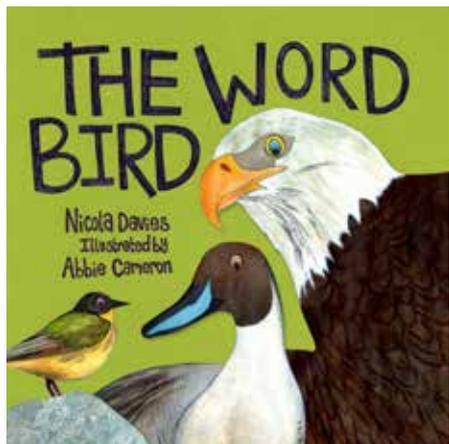


The Word Bird by Nicola Davies Resource Notes



The Word Bird

- Author Nicola Davies
- Illustrator Abbie Cameron
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- **The Word Bird** ISBN 9781910862438

Extra information about the birds in this book



Yellow wagtails are small, elegant water birds, that snatch small invertebrates from water and air with their fine beaks. They get their name from the way they constantly waggle their tails up and down.

which can weigh a ton and be 4 m deep.

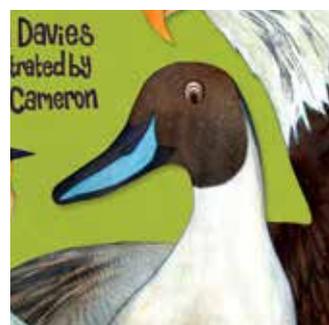
Bald eagles are mostly fish eaters. Like their close European cousin, the white tailed sea eagle, they snatch fish from the water with their great big yellow feet, grasping them with long needle sharp claws.



Bald Eagle

...isn't bald of course but just has a white head. It's the National Bird of America but is found all over Canada and down into north Mexico.

Bald eagles are BIG; they can weigh up to 6.3 kilos and have a wingspan of 2.3 m. They also make enormous nests in the tops of trees,



Pintail duck

The male pintail - shown on the cover - is, I think, one of the most elegant ducks in the world, with his chocolate brown head and long neck.

Females are the same elegant shape but have all over mottled brown feathers so they can be well camouflaged as they incubate eggs.

The long neck isn't just for show - it allows the pintail to reach deeper underwater for plants that other shorter-necked ducks can't get to.



Long tailed tits

If it wasn't for their VERY long tails these would be one of the UK's smallest birds.

Their bodies are tiny and they weigh just a little more than a ten pence piece. They travel through the tree tops in twittering flocks of around 20 birds, tweaking insects from bark, leaves and blossoms with their stubby beaks. Their nests are tiny domed structures made of cobwebs and lichen, webbed together like stretch velcro.



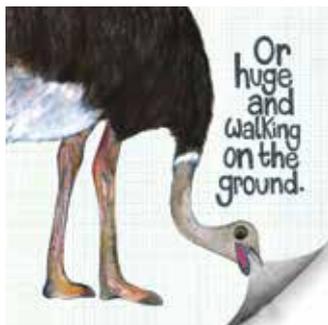
Grey wagtail

They look very similar to the yellow wagtail, but have a grey back and much longer tails. You can spot the males by their black throat, the females have a white throat.



Hummingbirds are so-called because of the sound made by their fast beating wings. They can zoom, hover and even fly backwards to manoeuvre their way around flowers that they feed from, using their long beaks like straws to drink nectar. They are some of the smallest birds on earth - the bee hummingbird is the smallest bird of all and weighs less than a one pence piece. Despite their small size some hummingbirds such as the ruby throated and rufous humming birds migrate long distances...all the way from South America to the north states of the USA and Canada.

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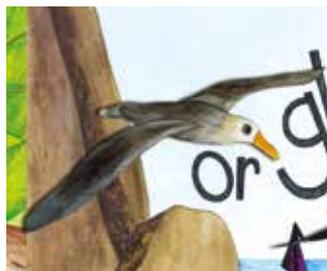


Ostriches are the largest of all birds, far too large to fly. Their wings are reduced to fluffy plumes which they use for display and their feathers serve just to keep them warm. But they can still move fast – running up to 70kph to escape predators.

