

FUN FACTS! ABOUT BIRDS!

LEARNING
ABOUT
BIRDS IN
AUSTRALIA



BY DAVID & DEBBIE HIBBERT & ROBERT TATE

FUN FACTS ABOUT BIRDS

By David & Debbie Hibbert
and Robert (Bob) Tate.



A free Educational Resource for teachers
of Primary School Aged Children.

*Credit BirdLife Australia's Birds in Backyards Program
(www.birdsinbackyards.net) & Wiki Encyclopedia.*

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This publication is designed to be used
in conjunction with the Artworkz
Quick Identification Local Birds eBook.



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FORWARD



By Robert (Bob) Tate

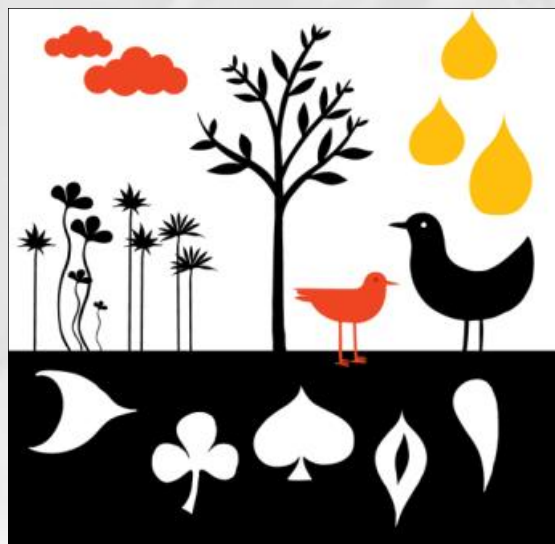
Nature study was an integral part of study in Primary Schools up until the mid 1900s. In those days nature was much closer to us than now, with the bush not far away and country students having easy access to nature on the way to and from school, and of course at home.

The Gould League of Bird Lovers played a very big part in this aspect of education. Unfortunately in this day and age, more emphasis is placed on environmental issues, though to appreciate this we still need to know just what is in the environment.

That is where I hope this eBook will help in raising awareness of the birds which are still here, and many of which can be seen on a regular basis. It can help students in identifying the various species shown, and thereby help them gain an interest which could eventually be in birds, plants, fungi, rocks or many other aspects of nature.

Bob Tate. B.V.Sc. L.D.A.

February 2013.



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Bird Songs & Calls

What is
a bird?

WHAT IS A BIRD?

Vertebrates

All birds have a backbone.

Feathers

All birds have feathers.

Wings

All birds have wings.

Egg-Laying

All birds lay eggs.

Bipedal

All birds have two legs.

Navigation

All birds can navigate (find their way from one place to another).

Bill

All birds have a keratin beak or bill.

Warm-Blooded

All birds generate their own body heat.

Communication

All birds can communicate with songs and calls.

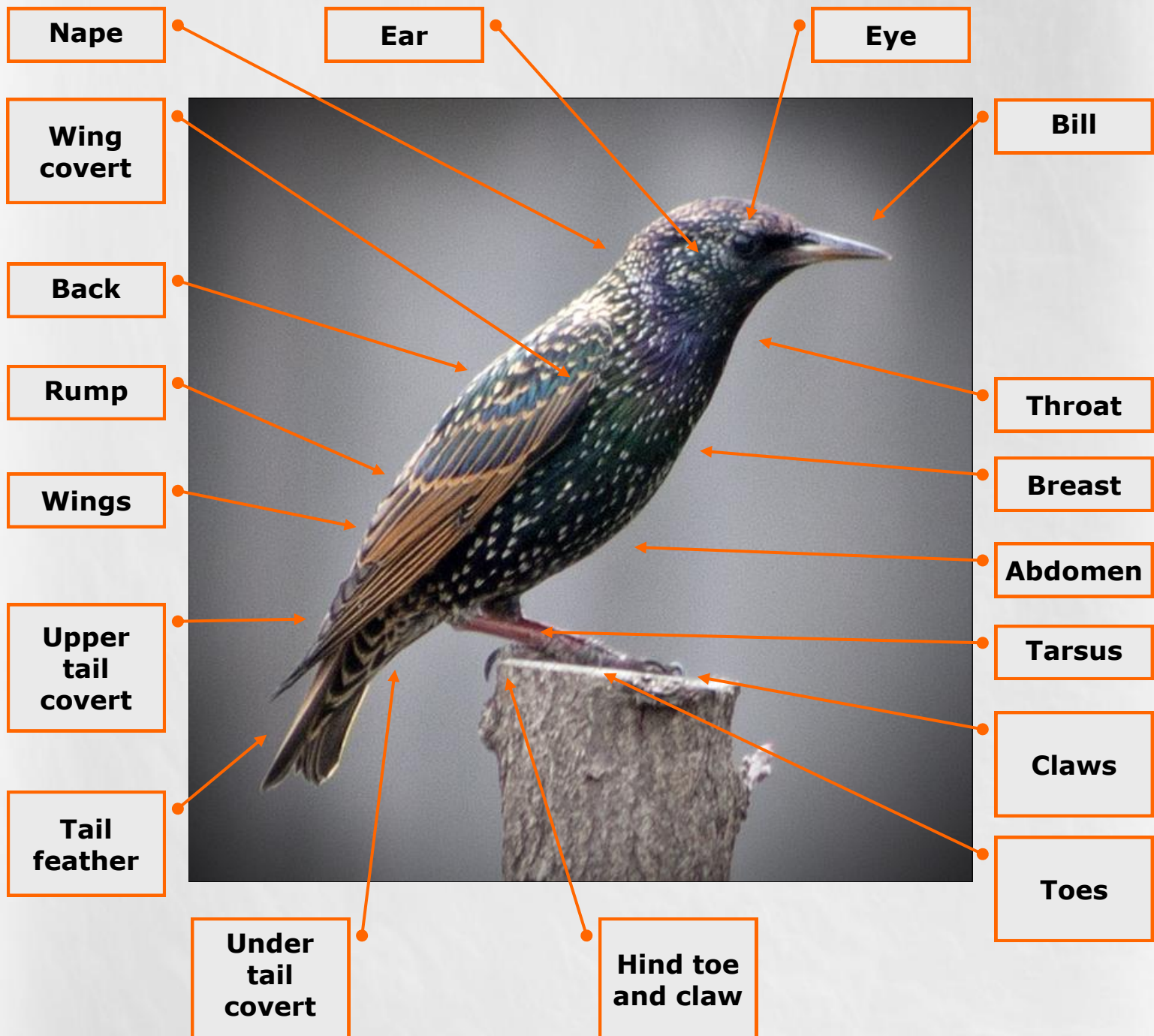
High Metabolism

All birds have a metabolism that turns food into energy quickly.

Furcula

All birds have a furcula (wishbone) that protects their chest cavity.

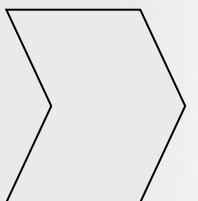
WHAT IS A BIRD?



There are nearly 10,000 different bird species living in the world today and they all share the same basic characteristics.

Bird names

**When were
Australian birds
named and
by who?**



BIRD NAMES

The Gang Gang Cockatoo is the faunal emblem of the Australian Capital Territory.



GANG-GANG COCKATOO

Found in cooler wetland and forested areas in south eastern Australia from New South Wales to Victoria. It grows to 35 cm and feeds on the seeds of eucalypt and acacia trees. It prefers forests, bushland and woodlands. It is known for its call which resembles a cork being pulled from a bottle.

The Gang-gang Cockatoo was originally named by Aborigines who lived in Australia before Europeans.



VIC

N.S.W

QLD

S.A.

W.A.

N.T.

TAS

NATIVE

INTRODUCED

ENDANGERED

Australian birds were originally given names by the aborigines prior to the arrival of European settlers.

Some of the aboriginal names used by them to describe birds are still used today.

An example is the Gang-gang Cockatoo whose name 'Gang-gang' comes from a New South Wales Aboriginal language.

BIRD NAMES



VIC N.S.W. QLD S.A. W.A. N.T. TAS



NATIVE INTRODUCED ENDANGERED

AUSTRALIAN MAGPIE

Found in all states of Australia. It grows to 43 cm and feeds on a wide variety of insects as well as millipedes, worms, spiders, skinks, beetles, caterpillars, frogs, moths and butterflies. It is an omnivorous relative of the butcherbird.

