousands of miles. They show advanced planning and art. They have been proven to perform arithmetic, invent words and express love through language.

MASTERS OF LANGUAGE

Parrots not only mimic the words of humans, they also understand the meanings of the words. Studies show that they remember 90% of what they are told, including full sentences and even parts of songs. They are capable of performing math, identifying colors and communicating to humans what they want. Parrots cannot bear to be alone. While most mate for life, all live in large social groups, sometimes with multiple species of birds.



GOOD MOMS

Ostrich mothers lay their eggs in a communal nest, allowing the eggs and young to all be cared for by one bonded pair; up to 380 chicks have been seen being escorted by loving parents.

BIRD BRAINS

Finches learn by listening to others and follow rules of syntax. Bengal finches use strict rules of syntax. If a zebra finch is sick, it will fake being healthy in front of other zebra finches, especially if there's a chance to mate.

BACKYARD BIRDING



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Watching the many species of birds that inhabit your ecosystem is a fun and fascinating pastime the whole family can enjoy together. You don't need to spend money on food or feeders to attract birds to your yard. If you can leave a small area of your yard unmowed, you can attract a lot of birds. They eat the seeds from the grasses and weeds and use the area for cover.

Employing a feeder grants the ability for close study of birds. While all feeders draw birds, those that keep the bird feed dry and free of mold are best. Moldy seeds are bad for bird health. Place feeders either near a window or fairly far away to help prevent birds from colliding with windows when startled.

The most common feeder is a hopper or house feeder, usually made of windows of clear plastic that feed seeds to a perching surface. These feeders attract cardinals, nuthatches, chickadees, grosbeaks, buntings and titmice. One without a lot of perching surface minimizes use by house sparrows or starlings. The most important thing is to keep feeders clean by washing with bleach water every few weeks. Washing with bleach water prevents the spread of disease.

Although slightly more expensive, bird food with black oil sunflower seeds attract a wide variety of desirable birds. A suet feeder attracts woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees and bluejays.



Some birders push suet or peanut butter into crevices in bark or in the cracks of old stumps to attract birds. Woodpeckers love dead branches on trees. Leave a dead branch on a tree to attract woodpeckers if it is safe to do so.

It is important to provide water for birds in winter too. Place the water in a spot in the yard that receives sun as its rays will melt some water for birds on even the

coldest days.

A good guide book is essential for identifying birds. Looking up unfamiliar birds and learning about their distinguishing characteristics is part of the fun of birding.

Modestly priced binoculars now have coated lenses and other features that make them acceptable choices for bird watching. Don't get zoom binoculars for birding. You tend to lose clarity at high magnification. A wide angle pair lets in more light and makes it easier to find birds.

EXOTIC BIRD OVERPOPULATION EPIDEMIC



Every year, thousands of captive birds are abandoned to shelters and rescue groups or wrongly set free. The problem has become epidemic due to overpopulation caused by profit-motivated bird breeders and unqualified caretakers. Many bird guardians are not committed caretakers and eventually decide that it's too much trouble to devote the necessary time and attention to their captive birds.

Parrots and other exotic birds are not domesticated animals. Domestic animals are animals that have been bred for hundreds of years to live in the care of humans and are distinct from their wild ancestors. Captive birds are the wild birds of other countries and all captive birds, even those born in captivity, will remain wild at heart. All captive birds, from parakeets to parrots, like other exotic wild animals, are programmed by evolution to display natural instincts, needs, and behaviors that are crucial for survival in their native habitats. Many of these behaviors are not considered desirable "pet" qualities. Too often, when the reality of living with a captive bird becomes too difficult, unprepared caretakers can become disenchanted and seek to be rid of the responsibility for providing lifetime care for them.

When people do not know or understand what it is to care for a captive bird, many unwanted birds become victims of neglect or abuse. They are often shut up away from human interaction except to be fed. They will be passed from home to home or relinquished to over-crowded shelters. Some will be sadly abandoned to fend for themselves outdoors. Even in tropical areas, captive birds cannot be returned to the wild. They do not possess the learned skills necessary to survive. They often end up isolated in back rooms and basements, where they are confined in barren cages.

Thanks to the efforts of devoted rescue organizations, there are those fortunate birds that will be rescued and cared for in shelters, until carefully screened and educated adopters can be found. But only a few of the thousands of displaced birds will make it to bird sanctuaries to live out their lives among other birds. If you choose to make a bird a part of your family - adopt, don't shop.