



# BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Learning about birds and their adaptations



## GRADE 4

### MATERIALS

- clipboards

### KEY WORDS

- adaptation
- beak
- talon

### STANDARDS

- SCI.4.3.2
- SCI.4.3.3
- SCI.4.3.4

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about birds, their adaptations, and other defining features.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Birds' beaks, or bills, have been adapted for use as weapons or tools. Only eagles (who use both beaks and claws as weapons) and parrots (who can hold food with their claws) use their feet as hunting devices.
- Beaks are made of the same basic material as horns, claws, hooves, and fingernails. They grow continuously so they are never worn out. Birds use their beaks as spears (kingfishers), chisels (oyster catchers), hammers and drills (woodpeckers), strainers (flamingos), and scoops (spoonbills), just to mention a few.
- Birds of prey have the most acute vision of any predator. Birds' eyes are relatively larger than humans' and have a retina more sensitive to color.
- Grasping claws are used by birds of prey (eagles, hawks, and owls) to hold down prey while tearing it with the beak. Fishing birds, such as ospreys, have talons modified for holding slippery prey.

### PROCEDURE

- Have students observe different species of birds while at the zoo and complete the worksheet.

### RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT

- Check students' worksheets for accuracy.

### ANSWER KEY

- A. NAMES: spoonbills, ibis, storks, egrets, etc. EATS: small aquatic animals, insects
- B. NAMES: ducks, geese, swans, etc. EATS: aquatic plants, grain, insects
- C. NAMES: macaws, parrots, cockatoo, parakeet, lorikeets, lovebirds, etc. EATS: fruit, nuts, seeds
- D. NAMES: ostrich (2 toes), emu (3 toes) EATS: grasses, leaves, fruit, flowers, insects

### EXTENSIONS

- Have each student choose a zoo animal and observe it for 5-10 minutes. Have them draw its picture and describe its behavior (feeding, sleeping, fighting, grooming, etc.). What adaptations are present that might help the animal survive?



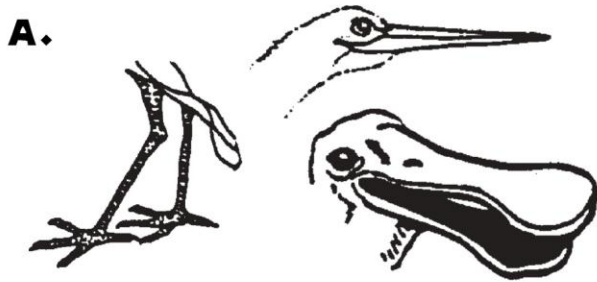


# BIRDS OF A FEATHER



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Birds have developed a variety of beaks and claws to help them adapt to their special living conditions. As you walk through the zoo, keep an eye (and an ear) out for birds that belong to the following categories. Then, write their names on the lines below the sketches of their beaks and claws.



Names of birds seen with these features:

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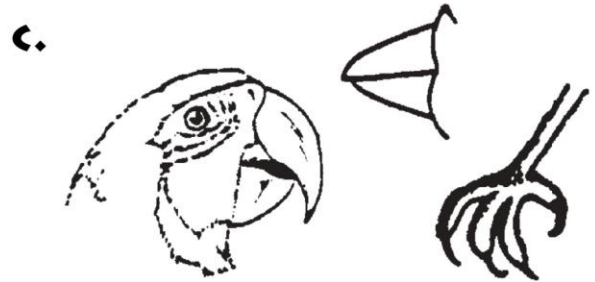
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What types of food they might eat?

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Names of birds seen with these features:

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What types of food they might eat?

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Names of birds seen with these features:

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