The Magpie was named by Englishman John Latham in the late 1700s.



VIC N.S.W. QLD S.A. W.A. N.T. TAS



NATIVE INTRODUCED ENDANGERED

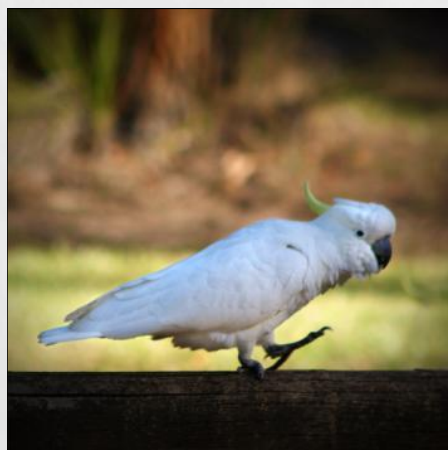
GREY FANTAIL

Found in all states (except the Western Desert Areas). It grows to 16 cm and feeds on insects it catches in flight. It prefers bushlands, forests and woodlands. It is identifiable by its constantly fanned tail feathers and is similar to the Willie Wagtail and Rufous Whistler.

The Grey Fantail was named by Englishman John Latham in the late 1700s.



VIC N.S.W. QLD S.A. W.A. N.T. TAS



NATIVE INTRODUCED ENDANGERED

SULPHUR CRESTED COCKATOO

A large white parrot found in all States of Australia. It grows to 50 cm and feeds on berries, nuts, seeds and roots of small plants. It is found across most habitats including regional townships and farmland areas.

The Sulphur Crested Cockatoo was named by Englishman John Latham in the late 1700s.



Many Australian birds were named in the late 1700s to early 1800s by early ornithologists (people who study birds) such as John Latham.

BIRD NAMES

The Birds of Australia

Published by John Gould

in 1848, with a

supplement

added in 1869.

The seven

volume

hardcover

publication

contained

over 600

colour

illustrations

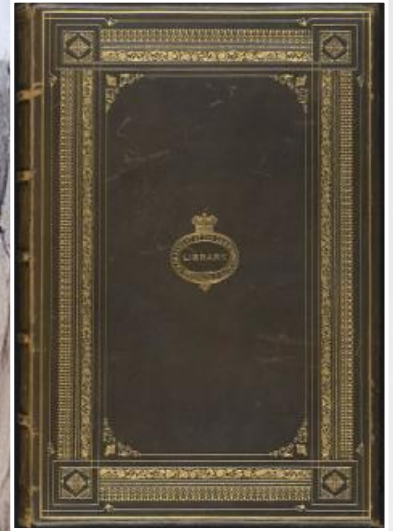
like this one

of the

Sulphur

Crested

Cockatoo.

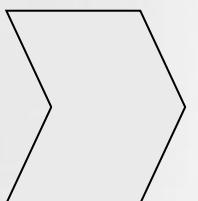


Courtesy National Library Australia.

John Gould came to Australia in 1838 and helped record Australian birds. He published a seven volume illustrated colour book in 1848.

Bird colours

**Why are
birds
different
colours?**



BIRD COLOURS

Pied Currawong



Sacred Kingfisher



Male Scarlet Robin



Rainbow Bee-eater



Golden Whistler



Galah



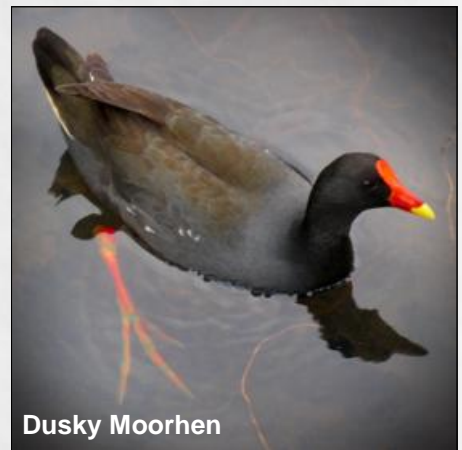
Eastern Spinebill



Scarlet Robin

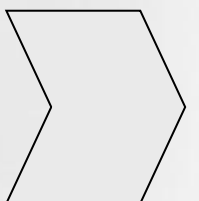


Dusky Moorhen



Birds vary in colour in order to blend into their background or to attract a mate.

**Are male
and females
always the
same colour?**



BIRD COLOURS

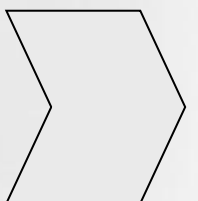
SUPERB FAIRY-WREN



The male Superb Fairy-wren is a colourful small bird while the female is a plain looking bird (inset). Sometimes male and female birds of the same species are different colours.

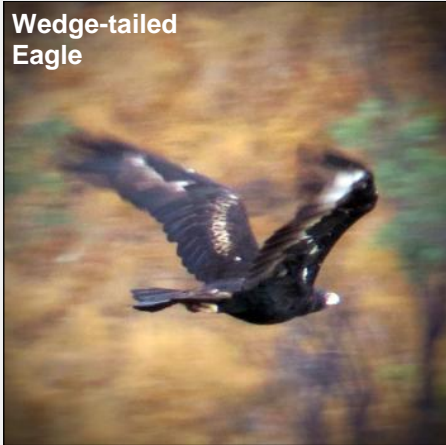
Bird sizes

**Are all
birds the
same size?**



BIRD SIZES

Wedge-tailed
Eagle



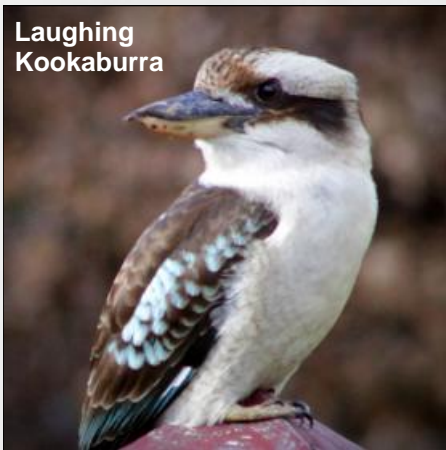
Australasian
Pipit



Leadon
Flycatcher



Laughing
Kookaburra



Rainbow
Lorikeet



Pelican



Common
Myna



Introduced from India, the Myna now competes with our native birds for food and territory.

Silvereye



White-winged
Cough



**All bird species are different
shapes and sizes.**

Bills, beaks and their uses



Aquatic Birds

Have medium-sized wide beaks for scooping food from on top and under the water.



Wading Birds

Have long bills for finding food in and around shallow water.



Birds of Prey

Have strong short beaks for tearing apart their prey.



Insectivorous Birds

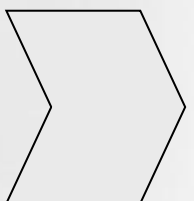
Have long pointed beaks for finding and eating insects.



Granivorous Birds

Have strong short beaks for breaking apart the grain and seed that they eat.

**What are
birds' beaks
made from?**



BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

RED WATTLE BIRD

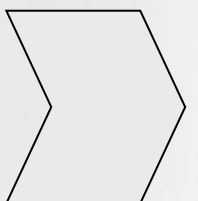


Birds' beaks are made from Keratin.

Other things made from Keratin include hair, fingernails, horns, hooves and claws.

The hard spine of a bird's feather (Rachis) is also made from Keratin.

**What are bills
used for?**



BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

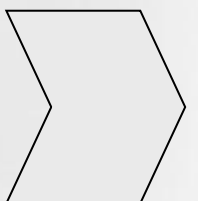
BLACKBIRD



Birds use their bills to find food, break open seed pods and seeds, dig and even to make their nests.



**Why do
Pelicans
have
large bills?**



BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

PELICANS

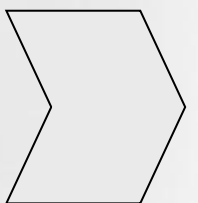


Photographs © Sue McMahon.

Pelicans have long bills to scoop up large amounts of water and fish. Their bills can hold up to 13 litres of water.



**Why does the
Black Swan
have a
wide bill?**



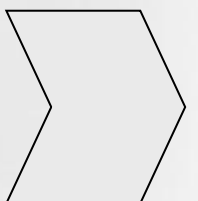
BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

BLACK SWAN



The Black Swan has a wide bill to help it collect and scoop up food from under the water. As a vegetarian, it sticks its neck under the water to feed on the weeds and algae growing on the bottom.

