God's BIG Book of Animals







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Publisher Note

Porcupines have natural antibiotics on their quills — ouch!

Jellyfish don't have brains, eyes, bones, or hearts — yikes!

Chameleons have tongues faster than a speeding jet — wow!

Animals are amazing — exactly how God created them to be. We know that God created the heavens, the earth, and everything in it in the 6-day creation week because the Book of Genesis tells us so. On the fifth day, God created birds and flying reptiles and sea creatures while on the sixth day He created the beasts of the earth, including dinosaurs. He then created Adam and Eve on the sixth day and gave humans dominion over the earth.

The animals we see and marvel at today are the descendants of the original, biblical kinds. God's Big Book of Animals is an engaging exploration of the majestic animal kingdom that God has created. Readers will meet 60 different animals, ranging from birds to reptiles to mammals to fishes. Vibrant, captivating full-color images show these animals up close in the wild and from bats to bears, and turkeys to turtles, you will get to learn some of the most interesting fun facts about these amazing creatures.

Discover what they eat, where they live, and how they live—while also learning about how God has uniquely and perfectly designed each one for its own special environment and circumstances. It's a celebration of God's wisdom and the amazing animal facts that point to His ingenuity.

Special Thanks

Thank you to Orit Kashtan for authoring the original Hebrew-language version of this delightful book and to HaChotam Christian Publishing House for publishing the original text. Thank you to Shirley Rash for editing the book.

Thank you to Mike Belknap, Tom Hennigan, Dr. Jean Lightner, and Dr. Todd Charles Wood for their kind, gracious, and thorough assistance in both providing and fact-checking information on the animals' classes, orders, and families.



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Introduction

Get ready to enjoy reading how smart, funny, strange, and colorful animals can be and how all are living proof of the love and wisdom of their one and only Creator.

Have you ever seen a white or black swan? It is very large and looks so regal when it moves across the water. Have you ever thought about how such a large bird can fly?

Think about the camel that lays down in the hot desert. How can it lay on the hot, burning sand?

Have you ever seen how animal colors match their habitat? How do geese, storks, and many other birds know where to fly and where to return many months and many miles later, arriving at the exact same place they left?

Do insects have glue on their feet? Is that how they are able to walk sideways and upside down? How is it that woodpeckers do not get a headache after pecking again and again? Who taught termites to make their nests facing the sun? Why don't vultures get a stomach ache after feeding on carrion? How come octopuses can change color from red to black and sometimes from yellow to white?

You will find answers to these questions and more in this book. As you read, remember that these amazing creatures were all created by God in His wisdom and love, and remember to praise God for His wondrous works.

Special Note

The study of animal kinds from a creationist perspective (baraminology) is an exciting field. It is also one that is still being studied and researched. The classes, orders, and families given for each animal are based on the most up-to-date information available, through further research is needed for many of the animals.

Bless the LORD, O my soul! . . .
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.
He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot. . . .
He waters the hills from His upper chambers. . . .
He causes the grass to grow for the cattle. . . .
The high hills are for the wild goats;
The cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers. . . .
The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their food from God. . . .
O LORD, how manifold are Your works!
In wisdom You have made them all.
The earth is full of Your possessions. (Psalm 104)

1



Hummingbirds

Class: **Birds**

Order: **Apodiformes (hummingbirds and swifts)**

Family: **Trochilidae (hummingbirds)**

Description

Hummingbirds weigh around 0.1 ounces and are about three inches long. They are very small and light.

Hummingbirds have beautiful feathers. Males have dark-colored feathers, mostly green, blue, purple, and yellow, and females are usually black, gray, brown, and green. Their bills are long and curved. Its shape helps them consume nectar. Their tongues and tails are very long, sometimes longer than their bodies.

A group of hummingbirds is called a charm of hummingbirds. As is common with many types of birds, a male is called a cock, a female is called a hen, and a baby is called a chick.

Did you know?

Hummingbirds are not actual songbirds. They are called hummingbirds because their wings beat so fast that they make a humming sound.

Their hearts can beat up to 1,260 times per minute (most birds' hearts beat between 50–160 times per minute).



Hummingbirds are one of the most beautiful birds God created. Their feathers are bright green, blue, purple, and red. Male hummingbirds are more colorful than females.

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither
sow nor reap nor gather into barns;
yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not of more value than they?

