What are birds?
The Differences and Usages of Plumage
Birds are animals that are easily distinguished from other animals by one unique feature...
Feathers!

Feathers come in many sizes, shapes, colors and textures.
Feathers are made of a flexible protein called keratin (also found in hair and fingernails).
There are two types of feathers that cover a bird’s body:

**Flight feathers**
- Wings, tail, and outside feather layer
- Long and strong

**Down feathers**
- Underneath flight feathers
- Soft and fuzzy

Field Sparrow Wing  
Baby Northern Saw-whet Owl
What is the function of feathers?

What do they help birds do?
Feathers help birds fly!

Great Blue Heron
Feathers are strong yet lightweight, which give birds the ability to fly.
Feathers help keep birds warm!

Feathers provide insulation by trapping pockets of warm air close to a bird’s body to help it conserve body heat.
All the feathers on a bird are called plumage.

Birds use their plumage in a variety of ways!

Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Plumage can indicate a bird’s age.

Baby
Northern Saw-whet Owl

Adult
Northern Saw-whet Owl
Plumage can show if a bird is male or female.
Plumage can provide camouflage for birds.

Brown Creeper
There are other important characteristics of birds!

Birds have lightweight skeletons made up of hollow bones.
Birds have a furculum or wishbone that can be compared to the collarbone in humans.
Birds have beaks!

- Northern Flicker: Grooming
- Great Crested Flycatcher: Eating
- Eastern Bluebird: Eating
- American Goldfinch: Feeding
- Yellow Warbler: Defense
Birds have an organ called a Gizzard that helps them to grind their food since modern birds don’t have teeth.
Birds lay hard-shelled eggs.
Types of birds

• There are over 10,000 species of birds in the world!
• About 300 of these can be found in the Tug Hill Region but only about 60 stay for the winter!
• Birds can be grouped according to common diet, habitat, body and bill shapes, and lifestyle.
Raptors

Raptors are birds that eat meat. They are also called birds of prey.

American Kestrel

Snowy Owl
Gallinaceous Birds

Gallinaceous birds are ground birds and do not fly often.

Wild Turkey

Ruffed Grouse
Waterfowl spend most of their time in the water.

Common Loon

Canada Goose
Waterbirds and Shorebirds

These birds can be found by water and usually have long legs, long beaks, and sometimes webbed feet.

American Bittern

Great Blue Heron
Perching Birds

Perching birds are the most common types of birds. They have similar feet that allow them to grab on to trees and other high places.

Brown Creeper

Golden-crowned Kinglet

Wood Thrush
What birds will you see?
White-breasted Nuthatch
Dark-eyed Junco
Blue Jay
Northern Cardinal
House Sparrow