



Birds of Prey! (Raptors)

Birds of prey are birds that hunt other animals for food. They all have powerful beaks and sharp talons to capture and eat their prey. There are some characteristics (things about them) that are similar but many differences as well. Remember that birds of prey are not pets. They can only be handled by people trained in falconry or licensed agencies such as zoos or Earthquest. Let's introduce you to some of the birds of prey you may be seeing today.

Remember, even our birds take vacations so if one of the birds mentioned here is missing from your show, just ask and Steve will tell you all about that bird as well.

Andean Condor.- Andean condors have a huge 10 ft. wing span built for soaring. Unlike birds of prey their feet are better suited to walking than gripping.

Vulture - Vultures are not buzzards! (Buzzards are true hawks.) Vultures are extremely intelligent and social. Our vulture loves to follow Steve around. He is very similar to the vultures you see circling over and eating dead animals.

Harris's Hawk. The Harris's Hawk comes from the southwestern United States. Harris Hawks are very social and often hunt in packs in a method called cooperative hunting. This very similar to how wolves hunt. Their method of hunting has given the name "wolves of the sky".

Red tail hawk – The red tail hawk can be found all over north America. They are not as social as the Harris's hawk but once they choose a mate, they mate for life. They are called "the farmer's friend" because they eat rodents.

Peregrine falcon - Falcons are one of the fastest animals on earth. Their speed has been clocked at over 200 mph when in a dive called a "stoop". Falcons were used in the sport of falconry for thousands of years by many cultures in Asia and Europe. In some cultures only royalty could handle falcons.

Great horned owl – Owls are silent, night time hunters. Their special feathers make them very quiet so their prey does not hear them coming. They are capable of turning their head 270°. Their eyes are quite large and can gather 100 times more light than humans.



Hawks!

Listen for the answers to these questions as Steve talks about our hawks. We have and train several hawks but our hawk ambassador is here today to teach you about hawks in general.

Hawks are predators (hunting birds).

- 1) What is the red tail hawk's nick name? _____

- 2) Why do people keep hawks today? _____

Hawks are known for their keen eyesight.

- 1) Do hawks see in color or in black and white? _____
- 2) How does this help them see their prey to hunt? _____

- 3) Hawks can see prey at great distances. They can magnify their focus _____ to _____ times greater than humans.

Hawks come from different areas of the country.

- 1) The hawk you saw today was a _____ hawk.
- 2) This type of hawk comes from what area of the United States? _____.

Hawks eat some animals you may know.

- 1) What do hawks eat in the wild? _____
- 2) What do we feed them in captivity? _____

Hawks are different from falcons in many ways. List three ways hawks are different.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



Condors and Vultures!

Listen for the answers to these questions as Steve talks about condors and vultures. Condors are very special birds. The California condor almost went extinct! Our condor is an Andean condor. Our vulture is an American black vulture. They want to teach you all about condors and vultures.

California condors are endangered species.

- 1) How did California condors become endangered? _____

- 2) Are Andean Condors endangered? _____
- 3) How did this Storm come to live with Steve? _____

Condors and vultures have bald heads.

- 1) Why do condors and vultures have bald heads? _____
- 2) Are condors and vultures really dirty birds? _____

Condors and vultures are slightly different.

- 1) Condors are much _____ than vultures.
- 2) _____ do not migrate where as _____ migrate between north and south America.

Condors and vultures eat some animals you may know.

- 1) What do condors and vultures eat in the wild? _____
- 2) What do we feed them in captivity? _____

Condors and vultures are different from our other raptors in several ways. Try to name three of those ways.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



Falcons!

Listen for the answers to these questions as Steve talks about his falcon. Falcons are very unique birds. Peregrine falcons were on the endangered species list until 1999. Now they work for humans keeping other birds away from airports and controlling populations of pigeons in cities.

Falcons are extremely fast.

- 1) How fast can a falcon fly? _____
- 2) What is a stoop? _____

Falcons have been trained to hunt for humans for over 3000 years.

- 1) What makes falcons such good hunters? _____

- 2) What do falcons hunt? _____

There are many kinds of falcons.

- 1) What kind of falcon did Steve bring today? _____
- 2) Where can you find these falcons in the wild? _____

Peregrine falcons were an endangered species until 1999.

- 1) What made them endangered? _____

- 2) How did we help them get off the endangered species list? _____

Falcons and owls are both excellent hunters but they hunt very differently. Name three ways in which falcons and owls are different in how or what they hunt.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____



Owls!

Listen for the answers to these questions as Steve talks about his owl. Owls are very quiet birds. They are great night time hunters. We use statues of owls on buildings to frighten away unwanted birds.

Owls are extremely quiet.

- 1) What makes the owl so quiet? _____
- 2) Why is it important for the owl to be so quiet? _____

Owls are considered wise old birds.

- 1) How big is an owl brain? _____
 - a. _____
- 2) Are they really smart compared to other birds of prey? _____

There are many kinds of owls.

- 1) What kind of owl did Steve bring today? _____
- 2) Where can you find these owls in the wild? _____

Owls help farmers and people in cities.

- 1) What do owls eat that helps the farmers? _____
- 2) How are they helpful to people in the city? _____

Owls have excellent hearing and eyesight.

- 1) What makes their eyesight so keen? _____

- 2) Why is excellent hearing important to the owl? _____

Owls seem as though they can turn their heads all the way around.

- 1) How far can they turn their heads? _____
- 2) What enables them to turn their heads so far? _____

Owls are different than all the other birds of prey you will see today. List two ways in which they are different from all the others.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____



Vocabulary!

There are many terms falconers must know to communicate about their birds. Here are a few to help you.

Falconry – Falconry is the sport in which trained raptors hunt game for humans. Originally this was a means of obtaining food for the table. Falconry was called the sport of kings because only kings and emperors were allowed to have certain birds. Peregrine falcons were kept by kings just as eagles were the birds of emperors. These birds were so valued that often ransoms were paid with birds of prey rather than gold.

Falconer – An individual trained in the sport of falconry.

Wing span – The distance between a bird's wing tips when their wings are fully extended.

Cooperative hunting – The method by which several animals of the same species work together to bring down prey.

Predator – an animal that hunts other animals for food

Prey – an animal that is hunted as food

Migrate – to move from one region to another for food or breeding purposes. Many birds migrate seasonally.

Stoop – a stoop is a power dive used by the falcon in which it folds its wings back and dives down on its prey at over 200 mph.

Rehabilitation – with regard to birds rehabilitation means to return them to health and retrain them to return to the wild. In some cases birds may be made healthy again but imprint on the humans helping them. In these cases the birds cannot be released to the wild because they will seek out human company. Birds who are rehabilitated but unable to return to the wild are often used in presentations at zoos, parks and educational programs such as you have seen today.

Reintroduction – reintroduction programs are designed to help birds of prey return to the wild after healing from injuries or being bred to repopulate a species.



Wings!

Each of our birds of prey has something different about the shape of its wings, head or body that help identify them from far away. Look at the silhouettes and see if you can match them to the correct bird of prey.

1.Hawk



2.Owl



3.Vulture



4.Condor



5.Falcon