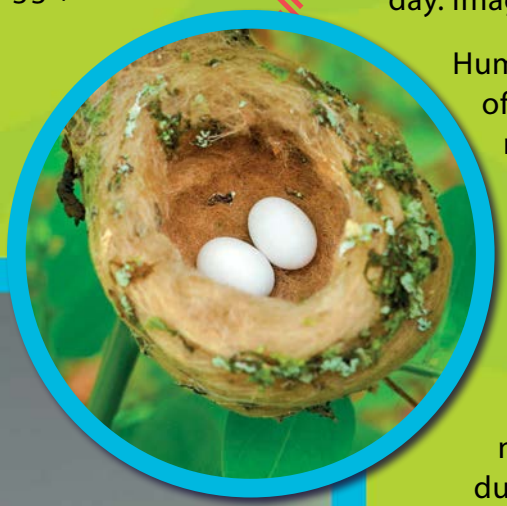
—Matthew 6:26



Baby hummingbirds

The female hummingbird weaves her nest with feathers and plant fibers, tying them together with spider silk. The tiny nest looks like a flower sprout.

Baby hummingbirds are as big as bees (hummingbirds usually lay two eggs).





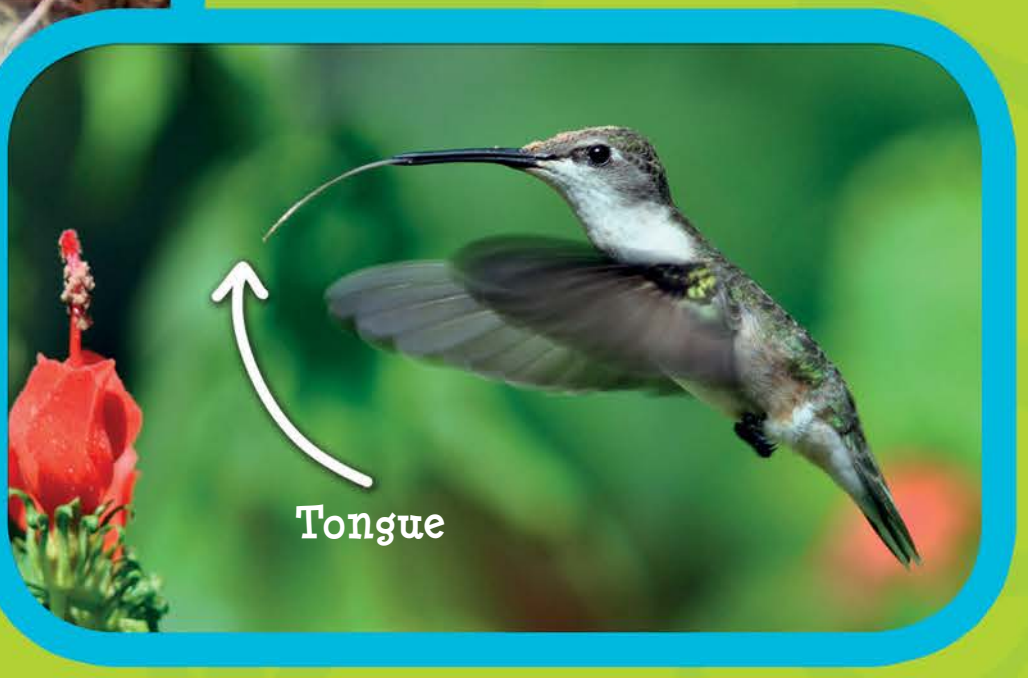
Small and hungry

Hummingbirds may be small, but they have big appetites. They have very fast metabolisms, second-fastest to insects. They eat 0.10 ounces of food per day. Such a large quantity for such a small body is like a person consuming 220–330 pounds of meat every day. Imagine eating that much food every day!

Hummingbirds need a lot of food because of the large amount of energy they need for daily activity. They constantly move, looking for nectar or small mosquitoes to swallow mid-flight. Hummingbirds have enough body fat to keep their energy throughout the day.

They need a solid, deep sleep at night because of all their activity during the day. They slip into a kind of hibernation called "torpor." This state lowers their heartrate and breathing while resting their bodies.

Hummingbirds have unique bills and long tongues. Both are longer than their bodies.



