Giselle Clarkson

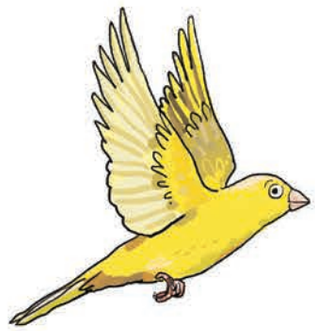
Omnibird





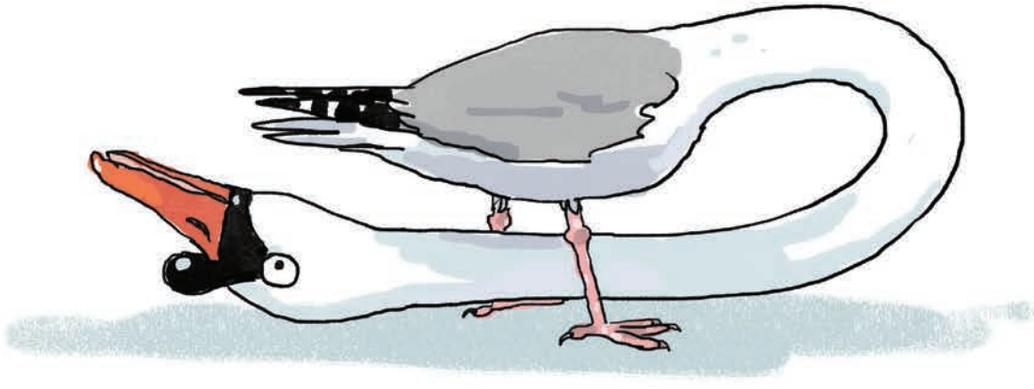
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Omnibird

AN AVIAN INVESTIGATOR'S HANDBOOK



GECKO PRESS

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OMNIBIRDING AND YOU

Have you seen a bird today? Probably, unless you haven't got out of bed yet.



