

Kristi Prefers Cheetos Over Funky Green Slime

## Taxonomy of Birds

All organisms are classified into groups, which makes it easier to study and learn about them. Birds are very diversified and live in almost all different habitats, which makes them hard to classify. Scientists needed a way to talk about birds, so they began arranging them using the science of classification, Taxonomy, grouping birds into groups based on their characteristics. All birds belong to the following:

**Kingdom-Animalia:** multi-cellular, can't make its own food

**Phylum-Chordata:** has a backbone

**Class-Aves:** an animal with feathers

After these three categories, the grouping becomes more specific and birds are grouped based on characteristics they have in common with other birds.

**Order-** there are 27 different Orders of birds, such as shorebirds (Charadriiformes), owls (Strigiformes), perching birds (Passeriformes)

**Family-** there are 202 families of birds such as typical owls (Strigidae), barn and grass owls (Cuculidae), or gulls (Laridae)

**Genus-** this is the first part of a bird's specific scientific name. This is always capitalized!!

**Species-** the second part of bird's scientific name, always lower case!!

## 5 Main Groups of Birds

Since there are so many birds in the world, scientists had a hard time classifying birds. It was decided that all birds can be placed into five nonscientific categories based on what type of beak and feet they have.

### Perching Birds

The largest nonscientific group of birds are the **Perching Birds**. This is the largest group of birds, and they are divided further into two groups- seed eating, and insect eating birds. Over half of all the birds in the world fall into this category. That is a lot of birds!! If they are seed-eating birds they have strong, broad beaks with rough tongues to help them crack shells and dig out the seed inside. If they eat insects they have a bill designed to bore into wood and find insects within, or they have a wide beak to help them catch insects. The

perching bird foot has three toes pointed forward, and one pointing backward. This helps them to perch on small branches by clamping their toes around the branch.

### **Birds Of Prey**

Birds of Prey are the most powerful birds. They live by killing and eating other animals. They have hooked beaks, and strong, sharp talons. Their talons are for grasping their prey, and their beaks are made for the tearing of flesh from their prey. The talons on birds of prey have two toes facing forward, and two toes facing backwards. Eagles are the largest of the birds of prey, but these birds come in all sizes and live in all types of habitats. You can group these birds even farther into Diurnal birds of prey, which are birds that hunt during the day; and Nocturnal birds of prey, birds that hunt at night. Birds of Prey can see up to 8 times better than humans.

### **Non-Perching Birds**

Non-perching birds are birds that feed on seeds and fruit. There are over 300 species in this category, the largest group being the doves and pigeons. These birds would rather walk than fly. In this group you would also find the woodpecker species, which use their strong toes for clinging on trees. There are a variety of different beaks in this group, as this group contains birds such as woodpeckers, pigeons, quail, pheasant, and hummingbirds.

### **Swimming Birds**

Swimming birds include loons, ducks, geese, and penguins. Waterfowl such as ducks, geese, and swans have bills that are flat, broad, and rounded. They use their beak to feed on aquatic life, usually by skimming the water. Their legs are strong and feet are webbed to aid them in swimming.

### **Wading Birds**

Wading birds include herons, flamingos, and storks. All have long legs and long toes that help them wade through shallow water. These birds live in habitats that are in or near shallow water. The heron has a spearlike bill to stab and catch its prey. Other birds in this group have bills that help them filter algae and invertebrate from the water.