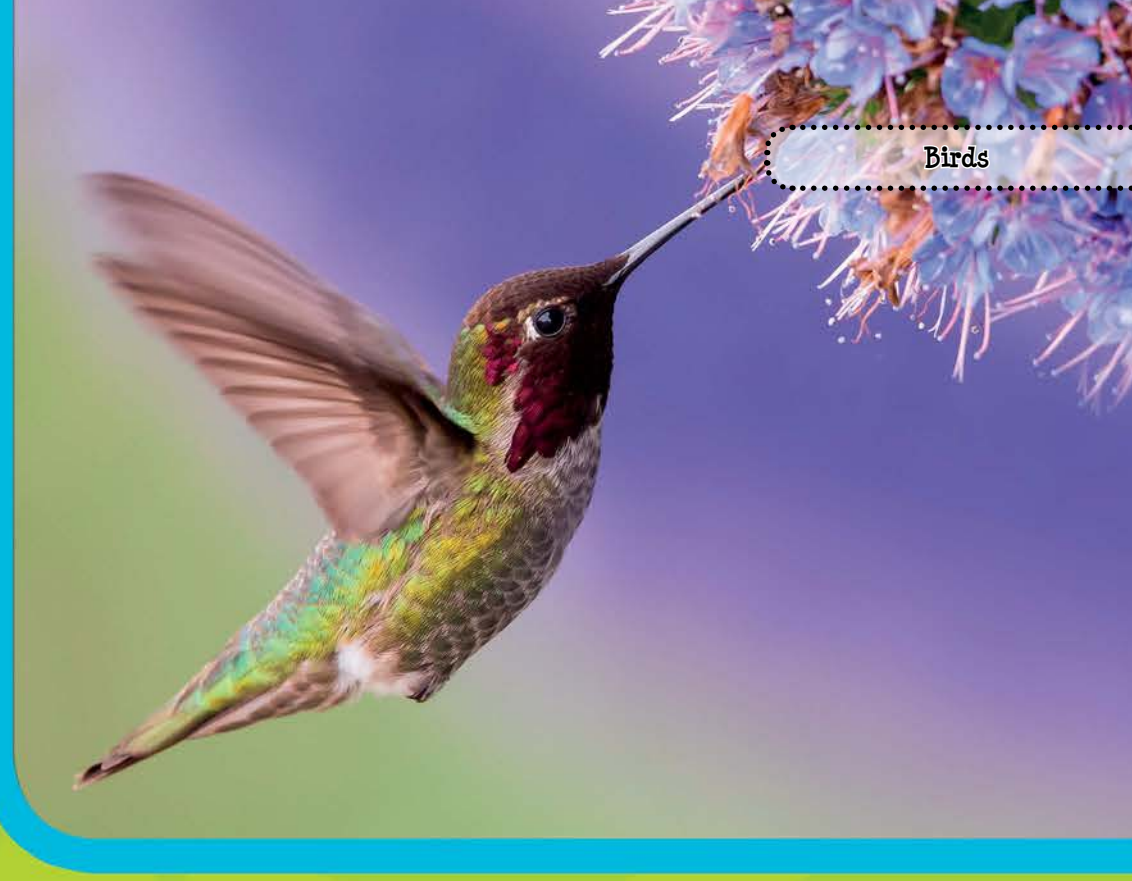
Their long tongues

Hummingbirds' tongues are textured. This texture helps them drink nectar. They put their curvy bills into the mouth of a flower and use their flexible, long tongues to trap nectar or insects.

Fun facts

Hummingbirds' wings flap so fast that it is hard to see them move. They look like a noisy, vibrating smudge. The only way to see their wings flapping is by using a special camera that can record fast movements. Some people mistake them for insects because of their size and the way they fly, but hummingbirds are truly birds.

They are curious birds that can adapt to human surroundings. If they find a source of food, they will visit it again and again. That is why some people hang hummingbird feeders a few feet away from their windows. Hummingbirds love the sugary water in the feeders and visit them a lot.



Great acrobats

Hummingbirds have strong shoulder muscles they use to flap their wings. Those muscles are one-fourth of their body weight.

Their shoulders have ball and socket joints, like the palms of our hands, with ten big feathers attached to them. This allows hummingbirds to rotate their wings 180 degrees in all directions, giving them their amazing flight ability.

Since hummingbirds can hover, they don't need to slow down when they feed. They can drink nectar while beating their wings as fast as they do while flying, and they quickly fly away when they've eaten their fill.

Hummingbirds are excellent acrobats. They can fly forward, backward, upside down, or straight up, like helicopters. They can even hover. Their wings flap so fast that you can only hear them.





Toucans

Class: **Birds**

Order: **Piciformes (woodpeckers, toucans, etc.)**

Family: **Ramphastidae (toucans)**

Description

There are 40 species of toucans, ranging in size from weighing only a few ounces to over 1 pound and measuring 1-2 feet long. They have short, solid bodies and rounded tails. Their necks are short and thick. Most toucans are black with touches of yellow or orange on their necks.

Toucans have colorful bills, usually orange, red, and yellow with splashes of blue and orange at the tips. Keel-billed toucans range from around 17 to 22 inches long, and their bills average around 5 inches. They are very colorful. Their necks and chests are yellow, their short legs are blue, and the tips of their tails are red.

