

## **Fun facts about birds and birding that will surprise even the most knowledgeable birders.**

### **1. What is North America's smallest bird?**

Answer: At 3 inches long, the Calliope Hummingbird is North America's smallest bird.

### **2. What is North America's heaviest bird?**

Answer: At 40 pounds or more, the Trumpeter Swan is North America's heaviest bird.

### **3. What regularly occurring North American bird has the longest wingspan?**

Answer: At 9 feet, the American White Pelican has the longest wingspan of any regularly occurring North American bird. However, the Wandering Albatross (common in the far southern oceans, and seen once off the coast of California) has a wingspan that can reach 11 feet.

### **4. What member of the North American cuckoo family is known for its running ability?**

Answer: The Greater Roadrunner, a member of the cuckoo family, can run at speeds of up to 15 miles per hour.

### **5. What is North America's fastest bird?**

Answer: The Peregrine Falcon is usually considered North America's fastest bird. It regularly attains speeds of 40-60 mph and has been clocked in steep dives at 175 mph.

### **6. What migrating bird flies the highest?**

Answer: The Bar-headed Goose may be the highest-flying migrant. These geese have been seen flying over the Himalaya at an elevation of 28,000 feet.

### **7. What migrant flies the fastest?**

Answer: Some migrating sandpipers have been clocked at speeds greater than 100 miles per hour.

### **8. What seabird is known for its incredible migration between the Arctic and Antarctic oceans?**

Answer: Some migrating birds cross tremendous distances. Most impressive is the Arctic Tern, which flies 22,000 miles round-trip between the Antarctic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean each year.

### **9. What is North America's smallest loon?**

Answer: At 25 inches long, the Red-throated Loon is North America's smallest loon.

**10. What is the most widespread grebe in the New World?**

Answer: The Pied-billed Grebe, the most widespread grebe in the New World, is found from southern Canada to Argentina.

**11. In Eurasia it is known as the Slavonian Grebe. What is this species called in North America?**

Answer: The Horned Grebe is known as the Slavonian Grebe in Eurasia.

**12. What seabird nests high in trees in old-growth forests?**

Answer: The Marbled Murrelet nests high in trees in old-growth forests.

**13. What is the tiniest member of the auk family?**

Answer: Only 6 inches long, no bigger than a sparrow, the Least Auklet is the tiniest auk.

**14. What North American goose nests the farthest north?**

Answer: The Brant is the most northerly nesting goose species in North America. It breeds throughout Canada's high Arctic islands.

**15. What North American bird is also known as the "baldpate"?**

Answer: Because of its whitish crown, the American Wigeon used to be called the "baldpate."

**16. What is the smallest shearwater regularly occurring off the coast of North America?**

Answer: Only 12 inches long, Audubon's Shearwater is the smallest shearwater regularly occurring off the coast of North America.

**17. What seabird is the national bird of Bermuda?**

Answer: The White-tailed Tropicbird is the national bird of Bermuda.

**18. Which of the two North American pelicans dives for fish?**

Answer: Brown Pelicans dive headfirst from as high as 60 feet above the water in order to catch fish.

**19. What is the largest North American tern?**

Answer: At 19 to 23 inches long, the Caspian Tern is the largest North American tern.

**20. What is the smallest heron in the world?**

Answer: Only 11 to 14 inches long, the Least Bittern is the smallest heron in the world.

**21. What North American heron is most associated with saltwater habitats?**

Answer: The Reddish Egret is the North American heron most associated with saltwater habitats.

**22. What species is also known as the "crab-eater"?**

Answer: The Yellow-crowned Night-Heron is also known as the "crab-eater." This species was introduced to Bermuda in a successful attempt to bring land crabs under control there.

**23. What is North America's only native stork?**

Answer: The Wood Stork is the only native stork in North America.

**24. In Europe it is known as the Kentish Plover. What is this species called in North America?**

Answer: The Snowy Plover is known as the Kentish Plover in Europe.

**25. What shorebird species lays its eggs in old songbird nests high up in trees?**

Answer: In the northern spruce bogs where it breeds, rather than nesting on the wet ground, the Solitary Sandpiper lays its eggs in old songbird nests high up in trees.

**26. What shorebird undergoes a flightless molt?**

Answer: The Bristle-thighed Curlew is the only shorebird that undergoes a flightless molt.

**27. What shorebird nest was first discovered during Admiral Peary's expedition to the North Pole in 1909?**

Answer: A nest of the Red Knot was first discovered during Admiral Peary's expedition to the North Pole in 1909.

**28. Which of the smaller waders is usually found in forests and eats earthworms?**

Answer: The American Woodcock, related to the shorebirds, is usually found in forests and eats earthworms.

