

## Information for Teacher-Led Lessons about Bird Feet

### Overview

- Studying a bird's skull and especially its beak provides valuable information about a bird's diet. Including its feet can add to knowledge of its habitat and behavior.
- Zoo staff will select –
  - About eight different photos of bird feet, providing a wide variety of foot types. They will match to whichever bird skulls are being used from the Zoo's skull collection. The photos will be enlarged versions of those presented below.
- The chart below is a summary of the more common bird foot types with illustrations and connections to their adaptations. Not all of the feet on the chart match to skulls in the Zoo's collection.
- Other resources include [www.projectbeak.org](http://www.projectbeak.org) *Bird Education and Awareness for Kids* at <https://www.biologycorner.com/2016/07/12/bird-beaks-and-feet/>








Shape of Bird Foot	Type of Bird Foot	Adaptation and Lifestyle
	Climbing	Feet like these help birds, like woodpeckers, climb trees. Notice the sharp nails for digging into the wood, and the back toes so that the bird doesn't topple backward.
	Swimming	Webbed feet help birds, like ducks, paddle through the water more efficiently.
	Running	For running quickly, birds like emus, often have three toes, all of which face forward.
	Perching	Feet with four toes, one of which is in the back, are useful for perching on tree branches. Birds, like blue jays, wrap their toes around the branch to help balance.
	Grasping	Predatory birds, like hawks, have clawlike feet called talons for grabbing their prey.
	Scratching	Chickens, and other birds that scratch in the dirt for insects, usually have feet with four toes, all of which have strong nails for digging into the ground.
	Wading	Birds like herons and cranes have long, thin legs that help it walk through shallow water to find aquatic insects, amphibians, and fish. Their long toes, with three pointing forward and one pointing back, help them balance through mud.

Chart adapted from the Norman Bird Sanctuary, 2004

### Bird Feet Photos that Match to Bird Skulls in the Potter Park Zoo Collection



Crow – Perching feet



Great Blue Heron – Wading feet



Bald Eagle – Grasping prey feet



Magellan Penguin – Swimming feet that also function as snowshoes on snow and ice



White Pelican – Swimming feet



Cardinal – Perching feet



Macaw – Climbing feet

#



Green Aracari – Climbing feet



Duck – Swimming feet



Pheasant – Scratching feet