A group of toucans is technically called a durante of toucans, but most people refer to them as a flock.



There is a constellation named after the bird called the Tucana.



Toucans have a narrow gray tongue that is about 20 inches long.

Their bills can be red, yellow, blue, white, green, brown, or black (or a combination of colors). Male toucans use their colorful bills to get the attention of females.

Toucans have short wings, so they can only fly very short distances.



Toucans' bills

Only God could create such a work of art like toucans' bills. They are thin and light and are hollow inside, so they are not as heavy as they look.

When toucans are hungry, they use their bills to pick fruit. If the fruit is hard or too big, they either cut it into smaller pieces with their bills or use their bills like a saw to break the hard fruit shell.

The bills are so large that they get in the way when toucans try to sleep.



Toucan enjoying a banana

Social lives

Toucans like to live in flocks. During breeding season, males sometimes look for delicious fruit to drop into females' bills.

After females lay eggs, both the male and female incubate them. The chicks hatch with soft pads on their feet to keep them from injury in the nest.

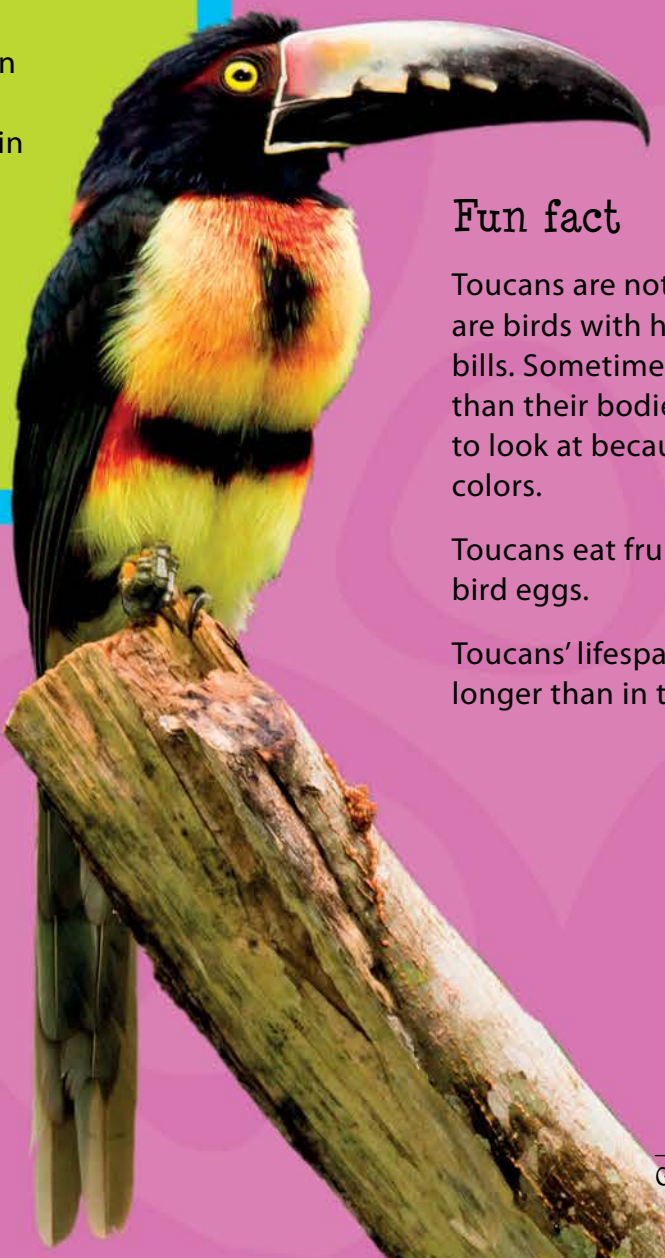
Unique bird

God created toucans with the ability to turn their heads completely backward and rest their bills on their backs, fold their tails, and cover their heads. God created toucans with light bills, so resting them on their backs is not very heavy.

Researchers find the bills' unique build interesting. Even though the bills are light, they are very hard. Their bills are used in different ways that require fine motor skills and great strength. Researchers copied toucans' bills to create light, strong vehicles.

One of the most unique toucan species is the gray-breasted mountain toucan, which lives in South Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. They live at much lower altitudes than other toucan species and stay quiet while flying. They don't like to live close to other birds.





Fun fact

Toucans are not parrots. Instead, they are birds with hard, long, and colorful bills. Sometimes their bills are longer than their bodies. They are amazing to look at because of their beautiful colors.

Toucans eat fruit dipped in bugs and bird eggs.

Toucans' lifespans in captivity are longer than in the wild.

Did you know?