**Why do
raptor birds
have a
pointy bill?**



BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

BROWN FALCON

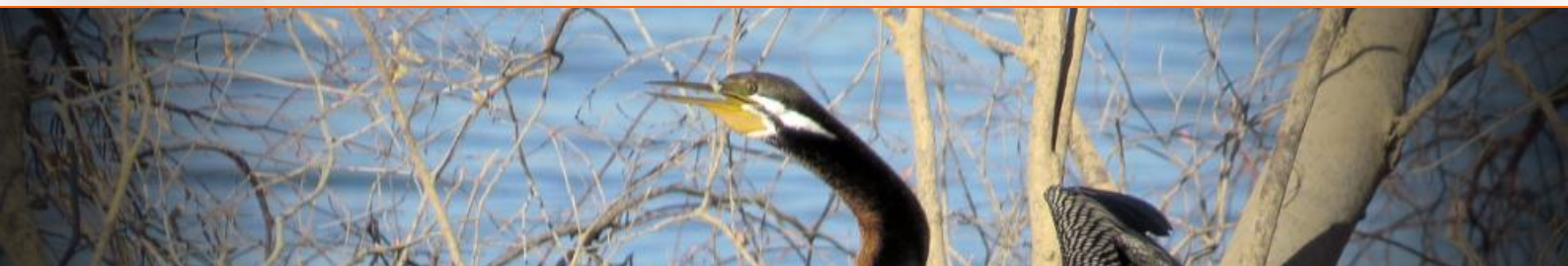
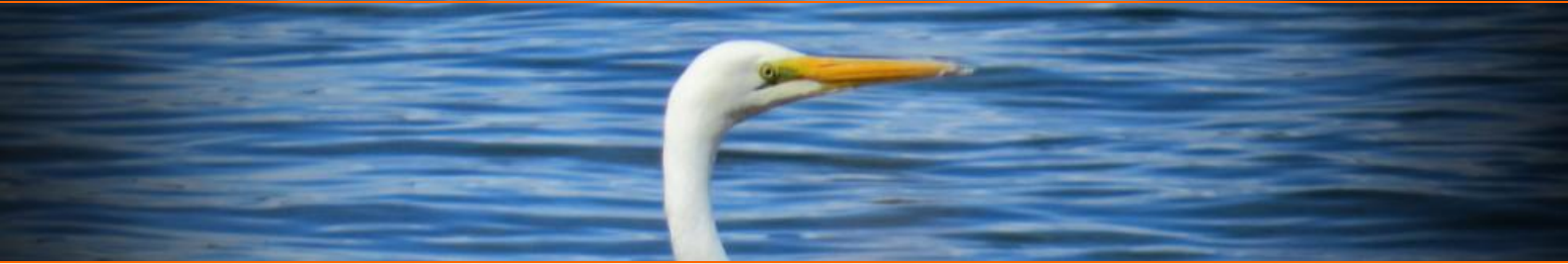


Courtesy Robert Gardiner

Raptor birds such as this brown falcon, have a pointy beak with a sharp hook on it, to help them tear through the flesh of their prey. This could include rabbits, hares, mice and even other birds.

BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

BIRDS' BEAKS AND BILLS



BILLS, BEAKS & THEIR USES

BIRDS' BEAKS AND BILLS



Bird tails

BIRD TAILS

GREY FANTAIL



The Grey Fantail is a master at using his wings and tail to catch insects mid air. Here one is heading towards a fly at great speed. The Grey Fantail is a short bird with a short tail.

BIRD TAILS

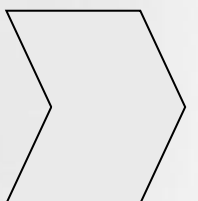
RED WATTLEBIRD



The Red Wattlebird has a long tail which it uses to change direction quickly while flying in order to catch insects like the Grey Fantail. It is a much larger bird, so its long tail helps it to change direction quickly.

Bird
wings

**What are
wings
used for?**



BIRD WINGS

RAINBOW LORIKEET



Birds' wings are primarily used for flying. Birds fly by flapping their wings to create lift or by using their larger wings to ride hot thermals that create upward lift for the bird.

BIRD WINGS

SEAGULL



Wings are made up of a large number of small, medium and large-sized feathers. These feathers are positioned in an overlapping manner that creates a long flexible wing.

BIRD WINGS

EASTERN SPINEBILL



Courtesy Jamie Flynn

A Eastern Spinebill is pictured here using his wings to create lift. This enables him to hover while he looks for and drinks nectar found in flowers.

BIRD WINGS

AUSTRALASIAN DARTER



Here an Australasian Darter is pictured drying its wings after feeding on fish in the water. Unlike ducks and swans, a darters feathers must be dried after feeding in the water.

BIRD WINGS

PELICAN



A pelican begins to spread its wings for take-off. A pelican needs at least 40 metres to take off due to their size and weight. Their wings are large and are able to create enough lift to get them into the air.

BIRD WINGS

WEDGE-TAILED EAGLE



Photograph © Mike Harrison

The size of birds' wings is related to the size of the bird. The wedge-tailed Eagle has a huge wingspan of over 2.2 metres.



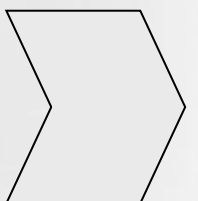
BIRD WINGS

SEAGULL



This seagull is using its wings to slow itself down for a soft landing. By putting its wings out and curving them slightly, it increases drag on the air, which slows its speed down.

**Can birds travel
long distances
without flapping
their wings?**



BIRD WINGS

WANDERING ALBATROSS



Some larger birds can travel long distances without flapping their wings.

The Albatross can travel over 1000 km without flapping. It grows to a length of 135 cm and has an enormous wingspan of over 3.3 metres.

BIRD WINGS

SEAGULL



This seagull is moving slowly through strong coastal winds. Its wings are strong and it is able to stay in the air for long periods of time.

BIRD WINGS

MASKED LAPWING

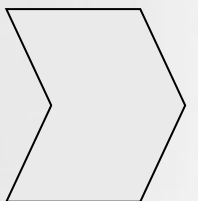


Courtesy Con Boekel

Masked Lapwings have spurs on their wings so he can drive predators away from their nests, which they build on the ground. Males have larger spurs than females.

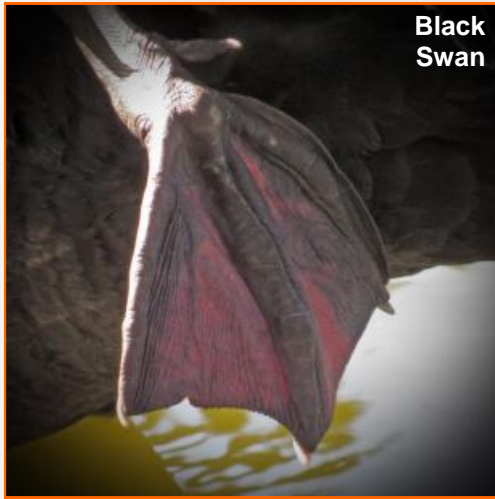
Bird
feet

**Do all
birds
have the
same kind
of feet?**



BIRD FEET

BIRD FEET



Black
Swan



Rock
Pigeon



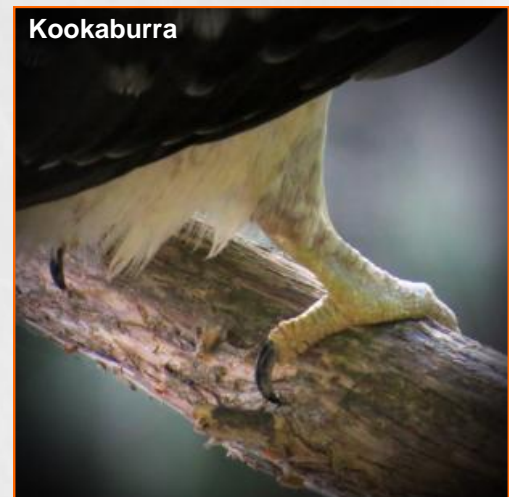
Dusky
Moorhen



Indian
Myna



Female Satin
Bowerbird



Kookaburra

Birds have different kinds of feet. Their feet are used to help them in their daily life. Water birds have webbed feet to help them move faster through the water. Perching birds have claws to help them hang onto branches. Some birds even use their feet and claws to find food.

