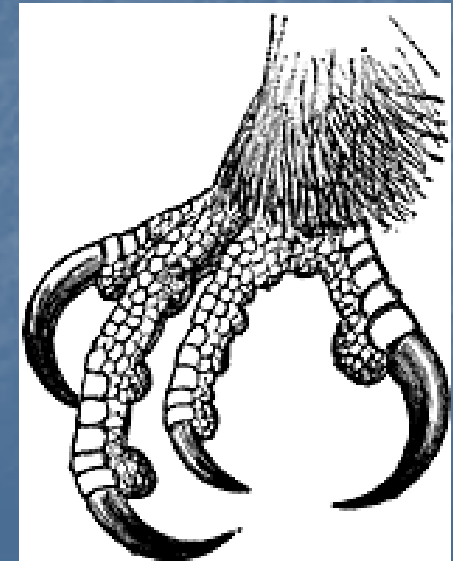


Raptors – Birds of Prey



What is a raptor?

- Three distinguishing characteristics:
 1. Hooked beaks with sharp edges
 2. Feet with sharp claws
 3. Keen eyesight



Who is a raptor?



- Eagles
- Osprey
- Hawks
- Owls
- Kites
- Harriers
- Buzzards and vultures
- Goshawks and condors

What do they eat?

- Meat eating birds that use their strong feet, talons and hooked beaks to catch and kill their prey.
- They eat small mammals such as mice and rabbits, fish, snakes, and even other birds.
- Some catch and kill their food and others (like vultures) feast on the leftovers other hunters leave behind.

Birds don't have teeth... can you guess why?

- Teeth are heavy and would make it very difficult for birds to fly. This is especially important for birds of prey who must fly swiftly to catch their food.



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I spy with my little eye...



- Raptors are believed to have the keenest eyesight of any animal based upon their large eyeballs and the eye muscles designed for rapid focus.

- The eyes of a raptor are so important for their survival, that they have three eyelids.
- The third one is partially see-through (partly "*transparent*") which allows the birds of prey to protect their eyes when attacking prey and still have some sight.
- Birds of prey have eyesight that is at least two or three times better than ours. Some can see a grasshopper from the other side of a football field!

Talons, anyone?



- A bird of prey's toenails are called talons. Talons are very sharp, hook-like appendages that are used to catch prey and balance on trees.
- Raptors that spend a lot of time soaring above the ground in search of prey have long broad wings that allow them to catch rising air currents and soar through the air.

Raptor Babies



- From just before the eggs are laid to midway through the nesting period, the male bird is busy hunting for food for the female and babies.

- Most birds of prey lay one to six eggs, but they don't lay them all at once. They wait a day or two after each egg before laying the next.
- The length of time it takes for the babies to get large enough to start flying is called the "fledgling period". This can be anywhere between 20 and 150 days.

Scientific Information

- Raptors are part of two scientific "orders" *Falconiformes* and *Strigiformes*.
- *Falconiformes* are "diurnal" which means they hunt mainly during the day -- for example, eagles, hawks and falcons. This order includes four "families" -- *Cathartidae* (vultures), *Accipitridae* (hawks, eagles and kites), *Pandionidae* (osprey), *Falconidae* (falcon and kestrel).
- *Strigiformes* is just a fancy way of saying owls. This order includes two "families" -- the *Tytonidae* (barn owls) and the *Strigidae* (all other owls).

Golden Eagle



- The Golden Eagle is the largest raptor in America, with a wingspan of over 7 feet and a length of 30-40 inches.
- They are dark brown with a golden nape plus they have dark eyes and beak.

- Usually females are noticeably larger than males.
- Their sharp claws let them carry as much as 8 pounds of prey while flying!



They usually eat rodents, reptiles and birds but will sometimes eat carrion!

Where do they live?

- The Golden Eagle is found in North American, Europe, Asia and northern Africa.
- They build their nests out of sticks and twigs in large trees or on the sides of cliff.



Eagle nest.

Sources:

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