Toucans are tropical birds that live in the tropical forests of South and Central America. They can live up to 50 years in captivity.

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Pileated Woodpeckers

Class: Birds

Order: Piciformes (woodpeckers, toucans, etc.)

Family: Picidae (woodpeckers)

Description

Pileated woodpeckers are a very large type of woodpecker that lives in North America. Other woodpecker species can vary considerably in size, but these birds are well over a foot long and weigh approximately half a pound.

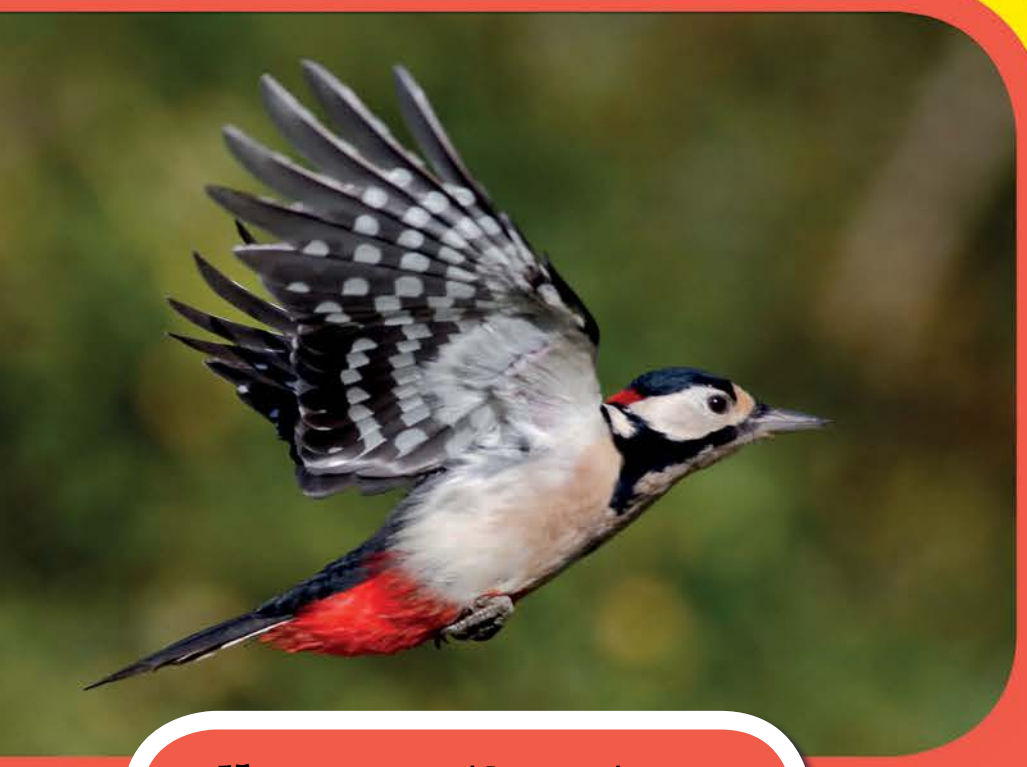
They are very striking animals, with black and white bodies and bright red crests on top of their heads.

Did you know?

They are very noisy birds. They get their names because they peck the trees they are in as a way to find food. The noise they make when they peck trees is called "drumming," and it is also a way they communicate with each other. They drum to attract mates and to warn other woodpeckers to stay away from their territory!







You can see the spots on the woodpeckers' wings when they fly.

The woodpecker's unusual eating habits

Woodpeckers do not have teeth, so they need stones to grind their food. They swallow little grain-sized rocks with their meals, and that helps them grind their food.

Woodpeckers have long tongues that are 2 to 3 times longer than their bills, with hard, pointed tips that look like brushes. These "brushes" help woodpeckers clean up leftover food and get rid of sawdust. Some woodpeckers have barbed tongues, while others have sticky ones. Both types of tongues help them with hunting for food.

Head up and down

Woodpeckers can peck sideways and upside down. Their talons help them firmly hold onto a tree. They lean on their tails for balance. That's how they can peck upside down safely, without falling.

Fun fact

Woodpeckers make "cracking stations." These are areas they use for cracking nuts they find. You can spot these stations by the amount of nut shells you find on the ground underneath them.

Woodpeckers can also cause damage. For example, they like to peck at water irrigation systems, so farmers now cover their pipes or lay them in the ground. However, they also help prevent insect infestations in trees.

Woodpeckers are cautious and skittish. When they see humans, they hide in their nests and peek out to see if the danger is gone. They come down to the ground very rarely, only to eat ants or to drink water.



A group of woodpeckers is called a descent of woodpeckers.

A grub or a nut?

