

WHAT MAKES A BIRD A BIRD?

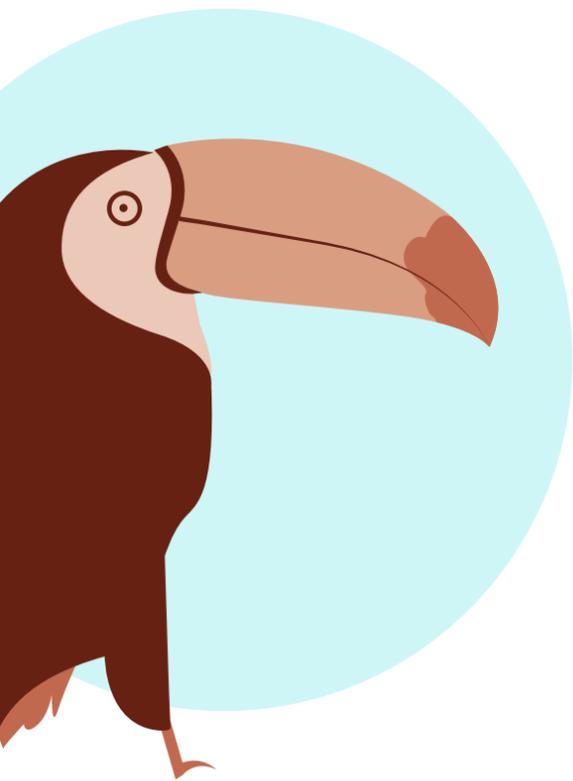


FEATHERS

All birds have feathers. Feathers are made of beta-keratin, similar to what makes up our fingernails. They help birds to fly, as well as to stay warm, cool and dry. Feathers contain pigments and come in many different colors and shapes, which helps with the visual identification of each different species of bird.

WINGS

All birds have wings, which are primarily used for flight. Different wing shapes reflect different styles of flight. Birds also use their wings for courtship displays and other behaviors. Some birds are not able to fly, but still have wings that are modified for other uses, such as swimming.



BEAKS

Though not unique to birds (fun fact: octopuses and some fish have beaks!), beaks are an important characteristic of birds. Beaks come in all different shapes and sizes, including straight, down-curved, up-curved, flat, and hooked. They are a useful tool to help birds grab and eat their food.

HOLLOW BONES

Most birds have hollow bones, which helps make them lightweight and able to fly (fun fact! Penguins, loons and puffins lack hollow bones, perhaps making it easier for them to dive underwater). This is a characteristic that our modern birds share with dinosaurs.