**29. What was Benjamin Franklin's choice to be the national bird of the United States?**

Answer: Benjamin Franklin thought the Wild Turkey was the best choice for the national bird.

**30. What raptor has been known to hang upside down in the branches of trees while searching for prey?**

Answer: The Crane Hawk, seen once in Texas, sometimes hangs upside down in trees.

**31. What North American raptor hunts cooperatively and shares the prey after capture?**

Answer: Harris's Hawks often hunt cooperatively.

**32. What pair of unrelated raptors appear quite similar when seen soaring?**

Answer: The Turkey Vulture and the Zone-tailed Hawk can be mistaken for each other when seen soaring at a distance.

**33. What is the largest falcon in the world?**

Answer: At 20 to 25 inches long, the Gyrfalcon is the largest falcon in the world. It can be seen in the lower forty-eight states only in winter.

**34. What is the smallest owl in the world?**

Answer: The sparrow-sized Elf Owl, only 5 to 6 inches long, found in the southwestern deserts, is the smallest owl in the world.

**35. What is North America's closest relative to the famous quetzals of Central and South America?**

Answer: The Eared Trogon, not the more common Elegant Trogon, is our closest relative to the quetzals.

**36. What bird's plaintive song gives it the common name "Jose Maria" in Mexico?**

Answer: The Greater Pewee's easily recognized call, sounding like "Ho-say, ma-re-ah," gives it the common name "Jose Maria" in Mexico.

**37. What is the most northerly wintering *Empidonax* flycatcher?**

Answer: The Gray Flycatcher regularly winters farther north than any other *Empidonax* flycatcher. In winter it can be found in southern California and Arizona, as well as south of the border.

**38. What species did Audubon call the "Missouri skylark"?**

Answer: A Sprague's Pipit singing over the prairies along the upper Missouri River inspired Audubon to call it the "Missouri skylark."

**39. What North American species is restricted to a single island?**

Answer: The Island Scrub-Jay, formerly a subspecies of the Scrub Jay, can be found only on Santa Cruz Island off the coast of California.

**40. What is the largest songbird (member of the passerine family) in North America?**

Answer: At 22 to 27 inches long, the Common Raven is the largest songbird, though it can only croak.

**41. What songbird is most closely associated with water and could actually be called a waterbird?**

Answer: The American Dipper, though classified as a songbird, is truly a waterbird. It feeds by walking along the bottom of mountain streams in search of insect larvae.

**42. What North American species is our closest relative to the Old World group known as the babblers?**

Answer: The unique Wrentit is neither wren nor tit, but may be related to the babblers of the Old World.

**43. What family of songbirds behaves more like the raptors?**

Answer: The hooked bill of the shrikes is a clue that they are predatory birds and have a similar diet to hawks.

**44. What species has the nickname "butcherbird"?**

Answer: The Loggerhead Shrike's habit of storing uneaten prey impaled on thorns or the barbs of fence wires has given it the nickname "butcherbird."

**45. What native North American species regularly raises the most number of broods per year?**

Answer: The Mourning Dove may raise up to six broods per year, more than any other native North American bird.

**46. What species' voice is imitated by the sound of the cuckoo clock?**

Answer: The voice of the European Common Cuckoo, which is not a breeding North American species, is the model for the sound of a cuckoo clock.

**47. What bird's croaking call, often heard on hot humid days, gave it the nickname "rain crow"?**

Answer: People thought the Yellow-billed Cuckoo's croaking call, often heard on hot, humid afternoons, sounded like a call for rain and thus nicknamed it the "rain crow."

**48. What was the first species of bird thought to "hibernate"?**

Answer: The Common Poorwill may remain in a torpid state for days at a time in cold weather. This behavior was new to science, but the ancient Hopi Indian name for the Common Poorwill means "the sleeping one."

**49. What is the most northerly nesting species of hummingbird?**

Answer: The Rufous Hummingbird nests into Alaska.

**50. In the nineteenth century, before the House Sparrow became abundant throughout our cities, what was the most common city sparrow?**

Answer: The Chipping Sparrow was the most common city sparrow in the nineteenth century.

**51. What species' name reflects its unconventional and seemingly carefree lifestyle?**

Answer: The Bohemian Waxwing's name reflects its unconventional lifestyle

**52. What is the most common western warbler found as a vagrant in the East?**

Answer: There are more sightings in the East of the Black-throated Gray Warbler than of any other western warbler.

**53. What warbler is named after an ornithologist's sister?**

Answer: The Grace's Warbler is named after Elliott Coues's sister.

**54. What duck dives the deepest?**

Answer: Though most of its feeding is done within 30 feet of the surface, the Long-tailed Duck is supposedly able to dive to 200 feet, deeper than any other duck.