Woodpeckers like to eat insects, especially grubs such as beetles and moths that live inside trees. They also eat fruit, nuts, and berries.

Some woodpeckers feed on acorns. When woodpeckers want to eat one, they choose an acorn and pluck it off a branch. They come as close as possible to it and tug at it with their bills. They must turn it over to store it in a hole, making sure the shell goes in first. To do that, they pin the acorn to the tree, turn it over, and push it over to the hole they carved. If the acorn falls, they curve their wings into a pocket and catch it. They are usually fast enough to catch acorns before they hit the ground.

When woodpeckers hunt for grubs, they usually eat them right away.



A woodpecker bringing a nut home



Woodpeckers do not get a headache

Woodpeckers carving a storage space can peck on the wood more than 100 times a minute without getting a headache. Any other creature would get a concussion from such pounding, but woodpeckers do not because God created them with a special spongy, plate-like bone that separates their bills from their skulls. These spongy bones protect the brain and keep the woodpeckers from getting concussions.

Building a home in a tree

Woodpeckers take 30 minutes to make a home for hiding and storing food. It is not an easy job. They have to carve into the tree trunk on their own. Then they work on making the space bigger, sometimes with the help of friends.

Tasty fruit

Woodpeckers would gladly eat apples or pears when they can't find grubs and acorns. They peck at the fruit and eat it from the inside out. They do not nibble on one fruit and move to another. They finish the one they started eating before they pick another fruit.

Who watches the babies?

Baby woodpeckers are cared for by both parents. They stay with their parents for their first few months. The parents take turns feeding the babies.



Crows

Class: **Birds**

Order: **Passeriformes (perching birds)**

Family: **Corvidae (crows, ravens, etc.)**

Description

What is usually black, can fly, can be a good friend, makes hoarse sounds, and can mimic our language? Crows.

They also have short, strong legs and powerful bills. They can reach a length of nearly 20 inches, their wingspans are around 39 inches, and they weigh around 1 pound.

Most crows are black, but some are other colors, including gray or white.

Did you know?

Crows are songbirds because of their complex vocal organ.

God created crows to be very intelligent. They can be trained to mimic human voices, just like parrots. There are many stories, poems, and legends written of crows because of their color and toughness. Most of these stories view crows as bad omens of war, death, and evil.

Crows can single out a person who harmed them or their chicks. There are documented events of crows attacking people they identified as aggressors.

A group of crows is called a murder of crows.

When crows find tough food to chew, like dry bread, they take it to a water source like a puddle or fountain and dip the food in the water to soften it.







Crows and their enemies

Crows have two great enemies: humans and owls. They watch out for cats, eagles, or foxes, but their greatest fear is owls. Owls can creep in and hunt for crow chicks or adult crows in the dark of night, without being seen or heard. Many humans bring owls to scare off crows from their homes.

What is for dinner?

Crows are not scared off by scarecrows. They are only scared of people and animals. They do not cause much damage to gardens because they prefer eating meat. When an animal gets run over, crows immediately fly to the scene to feast on the flesh. They also eat mice and other rodent carrion. They will also gladly eat wheat, insects, bird eggs, fruit, nuts, and vegetables. Their diet is varied, so they do not usually suffer from hunger.

A crow cracking a nut shell on a pavement



Faithful for life

When male and female crows mate, they stay faithful to each other for the rest of their lives. Sometimes, a pair of crows leaves the flock to join another, but the pair stays together. They never leave each other.

When they have chicks, the mother takes care of them while the father keeps watch and brings food for the family. Baby crows eat at least eight big meals a day. Studies show that a family of crows can eat about 40,000 insects at one meal.





How do crows talk?

The truth is that crows do not really talk, but they do communicate with each other using caws. Scientists have found that crows have more than 50 different calls they use to communicate.

Crows know to sound out excited caws when they find food, sad caws when a fellow crow dies, or even special warning caws to warn friends. In captivity, crows can learn to talk even better than some pet parrots.



Good friends

Crows live in flocks and work together. They use their loud caws to call for help or alert each other of danger.

Crows are known to care for one another. For example, if a crow is injured, his fellow crows will stay by his side, even in the face of danger.

Fun fact

If you pay attention, you might see crows dropping nuts on sidewalks and roads. The shells crack open or get run over, and crows can then eat the inside easily. Crows like shiny objects, so they often "steal" items left out in backyards.

Crows can live up to 20 years in the wild.

Crows can fight

Crows' biggest weapon is their voices. They use them to fight and defend their friends. They caw so loud that enemies are scared off and keep away. Sometimes, when they have no other choice, they will fight enemies with help from fellow crows, which explains why they are so hard to beat.