BIRD WINGS

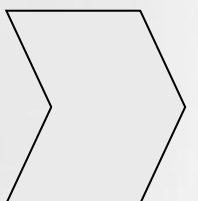
WHITE-THROATED TREECREEPER



This White-throated treecreeper is using his feet and claws to find an insect hiding inside a small hole in a wattle tree.

Bird habitats

What are Habitats?



BIRD HABITATS

ALPINE



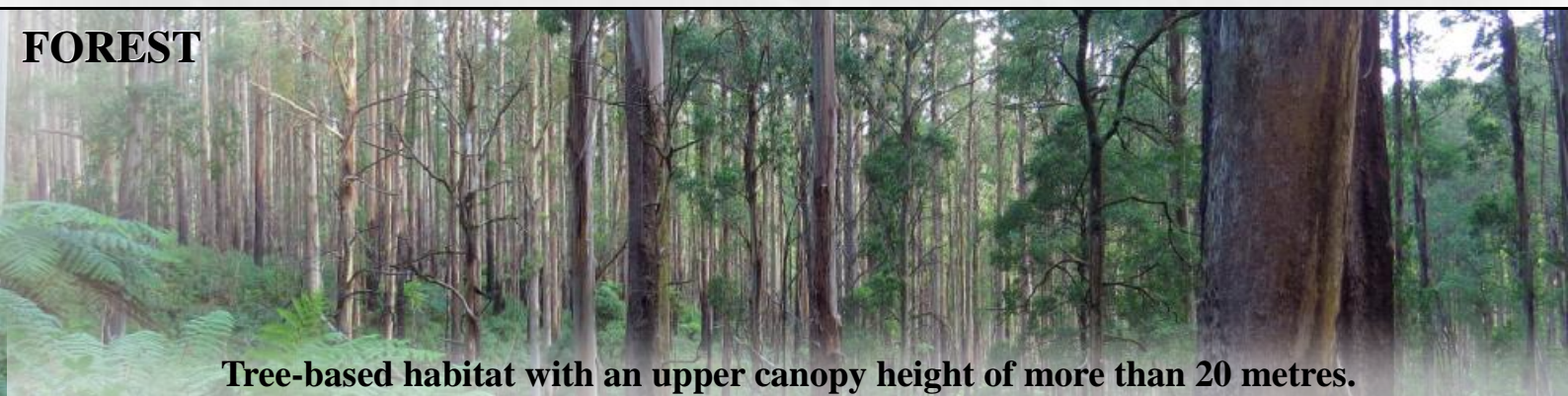
Areas of high altitude and given to snow in winter months.

BUSHLAND



Bushlands are areas where the flora and fauna is predominately indigenous.

FOREST



Tree-based habitat with an upper canopy height of more than 20 metres.

**A bird's habitat is where the birds are found.
There are many different habitats in Australia.**

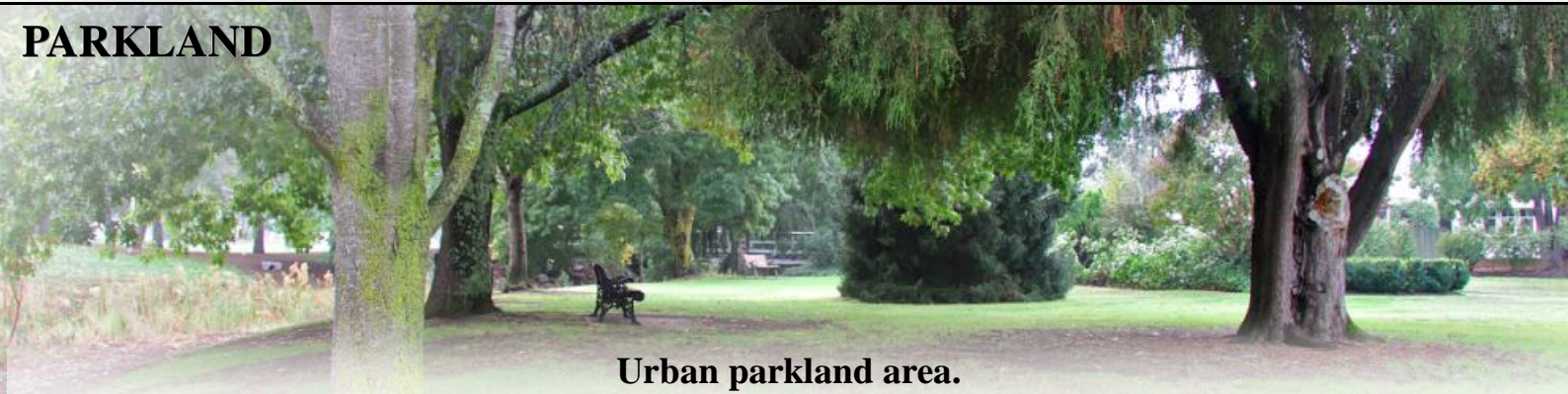
BIRD HABITATS

GRASSLAND



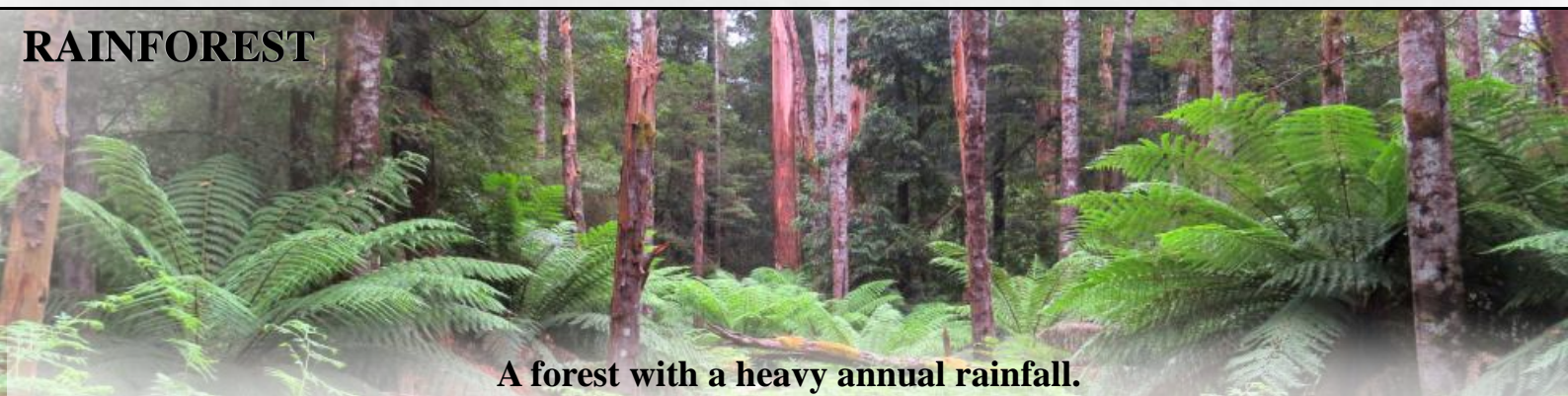
Grassland based habitat with few low shrubs and no tall trees.

PARKLAND



Urban parkland area.

RAINFOREST



A forest with a heavy annual rainfall.

Habitats range from the hottest to the coldest area, as well as the driest to the wettest areas.