And if their enemies catch up...they can deliver a deadly kick with their powerful legs and feet. Ostriches of course lay huge eggs; a single ostrich egg is the equivalent of two dozen hens' eggs!



Sulphur crested cockatoo comes from north and east Australia where they feed on seeds and plants. In some places their flocks are so big that they can damage crops like wheat. They are very intelligent and sociable and co-operate to keep lookout for danger while they are feeding.



Sooty albatross is just one of the 21 different kinds of albatross. They are all birds of the wide open ocean, usually to the far south of our planet around Antarctica. Their huge wings are brilliant for gliding so that can fly for hours on end without flapping their wings at all, making use of the air currents and strong winds that blow over those wild seas. Their numbers have dropped in the last few decades as they get tangled in human fishing gear and drown.



Eurasian Eagle owl
This is a huge owl...over 70 cm tall with a wingspan of 188 cm (over 6 feet). It inhabits forests and mountains from Spain through to China and will eat all sorts of animals from frogs to small deer!

Like all owls, they can see in very low light intensities – those big eyes are good at gathering the smallest amounts of light. But owls also rely on hearing. The ears are not in the feather tufts on top of the head, but are small holes, hidden

under the ring of feathers around the owl's face, which acts like a sound-collecting disc.



Blackbird, Robin and Thrush

These are three of the most familiar garden birds in the UK. Learning to identify them and their songs is a great way to start learning about birds and developing your birding skills. Blackbirds and song thrushes sing in spring and early summer but robins sing year-round to defend their territories, so in winter, the females sing as well as the males.

Ducks, swans, pelicans, bitterns and avocet

There are four kinds of duck in this picture.



The **pintail** (and his lady) who we've already heard about.



The **shoveller**, whose beak flares out to help it sift small food from water.



The tiny **teal** which is wonderful at almost vertical take-off to escape predators.



The **red headed pochard**, which, unlike the others, gets its food by diving.



The swan is the **mute swan**, one of the largest of all flying birds. It takes a lot of effort to get a body like that off the ground and swans usually take off over water, paddling at the surface with their feet to help them get up the speed their need to get airborne.

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The black and white bird is the **avocet** – a wading bird with long legs so it can walk out into the water and use its curved beak to skim small creatures from the surface.

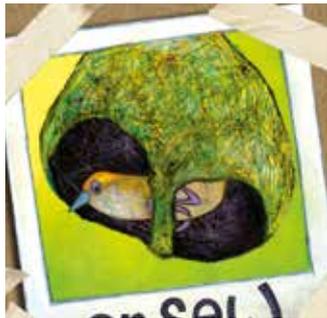


Pelicans are fishers. They use their big beaks and throat pouches as nets, dipping them into the water again and again to 'net' fish. They sometimes work together, swimming in a line so that a shoal of fish has no escape.

Beaks



Flamingo beaks have a very clever filter system. The flamingo bends over and puts its beak upside down in the water, the long neck pumps back and forth, pulling water in and out of the beak, and the ridges on the side of the beak filter tiny creatures from the water. It is the food they eat that give flamingos their fabulous colour.



Weaver birds do just what their name suggests. They have beaks like needles and use them to weave round, hanging nests with long curved entrance tunnels from grass. These nests dangle at the very end of branches, and that, with their long tunnel entrance keeps snakes away from the weaver bird's nests.

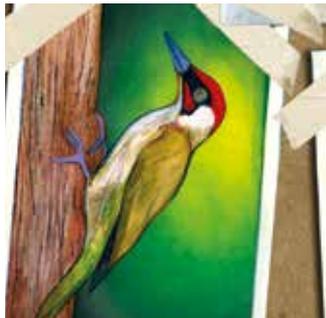


Boobies are the typical relatives of gannets. Like gannets, they can dive for their food, but they are also very skilled at swooping down and snatching fish with their long, spear-shaped beaks.

Feet



Mandarin ducks, like all ducks, have webbed feet for paddling. So when you see a duck gliding across the pond you have to remember that its little feet are underneath, working like mad.



Green woodpecker

Woodpecker feet have two toes pointing forward and two pointing backwards, so they can cling on to vertical tree trunks and climb up and down easily.