When they fight, they work together. They split up into two groups. The smaller crows are used as bait to bring the enemy to a vulnerable location, and the bigger crows can attack from behind.



5



Vultures

Class: **Birds**

Order: **Accipitriformes (hawk-like birds)**

Families: **Accipitridae (Old World vultures); Cathartidae (New World vultures)**

Description

Vultures have long torsos and can grow up to 3 feet long. Their wingspans are around 10 feet, and they weigh nearly 20 pounds. Males are larger than females. They have long necks, and their beaks are curved like hooks. They have short, powerful legs covered with down feathers down to their knees. Their talons are also curved but are not sharp. They are bald, and the bottoms of their necks are covered with a white, coarse plumage. They are usually various shades of brown or gray.

A group of vultures can be called by several names, depending on what they are doing. In general, they are often called a committee of vultures or a colony of vultures. These terms are especially common for a group of vultures nesting in trees. However, if they are circling in the air, they are called a kettle of vultures. If they are feeding on the ground, they are called a wake of vultures.



Vultures in Israel

Did you know?

The word "vulture" came from the Latin word *veller*, which means "to treat or to pluck out."

Unlike other birds, which hunt live prey, vultures feed on dead animals (carrion).

Vultures are great at gliding. They can move up to 37 feet through the air without flapping their wings. When they see a dead animal, they dive toward it at speeds of over 85 miles per hour.

Vultures can wait near carrion for many hours, sometimes even days, until the flesh softens. Elderly vultures eat first, followed by the young ones.

Baby vultures feed on bones crushed by their parents, which is how they get calcium. Vultures can eat very large portions, followed by a time of rest. They can go without eating for as long as five days straight.



And when the vultures came
down on the carcasses,
Abram drove them away.

–Genesis 15:11

Vultures in love

During breeding season, vultures perform a lovely courting ceremony. The female carries a stick with her beak and soars up high. She then throws it toward the male she chooses. If the male is interested, he picks up the stick and returns it to the female. She throws the stick over and over again, and the male flies down to catch it each time and brings it back to her. Finally, after playing catch, they soar together and take a sudden dive, almost touching the ground, and soar again.



In many cultures, vultures are feared because they eat dead animals.

The highest nest

Vultures build their nests in a tall tree or cliff. It is not easy to build a nest. They have to collect hundreds of branches and twigs and carry them high up to their nests. Every year, vultures work at taking care of their nests, adding more twigs, wood chips, and grass.

Their nests are built on high elevations to provide the most protection for their babies. These high nests also give vultures a good view and control of the area. Since the nests are at such heights, baby vultures don't have much protection from the sun or rain, so when it does rain, one of the parents spreads its wings over the babies to give protection, like an umbrella.

Getting cleaned up

Surprisingly enough, vultures are rather clean despite what they eat. That is surprising for another reason: they do not wash. That does not mean that they ignore cleanliness, however!

When they are done eating, vultures find a nice perch and turn their backs to the sun. The black feathers on their wings absorb the warmth of the sun's rays and carry heat to their heads. This kills any bacteria that they might have picked up.

Vultures also spread their wings out in the sun to warm themselves while they pick away food particles with their beaks (that is called preening). This is how they keep warm and keep their wings clean. The warmth of the sun provides heat that kills bacteria on their wings. Rain also allows them to clean themselves. They let the drops of water fall through their spread wings.

Still, vultures often carry pieces of meat, blood, and bacteria on their bodies. So they rub their beaks against their feathers, cleaning feather by feather. You could say that is their dessert. Vultures can't clean their heads with their beaks, but thankfully, their heads and necks are bald. Sometimes, food gets on their heads, too, but cleaning skin is easier than cleaning feathers.

The same is true of their feet and talons. Vultures use their feet to hold onto their food and tear off pieces, which makes their feet very dirty. Vulture legs are covered by their feathers, so they have to find another way to clean their legs and feet. Fortunately for them, their urine is so acidic that it kills bacteria. That's right — their pee helps keep their legs clean!





The eyes

Vultures have a very good sense of sight. They can see everything on the ground even when they are high in the air. Their eyesight is six times better than human eyesight. They can see a coin from 656 feet away.

Because a vulture's eyesight is so good, God has given them protection from the bright sunshine. Vultures have dark lines around their eyes that reduces glare by absorbing the sunshine. If you have ever seen football players with dark lines on their face below their eyes, that works the same way.

The nose

Vultures' keen sense of smell also give them another advantage. They have nares, which are holes in their beaks. Vultures can pick up smells when the wind blows through their nares. Every gust of wind gives them lots of information, purely by smell alone. Vultures also have a sizeable olfactory lobe that God provided them to help them process all of the smells they pick up.