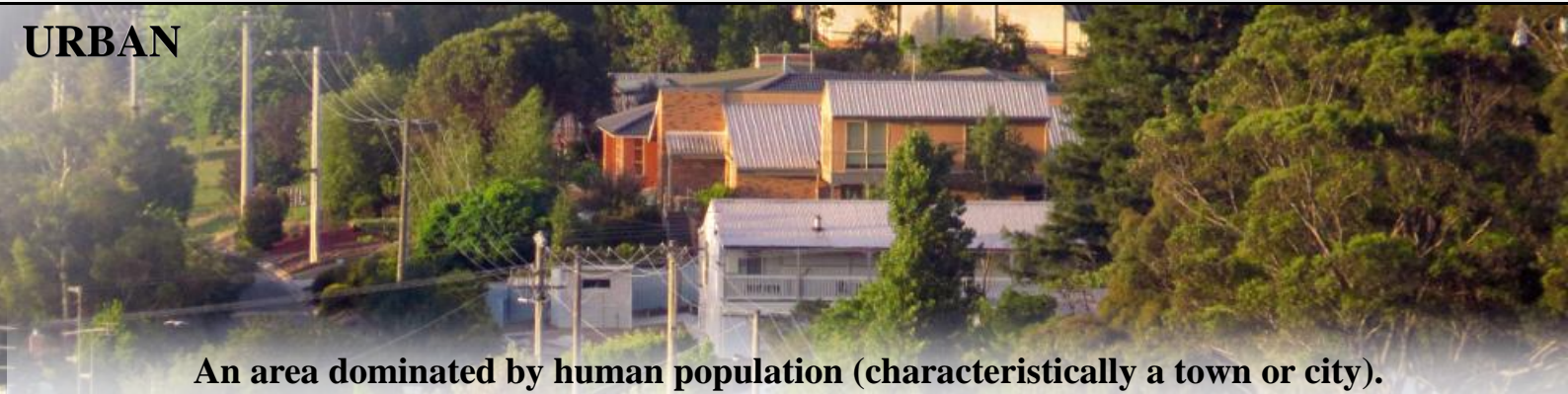
BIRD HABITATS

SCRUB



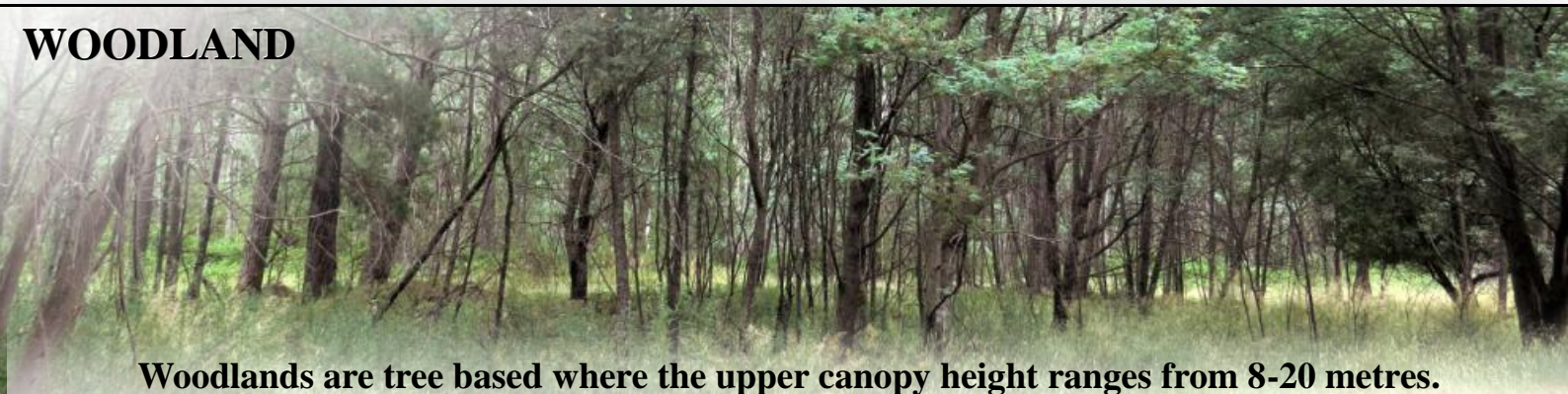
Thick low growth habitat where vegetation ranges from 0.5 to 4 metres

URBAN



An area dominated by human population (characteristically a town or city).

WOODLAND

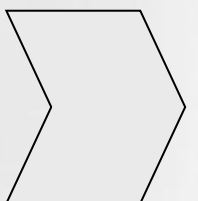


Woodlands are tree based where the upper canopy height ranges from 8-20 metres.

A bird's habitat must supply all of the bird's food and water requirements.

Bird nests

**What is a nest
used for?**



BIRD NESTS

BLACKBIRD NEST



Nests are used for the laying of birds eggs by birds. The nest offers protection for the eggs and a place for the bird to sit on the eggs while they incubate.

BIRD NESTS

WILLIE WAGTAIL NEST



Nests are used for protection, resting and for raising a young bird family. These baby Willie Wagtail's are safely at home in their nest, built by their parents under a verandah.

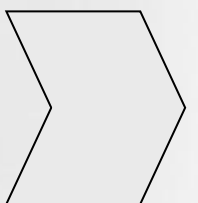
BIRD NESTS

WHITE-FACED HERON NEST



Nests are also a place where baby birds develop into adults. They can even learn to fly from the nest by jumping off the edge of the nest then returning to the nest for safety.

**Where can
nests
be built?**



BIRD NESTS

TREE FORK



**Nests can be built in many areas in nature.
Here a nest is found in a small tree.**

BIRD NESTS

WILLIE WAGTAIL NEST



Nests are also built on the ground, on cliffs and rock ledges, on tree branches, in tree holes, between rocks and even around homes.

BIRD NESTS

CLIFF FACE



Here a large Lyrebird nest made of sticks, is found on a cliff face a few metres off the ground.

BIRD NESTS

IN BUSHES



This nest is made of small twigs and leaves and is built hidden deep inside a bush. This bird wanted to hide its nest from predators who can prey on the eggs and chicks.

BIRD NESTS

MAN-MADE STRUCTURES



Birds will build nests on man-made structures if they are available. Here an eagle has used an old power pole because of the lack of a suitable tree.

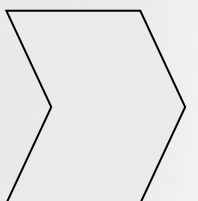
BIRD NESTS

HIGHEST BRANCHES



Birds will build nests as far away from danger as possible. Here white ibis have built their nest high in the upper branches of a tree.

**What are
nests
made from?**



BIRD NESTS

MAGPIE LARK NEST



Nests can be made from most things found in nature, including leaves, straw, grass, twigs, branches and even mud.

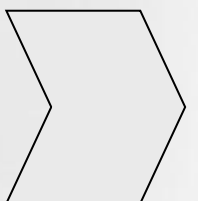
BIRD NESTS

BROWN THORNBILL NEST



Large and small birds build nests. This grass nest is home to a family of very small brown thornbills and has a hole at the front.

