



DID YOU KNOW?

- Birds do not possess sweat glands (they can not perspire). They pant to regulate the temperature of their body (kind of like dogs do).
- Usually the prey represents about from 12 % to 50 % of the weight of the raptor.
- Most birds have a very weak sense of smell. However, the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) uses its excellent sense of smell to find dead meat. Black Vultures follow it to find their food.
- Birds of prey catch their prey with their talons not with their beak.
- For most birds of prey, the female is larger than the male. Sometimes the male can weigh one-third the weight of the female.
- The Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) is the bird emblem of Quebec.
- The Greek goddess Athena, the goddess of wisdom, is often represented with an owl perched on her shoulder or having the head of an owl.

VISION

- Contrary to certain beliefs, owls see very well during the daytime. The Great-horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) sees even better during the day than at night and does not see anything in the total darkness! Moreover, owls see about three times better at night than we can.
- The birds of prey have better vision because they have more visual receptor cells (cones and sticks) and their retina is one-and-a-half times thicker than that of other animals.

HEARING

- Birds are sensitive to sounds of frequencies between 1 and 5 kHz. The limit is about 10 kHz. Humans can hear frequencies from 0.02 to 17 kHz.
- Contrary to other birds, owls have a very developed hearing what allows them to capture prey in total darkness. Some can hear frequencies that are much lower and much higher than what humans can hear. Their asymmetrical ears allow them to locate the source of a sound with a high degree of precision.

PLUMAGE

- Birds of prey moult only once a year. Feathers are shed in a sequential way to allowing the bird to fly even if a few feathers are missing. Four to eight weeks are needed to renew all the feathers.
- The Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has more than 7000 feathers. Its plumage represents 17 % of its weight whereas its skeleton represents only 7 % of its weight.
- At 5 or 6 years of age, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) gets its characteristic white head and white tail. The younger birds, called juveniles, are brown and then become «salt-and-pepper» in every annual moult.



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BREEDING

- The smaller the species, the younger it starts to breed.
- The accipiters, small falcons and harriers start breeding at one or two years of age.
- Hawks, large falcons and kites start at two or three years of age.
- Ospreys at the age of three and more.
- Eagles start breeding between the age of four and nine.
- Vultures can wait until they reach twelve years of age!

MIGRATION RECORDS

- A banded Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) travelled 11 500 km from Saskatchewan to Argentina in 126 days.
- A Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) left the Northwest Territories and arrived in Argentina 15 000 km and 174 days later.
- Bat Falcons (*Falco amurensis*) travel from Siberia to the South of Africa by crossing the Indian Ocean.

SIZE RECORDS

- Smallest nocturnal bird of prey: the Elf Owl (*Micrathene whitneyi*), it is 13 cm tall and weighs hardly 95 grams.
- Smallest diurnal bird of prey: the Pygmy Falcon (*Polihierax semitorquatus*), it weighs 60 g and has a wingspan of 30 cm.
- Largest: the Andean Condor, it weighs 14 kg (31 lb) and has a wingspan of 3.2 m (10 feet).
- Tallest: the Secretary bird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) is 1.3 m tall.
- Largest Bald Eagle's nest (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) measured 2.9 m wide, 6 m deep and weighed more than 3000 kg. These birds use the same nest year after year, adding more branches and other building materials annually.

AGE RECORDS

- Banded wild birds:
 - Osprey, 32 years
 - Golden eagle, 25 years
- Average longevity of birds in captivity (zoos or others)
 - Falcons and Accipiters, 15 years
 - Hawks and other average sized raptors, 20 to 40 years
 - Vultures and eagles, 40 - 55 years