Bald eagles, like most birds of prey, have feet with strong toes tipped with curved talons. It is talons, not the beak, that do the killing, stabbing prey as it is grasped by the strong feet.

Wings

Wings are of course the secret to most birds' success. Wings let them travel long distances without using too much energy and to find food over a wide area. But every kind of bird has wings that are shaped for the way it makes its living.



Vultures need to soar high to find dead animals to eat. Food may be very thinly spread so vultures need to cover a lot of miles and use very little energy. So they have long, broad wings, great for soaring without the need to flap.



Pigeons need to take off and fly fast as they feed on the ground and need a fast getaway from predators. So they have medium length powerful wings that they can power-flap and get up in the air quickly.



Swallows need fast swoops and glides to chase after insects plus good ability to turn fast. Their pinnated narrow wings are just the thing!

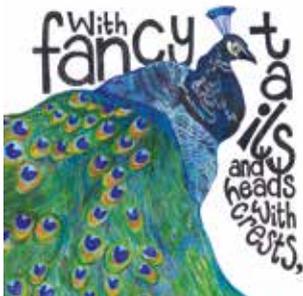
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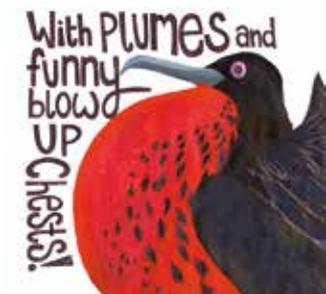
Penguins nest in antarctica where there are no predators on land, so no need to fly and where the only food is in the sea. So they've traded wings used for flight for wings as flippers for underwater flying.

Display

Showing off is a big thing for birds. Displaying using bright feathers, sounds and movements is how male birds – and sometimes females – impress their mates.



Peacocks have simply enormous tails which they fan out to impress the ladies.



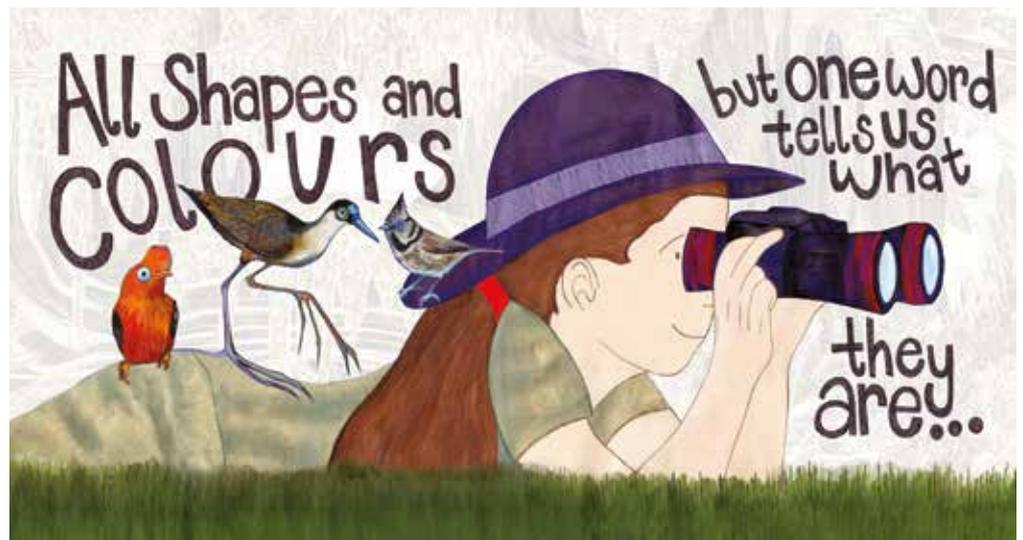
Frigate birds blow up their bright red throat pouches and vibrate their bills to make a drumming sound and attract a female.

Match the names to the birds

And now it's your turn to find something out all on your own...

I'll tell you what the birds on the last few pages are but you have to match the names to the birds and see

if you can find out why they are the shapes, sizes and colours that they are, and where in the world and what habitat they live in.



Cock of the rock

Arctic tern

Fischer's lovebird

Pileated woodpecker

Little owl

Jacana

Crested tit

Peregrine falcon

American robin

Kingfisher