**Do all birds
build nests?**



BIRD NESTS

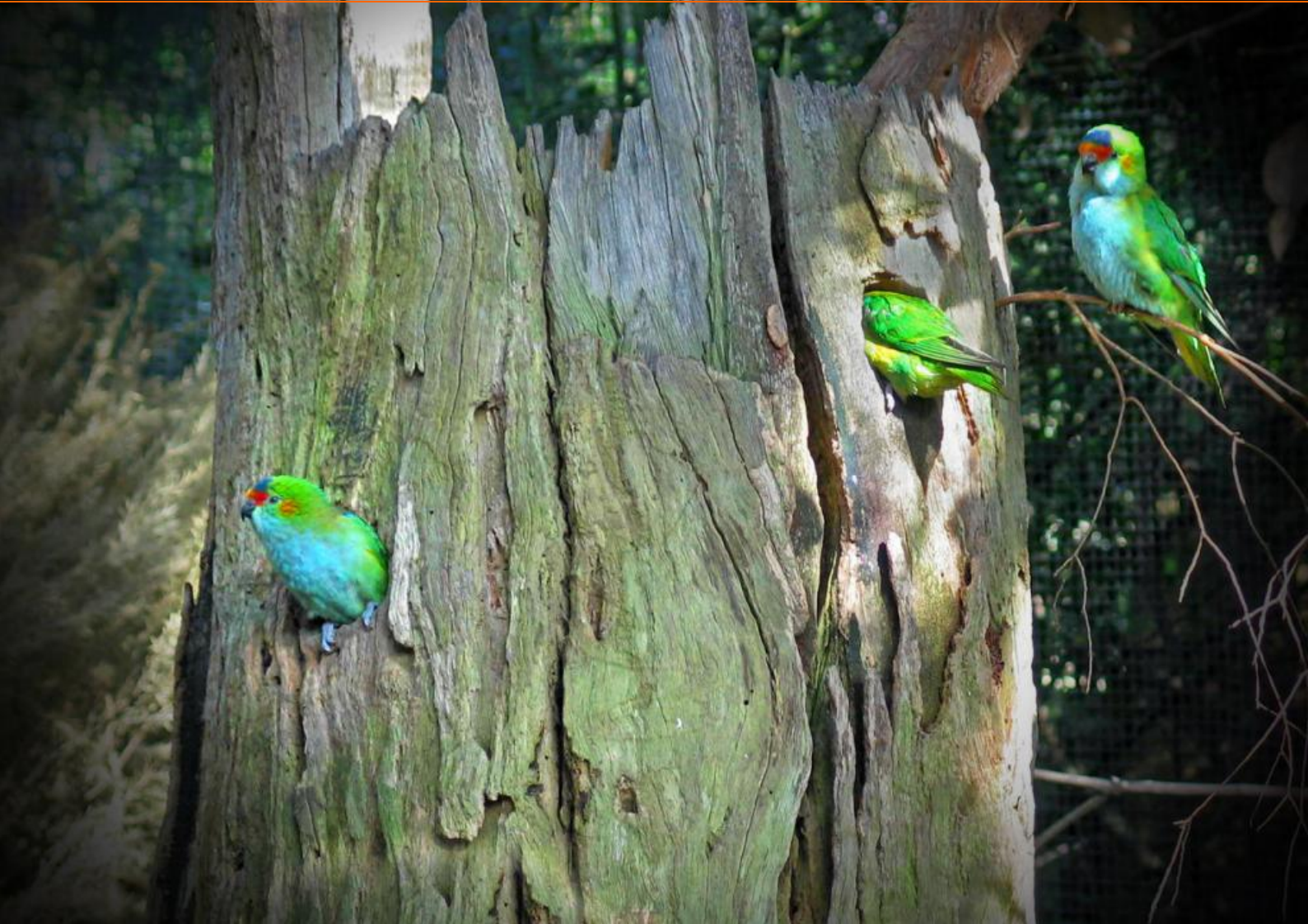
EUCALYPT TREE



Not all birds build nests. Some birds look for holes in trees, rocks and other natural locations, then make it their home. These offer natural protection from predators and weather.

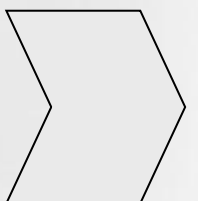
BIRD NESTS

DEAD TREE STUMP



These birds are nesting in holes in an old dead tree stump. Dead trees are important to some birds and they also make for a more diverse natural habitat for birds.

**How high
can nests
be built?**



BIRD NESTS

BROWN GOSHAWK



**Nests can be built high up in the tallest trees
and on the tallest cliffs and mountains.**

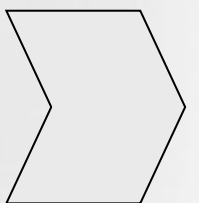
BIRD NESTS

BLACK SWAN NEST



**Nests can also be found on the ground.
Here a Black Swan has made her nest of
grass in an area close to the water.**

**What are the
wooden boxes
found in some
trees?**



BIRD NESTS

NESTING BOX



This manmade wooden enclosure is a nesting box.

Nesting boxes help birds to find dark and protected places where they can nest, especially in areas where nesting places are hard to find. Nesting boxes can maintain the numbers of threatened birds in an area.

BIRD NESTS

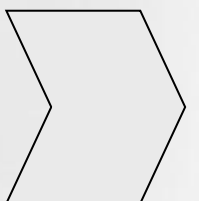
NESTING BOX



The House Sparrow is an introduced bird that competes with our native birds for food and territory.

Nesting boxes are also sometimes called birdhouses. These can be useful enclosures for more common birds such as this House Sparrow, which is feeding its very hungry young.

**What is
a Bower and
is it a nest?**



BIRD NESTS

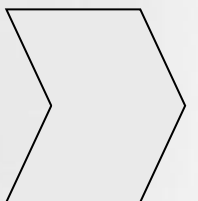
SATIN BOWER BIRD



A Bower is an area built by male Bower Birds to attract females. It is not a nest, but more like an entertainment area. Satin Bower Birds collect blue objects to impress female Bower Birds.

Birds' eggs
and
their young

**Do all
birds lay
eggs?**



EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BLACKBIRD EGGS



All birds lay eggs and their eggs come in different sizes, shapes and colours. Eggs contain chicks, which eventually hatch.

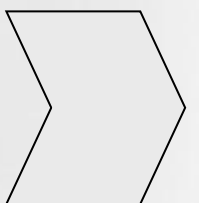
EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

WILLIE WAGTAIL EGGS



We should not touch bird eggs, as the parents will often abandon them if we do. However it is ok to look at their eggs from a safe distance.

**How do baby
birds get out of
their eggs?**



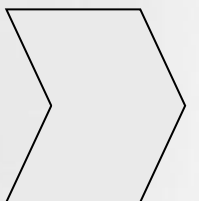
EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BIRD'S EGGS



Once a bird is strong enough it will crack through its egg shell with its beak and claws, then leave the egg. This one has a hole where the baby bird left.

**How do birds eat
and stay warm
after they hatch
from their egg?**



EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BABY BLACKBIRDS

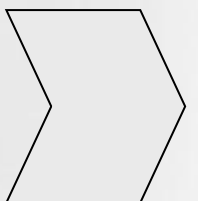


Baby birds rely on their parents to keep them warm and feed them.

Without warmth and food, they will quickly die.

These birds are calling for their parents to feed them as they are very, very hungry!

**Do all
baby birds
have
feathers?**



EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BUDGERIGAR



Not all baby birds have feathers. Some start growing feathers soon after being born. This is why the mother will continue to warm her babies with her body, after they hatch.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

HOUSE SPARROW



The House Sparrow is an introduced bird that competes with our native birds for food and territory.

A baby House Sparrow takes a look around its environment. Its mother is not far away, gathering food for it to eat. It is still too young to be a confident feeder on its own and will rely on its parents a little longer.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BABY BLACK SWANS



Three baby Black Swans (cygnets) take a paddle in some shallow water near their nest. Their mother is close by at all times to protect them from predators, such as cats and foxes.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BLACKBIRD



This fluffy baby was found on the ground and was in danger of being killed. Abandoned birds this small are hard to raise without expert help.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

BLACKBIRD



Blackbirds are often found scratching around for food in garden beds. This fluffy baby is waiting for its mother to return with food as it is still too young to feed itself.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

PACIFIC BLACK DUCKS



Learning to move across the water takes time and practice. These baby ducks are never out of their mum's sight, though she knows the importance of letting them learn on their own.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

PINK ROBIN



When birds are small they will often appear different in size and colour to when they are grown. The baby Pink Robin is coloured various shades of brown to hide it from predators, while the adult Pink Robin has a strong bright pink breast.

EGGS & YOUNG BIRDS

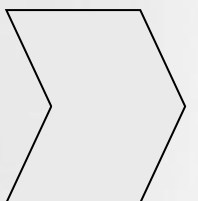
RED WATTLEBIRD



A scruffy baby Red Wattle Bird waits for its parents on a tree limb. Red Wattle Birds are excellent hunters of prey, though babies are not able to hunt successfully until they reach a more mature age.

