

Birds are Unique!

At the East End Lagoon Nature Preserve

As you might have noticed in the Birds video, birds are incredibly different in size, shape and behavior. However, they all share certain characteristics:

FEATHERS - All birds have feathers. They are the only living creature that has them.

WINGS - All birds have two wings. The majority use their wings to fly.

BEAKS - All birds have a beak, which is the bird's jaw and its horn-like covering.

PREENING - Birds use their beaks to preen or smooth and straighten out their feathers.

EGGS - All birds are hatched from hard-shelled eggs.

LIGHTWEIGHT SKELETON - Most bones in a bird's body are hollow and thin making them lightweight

KEEN EYESIGHT - Birds need excellent sight as they fly among branches, search for food, look for a mate, and watch for enemies.

POOR SENSE OF SMELL - Birds have two nostrils in their beaks but most do not have a good sense of smell.



(From Flying WILD)



What is a Feather?

Feathers are lightweight growths that cover a bird's body.

At least once a year birds shed their feathers through a process called **molting**. Then new feathers grow in.

Like hair, fingernails, and claws, feathers are made of a substance called **keratin**. Keratin is both lightweight and strong.

Different kinds of feathers have different purposes. Straight, stiff feathers give birds their ability to fly. Tail feathers help with steering, balance, and braking. Small, fluffy feathers, called down, keep a bird's body from getting too cold and its skin from getting wet.

When birds **preen**, they apply a special oil or powder on their feathers that makes them waterproof.

(From Kid's Britannica and everythingbirds.com)

Is it illegal to have a feather?

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 made it illegal to own or sell feathers, bones, or eggshells and nests from migratory bird species native to the United States. Game birds are excluded from this protection.

Decorate a Feather

Trace and cut out the feather shape on this page or draw your own feather shape. Use the colors of your favorite bird to decorate it and start your own paper feather collection.

