

# The Wild Birds: Interesting Facts

*You can use these notes during "The Wild Birds" presentation to share some interesting bird facts with your students.*

## Ravens

- Up to 2.5 feet long and 3.5 lbs
- Can live up to 40 years, but in the wild they usually only live 10 – 13 years.
- Settled in California 2 million years ago. Came from Asia by crossing the Bering Straight during an ice age.
- Like to eat carrion, grains, fruit.
- Largest brain of any bird species.
- They will watch where other birds hide their food, remember the location, and steal it.
- They will call coyotes over to a dead animal so that the coyotes open it up and make it easier to eat.
- Young ravens are very curious about shiny, round objects. They will steal and hide them.
- They make their own toys out of sticks by breaking them.
- They like to do things for fun, such as sliding down snow banks.

## Acorn Woodpecker

- Nest in dead trees
- Groups of adults help with nesting. There are often several males who help a single female nest.
- They drill holes into dead trees to store acorns. As the acorns dry and shrivel, they are moved to smaller holes.
- The woodpeckers must guard their acorns against other birds, like scrub jays.

## Scrub Jay

- Acorns are the most important part of their diet
- Jays store acorns in the ground to eat later. The acorns they forget often grow into trees. They help replant our forests!
- Also eat grain and berries
- Each nest has several helpers who are siblings of the parents

## Northern Flicker

- Eat insects, fruit, berries, nuts
- Primary food is insects

- They take acid from ants and use it to preen their feathers; it's called "anting"
- Are cavity nesters—live in holes in trees
- It takes 1 – 2 weeks to build their nest

### Great Blue Heron

- About 3 feet in length
- Eat rodents, gophers
- Long legs let them wade in deep soil
- Nest in trees next to rivers
- Eggs must be incubated 28 days before hatching
- Turkey vultures eat their eggs
- Always live near water
- Chicks leave the nest when they are only 2 months old

### Western King Bird

- Likes to nest fence posts and electric poles
- likes to live on savannah habitat
- Eats flying insects and fruit
- Nests are made of fine twigs, hair, cloth, feathers
- Catches insects by hawking – swooping down from above
- called king birds because they aggressively defend their territory
- They migrate up and down the Pacific coast

### Tree Swallow

- Lives in marshes and open fields
- Eats insects
- Lives in cavities in trees
- Flies through the air and catches bugs
- They roost together in groups of hundreds of thousands
- They line their nests with feathers from other birds to keep them warm

### Mourning Dove

- Eats seeds
- They make a mournful sounding call, hence their name
- Likes living in open woodland
- Lives in trees
- Eats seeds off the ground

- When they eat seeds off the ground, they store them in a crop, a pouch inside their esophagus. They can fit up to 17,000 seeds in their crop. When they've filled the crop, they fly up to a perch to digest their food.
- They eat 20% of their body weight per day.
- They can drink salty water and not get dehydrated.
- They can live to be 30 years in captivity.