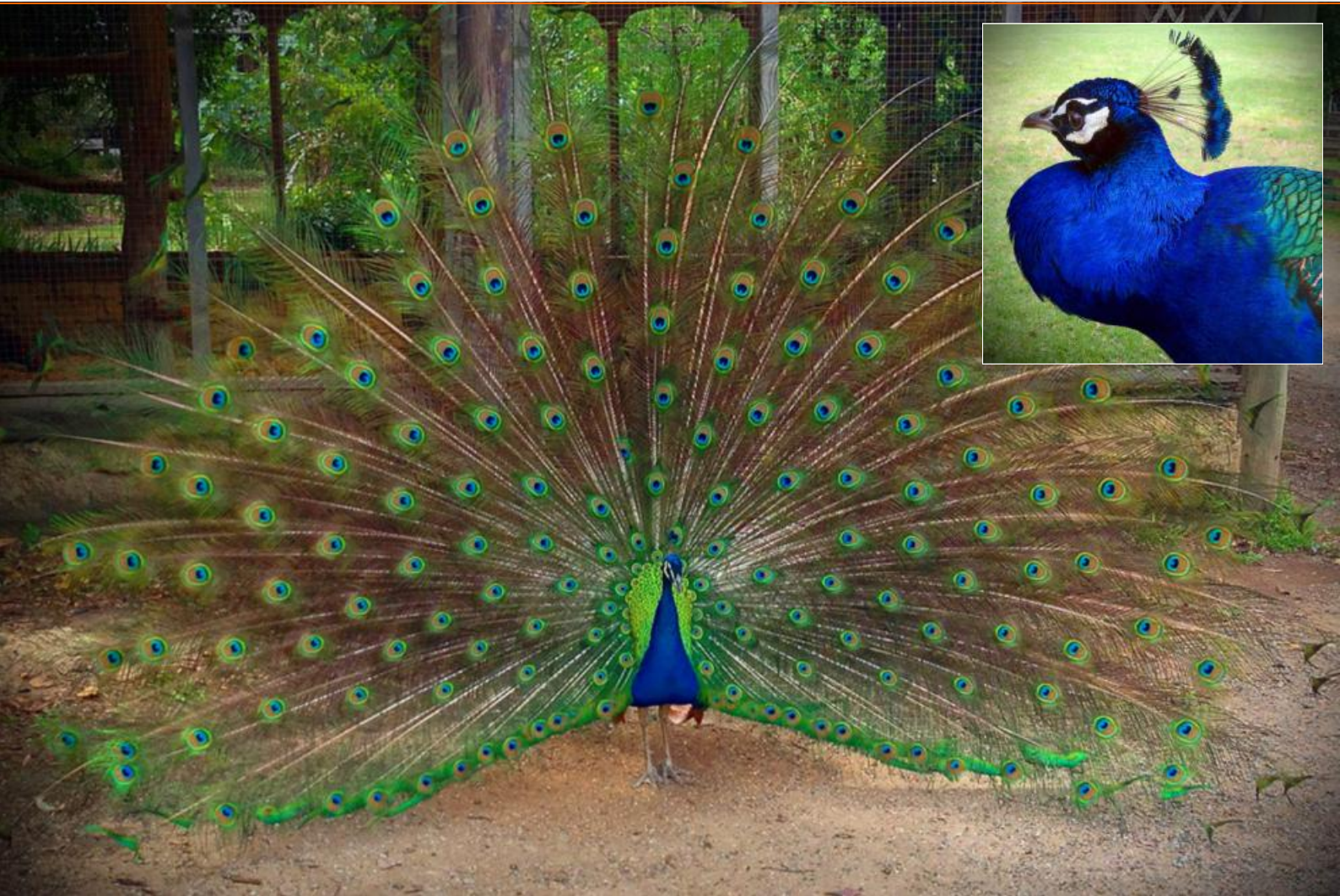
Bird
feathers

**Do all
birds have
the same
feathers?**



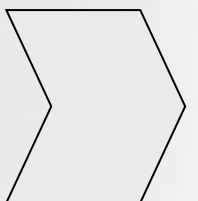
BIRD FEATHERS

PEACOCK (Peafowl)



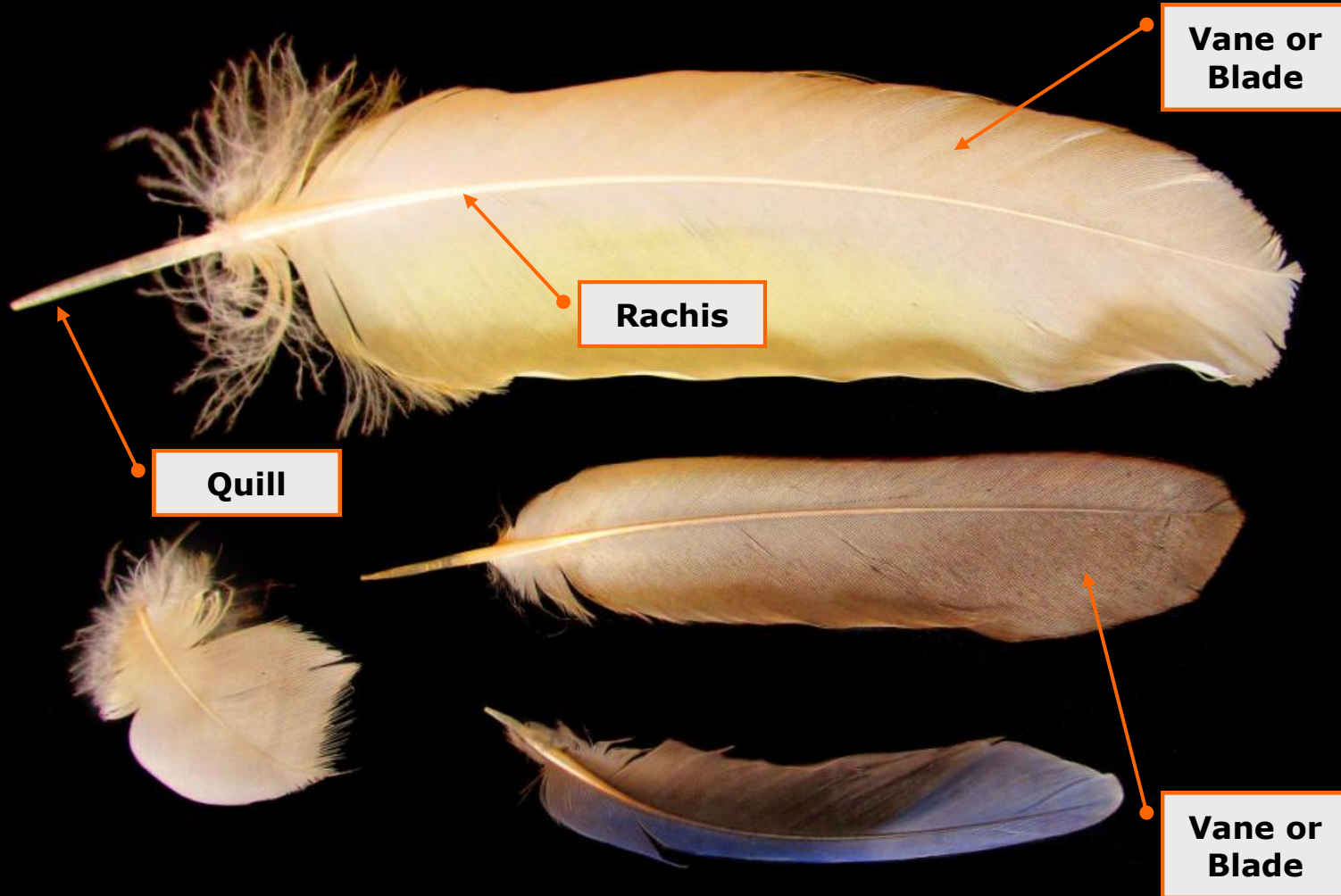
All species of birds have different feathers, even though these differences are sometimes hard to see. At other times the differences are more obvious, such as the feathers on a Peacock and Magpie.

