



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.

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.



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? the farmer's friend
- 2) Why do people keep hawks today? Aside from zoos and educational agencies, hawks are kept by falconers. Hawks are kept by falconers (hawkers) for the sport of falconry.

Hawks are known for their keen eyesight.

- 1) Do hawks see in color or in black and white? color
- 2) How does this help them see their prey to hunt? Their keen eyesight helps them distinguish their prey from the prey's surroundings.
- 3) Hawks can see prey at great distances. They can magnify their focus 4 to 8 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? primarily rodents
- 2) What do we feed them in captivity? chicken, quail

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

- 1) Falcons are primarily mid air hunters (other birds) while hawks focus on ground prey (rodents)
- 2) Falcons have tapered wings that allow them to turn and dive quickly using the "stoop"
- 3) Hawks are larger, stronger birds.



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? *Condors reproduce very slowly. When they were collected for exhibition by museums there were very few left to reproduce. The result was a decreasing population.*
- 2) Are Andean Condors endangered? *Yes* _____
- 3) How did this Storm come to live with Steve? *Storm came from a condor reintroduction program. She meant to be released to the wild but imprinted on humans when she needed help emerging from her egg. She was hand raised and could not be released.*

Condors and vultures have bald heads.

- 1) Why do condors and vultures have bald heads? *Since they eat dead animals (carrion) they have developed bald heads so that their food does not stick to their face and head. They have to put their heads in a carcass sometimes and don't want to wear their food!*
- 2) Are condors and vultures really dirty birds? *No! They bathe on a regular basis to stay healthy and keep their feathers in flight condition.* _

Condors and vultures are slightly different.

- 1) Condors are much *larger* _____ than vultures.
- 2) *Condors* _____ do not migrate where as *vultures* _____ 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? _____ *carrion* _____
- 2) What do we feed them in captivity? _____ *chicken, quail and carrion* _____

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

- 1) _____ *bald heads* _____
- 2) _____ *eat carrion* _____
- 3) _____ *feet made for walking not grasping* _____



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? over 200 mph in a stoop
- 2) What is a stoop? a steep dive used by the falcon to attack its prey

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

- 1) What makes falcons such good hunters? speed and eyesight
- 2) What do falcons hunt? birds such as duck, quail, doves and pigeons

There are many kinds of falcons.

- 1) What kind of falcon did Steve bring today? hybrid peregrine falcon
- 2) Where can you find these falcons in the wild? peregrine falcons are found all over the world (hybrids are man bred)

Peregrine falcons were an endangered species until 1999.

- 1) What made them endangered? The introduction of DDT weakened their breeding and the population decrease of their natural prey.
- 2) How did we help them get off the endangered species list? through breeding and reintroduction programs

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) Owls are night time hunters; falcons are daytime hunters
- 2) falcons attack birds mid air; Owls eat primarily rodents
- 3) Owls depend on silence and hearing to hunt; falcons depend on speed and eyesight



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? Their feathers are not barbed so they don't rustle (make noise due to friction) when they flap
- 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? They have relatively small brains because so much of that space is dedicated to vision and hearing.
- 2) Are they really smart compared to other birds of prey? no

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? depends on the owl presented

Owls help farmers and people in cities.

- 1) What do owls eat that helps the farmers? rodents
- 2) How are they helpful to people in the city? They eat rodents that spread disease and scare away nuisance birds

Owls have excellent hearing and eyesight.

- 1) What makes their eyesight so keen? They can receive 100 times more light than humans(they have 10 times more cones and rods in their eyes than humans)
- 2) Why is excellent hearing important to the owl? To find their prey in the dark

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

- 1) How far can they turn their heads? 270°
- 2) What enables them to turn their heads so far? They have an extra vertebrae

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) Owl wings are adapted for silent flight rather than high altitude soaring or extreme speed.
- 2) Owl eyes are adapted for night hunting



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