Fun fact

During the breeding season, vultures comb one another, perform flight displays, and make calls to draw attention to each other. Once eggs are laid, the parents take turns incubating them for about two months. Before they each take their turn, they circle and greet one another.

Vultures are often considered one of the creepiest birds on the planet. Because of their gruesome diet, they are often avoided, even feared. Despite this reputation, they are still among God's creatures, and God created them for a special purpose — to help clean up dead animals.

How come vultures don't get sick from eating dead animals?

Vultures eat rotten flesh, often of animals that were sick, so they have a special digestive system. The acid in their crop (stomach) is one of the strongest in the natural world, strong enough to kill harmful bacteria in their food. That acid keeps vultures from getting sick from almost anything they eat. This kind of bacteria would surely make humans or other animals sick or even kill them, but when digested by vultures, the bacteria dies instead. Vultures keep the environment clean of disease and protect us from harmful bacteria.



How do you find carrion?

Vultures do not have sharp talons, as we may think. They do not attack or hunt. That is why they are not predators. Vultures need patience to find their food.

Most animals can find prey because it moves. When prey is moving about, it can be easily found. Vultures need much more time to find prey that does not move.

God gave vultures two talents that help them find their motionless food — an excellent sense of smell and great eyesight.



Owls

Class: **Birds**

Order: **Strigiformes (owls)**

Families: **Strigidae (typical owls)**

Description

Owls are big birds that look even bigger because of their feathers. They are usually brown and speckled. They have short, strong legs covered with feathers, and they have very sharp talons. Owls have four toes, two facing forward and two facing backward. They have large, flat heads and forward-facing eyes that bulge out. They can turn their necks all the way around.

Ears

Owls have lopsided ear openings on the sides of their heads, behind the eyes. One opening is higher and one is lower. They are used as speakers. One ear opening hears sound a split second faster than the other, letting the owl know the location of its prey, how fast it is traveling, and where it is going.

Did you know?

There are over a dozen types of owls in North America. Owls that are commonly found in America include barn owls and great horned owls. The word "owl" comes from an Old English-German word that means "to wail." Owls are active at night and their hoots sound like wails.

A group of owls is called a parliament of owls. Baby owls are often called owlets.





Fun facts

Owl parents share the workload. The female lays eggs and incubates them. The male teaches the babies and feeds the family.

Owls swallow their food whole. They cannot digest the fur and bones in their food, though, so they usually cough those back up as something called a pellet.





The owl is mentioned in Isaiah 34:11, where it says owls will remain in the land after the Lord punishes his people and makes the land desolate.

Talons

Owls have four sharp talons that let them grab their prey at any angle. Their talons are so sharp that they can pierce the toughest skin and not drop their prey.

Rotating necks

Owls can rotate their necks in different directions, almost 360 degrees. They can turn their heads toward their backs and, when they do, they rest their head between their wings. If that doesn't impress you, owls can also rotate their heads upside down, with their beaks facing up and their eyes facing down.

God created owls with twice as many neck bones as a human has. Those extra bones and flexible muscles let owls rotate their heads in every direction. We say owls are smart birds, but in fact, their Creator is the One who is truly smart.

Hunting feathers

Mice have excellent hearing. They can hear every little noise, but they find it hard to hear owls flying because God created owls with unique feathers. The edges of each feather on their wings looks like tiny combs that let air pass through in almost complete silence. Little rodents can't hear owls coming because they can fly very quietly. On the other hand, owls can hear and spot their prey in the dark.



Nighttime. All is quiet. A lone mouse is peeking out, afraid, sniffing the air. It is relieved. It looks like the coast is clear. It comes out of its hiding, looking for food. All of a sudden, an owl swoops down, grabs it with its talons, and takes off.

Big eyes

You have probably seen that owls have very big eyes compared to other birds. If owls were as big as little children, their eyes would be the size of tennis balls! Their eyes have very unique traits.

First, they have large pupils. The larger the pupil is, the more light that passes through, letting them see better, especially in the dark. A pupil is like a window with light shining through it, determining how clear and bright the room looks.

Second, owls have forward-facing eyes, unlike most birds. This gives them a wide range of binocular vision, which most birds do not have.

Third, owls have three eyelids. They have an upper and lower eyelid and a third eyelid that cleans and protects the surfaces of their eyes, like a windshield wiper.

Why do owls hunt at night?

Owls are one of the most unique animals God created. Their special abilities let them hunt at night. They don't need to fight over their food with falcons and eagles that hunt for the same food in the daytime.

God gave owls special abilities to hunt at night.