**What are
the parts
of a feather
called?**



BIRD FEATHERS

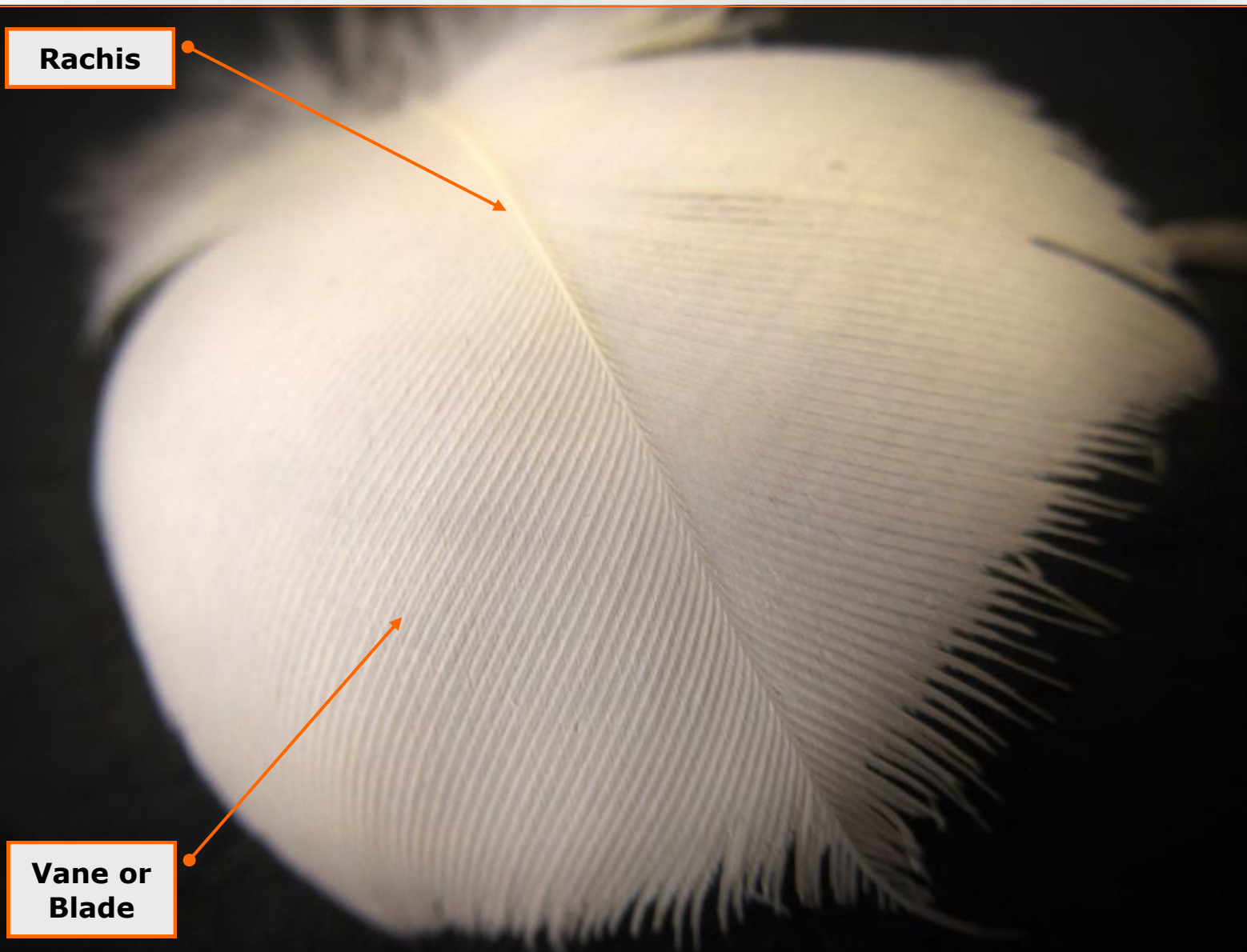
BIRD FEATHERS



Here are some samples of different bird feathers. The largest and smallest feathers are both from a Cockatoo, while the feather with the blue is from an Australian Laughing Kookaburra.

BIRD FEATHERS

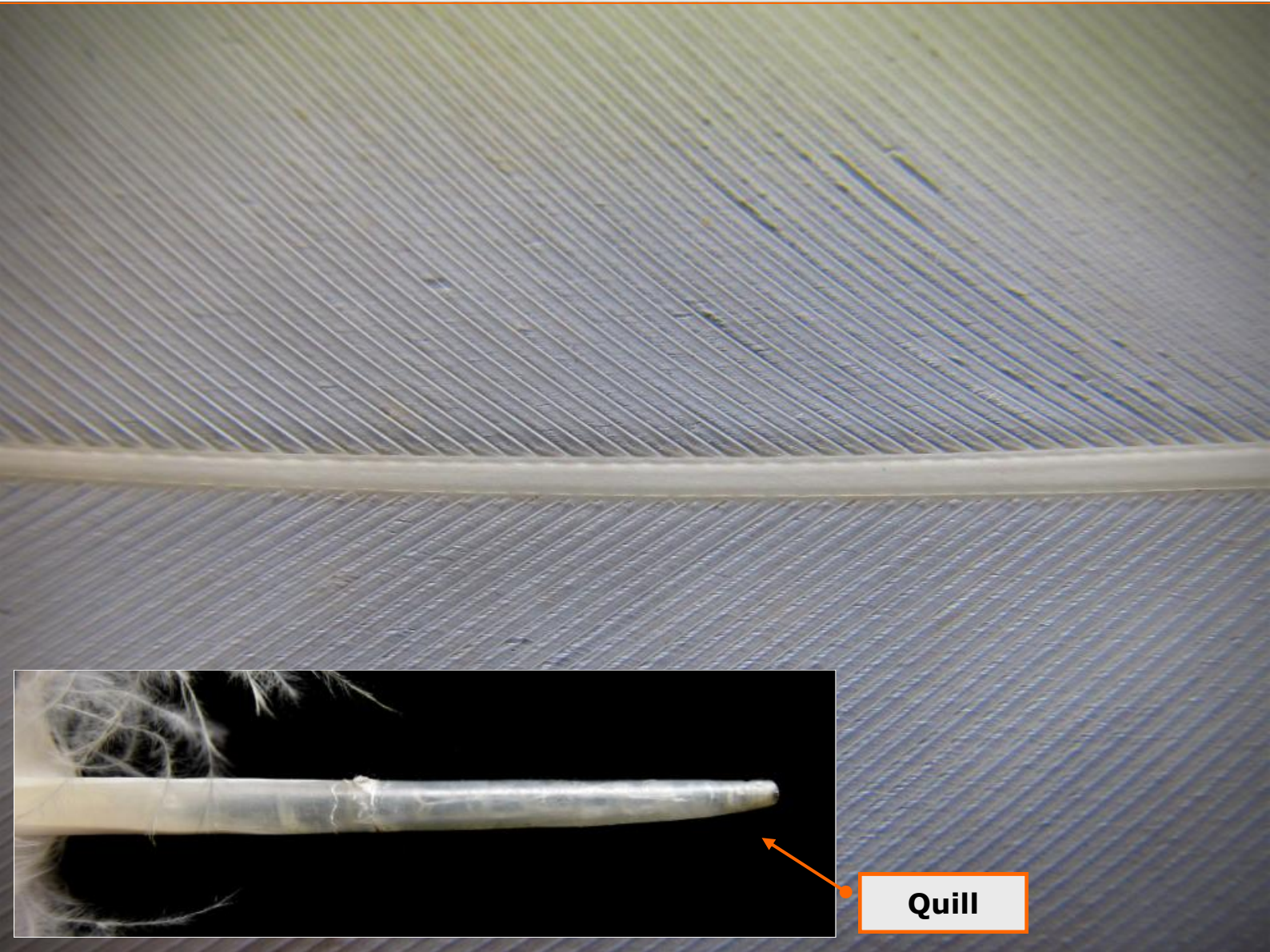
BIRD FEATHERS



When looking at feathers close-up, they have a definite pattern and structure. This is a small feather from a large bird.

BIRD FEATHERS

BIRD FEATHERS



Quill

The feather quill (or Calamus) is made from Keratin. This is the same material that the bird's beak is made from.

BIRD FEATHERS

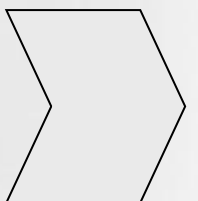
RAINBOW LORIKEET



Birds' feathers work together to form a wing which is strong enough to withstand heat, cold, wind, rain and all the stress and strain of flying every day of its life.

Bird songs and calls

**What is a
bird song
and a
bird call?**



BIRD SONGS

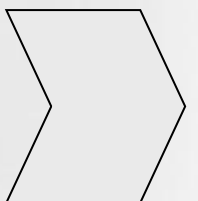
Humans consider a bird song as something that is beautiful to listen to.

In bird terms, a bird song is a complex long sound designed to help them attract a mate.

BIRD CALLS

In bird terms, a call is a form of communication designed to send a message. Birds will use calls to warn other birds of danger, or just to keep in contact with each other.

WHAT BIRD HAS THIS CALL?

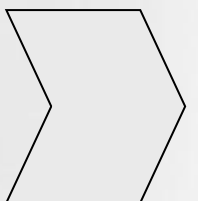


AUSTRALIAN NATIVE BIRD

Laughing Kookaburra



WHAT BIRD HAS THIS CALL?

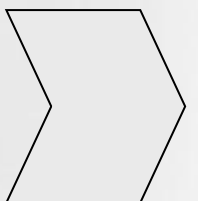


AUSTRALIAN NATIVE BIRD

Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo



WHAT BIRD HAS THIS CALL?

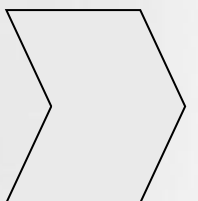


INTRODUCED BIRD

House Sparrow



WHAT BIRD HAS THIS CALL?

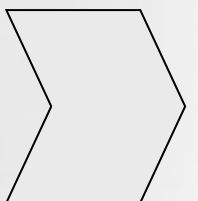


AUSTRALIAN NATIVE BIRD

Australian Magpie

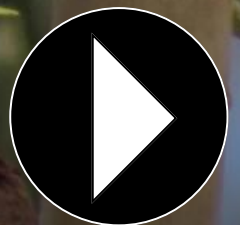


WHAT BIRD HAS THIS CALL?



AUSTRALIAN NATIVE BIRD

Bell Miner





Artworkz

Serving the Community