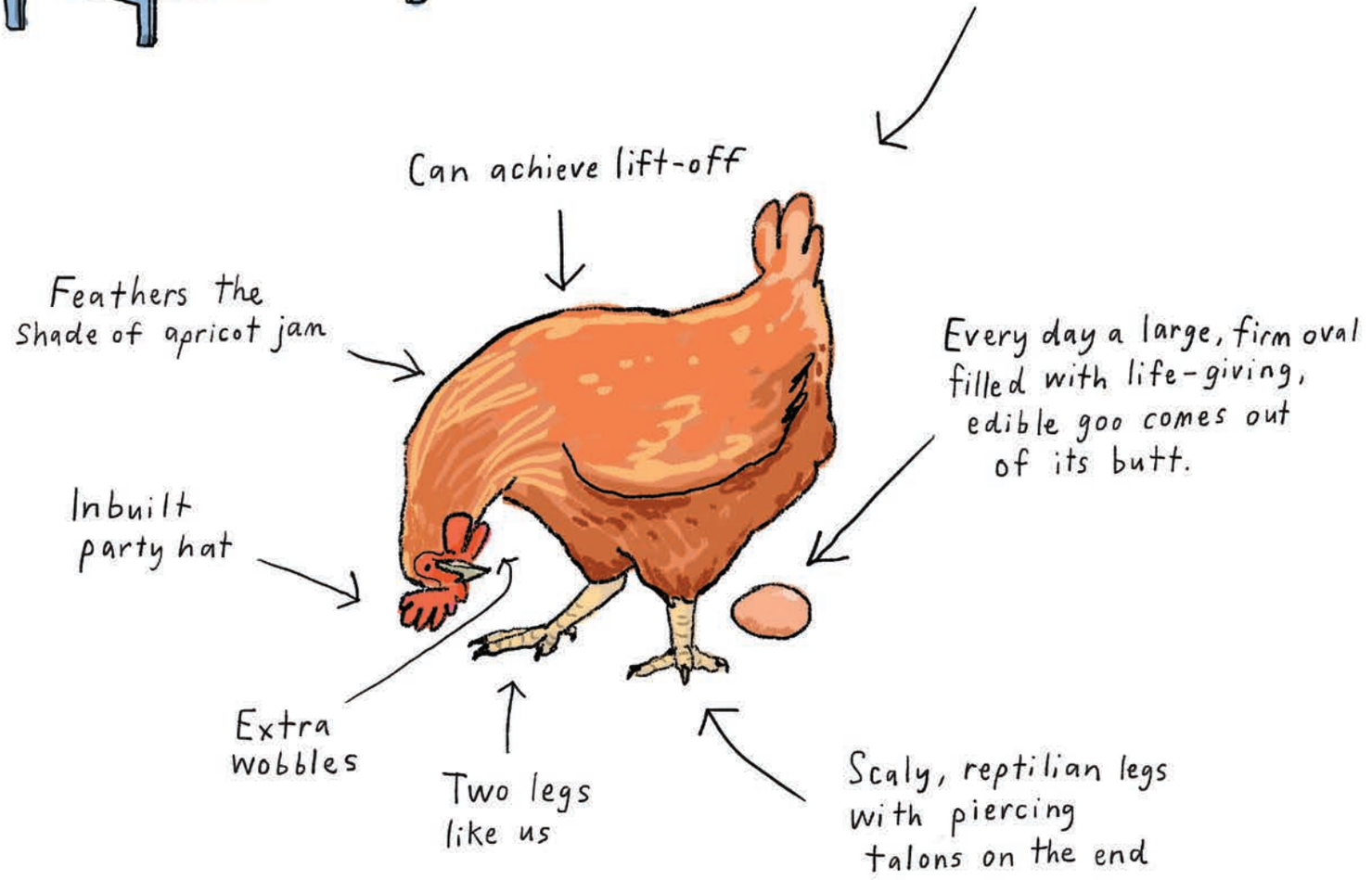


Ornithology = the study of birds
Avian = all things birdy

When we see something all the time, it's easy to forget that it's extraordinary. Mistaking the world for ordinary is a terrible habit that you should always struggle against. It's much worse than even picking your nose.

You can remind yourself how remarkable something is by breaking it up into pieces in your mind. A bird investigator specializes in doing this with birds.

Just look at this outrageous life form!



EVERY DAY IS REPLETE WITH INVESTIGATIVE OPPORTUNITIES



Staring out the window



Participating in team sports



Eating lunch outside



Riding a bus



Focusing on the background of boring TV shows



Being dragged outside for some fresh air

Here's how an omnibirding investigator sees a flamingo.

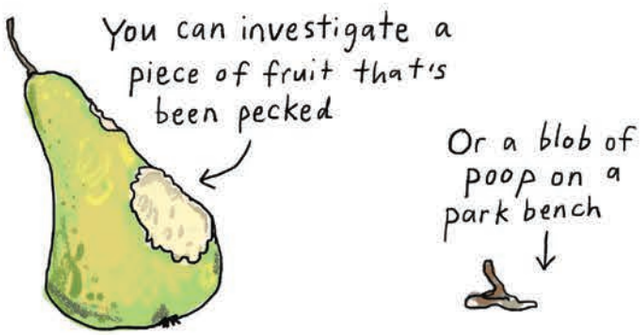


Omnibird means "the universal bird," because when you're an avian detective you have a dossier of intelligence on every single bird in the universe (there are over 10,000 of them), even if you don't know their names.

Investigating a bird is like solving a puzzle. To gather all the pieces, you look for clues. What sort of beak does it have? What do its toes look like? Then you just need to learn which feet do which jobs and which beaks eat which meals (that's what this book is for), and you'll find you can deduce all sorts of facts about your bird and its way of life.

The more birds you inspect, the more you'll start to notice patterns, similarities and differences that will all add to your omnibird case file. You'll be able to look at any bird and see immediately which puzzle pieces fit.

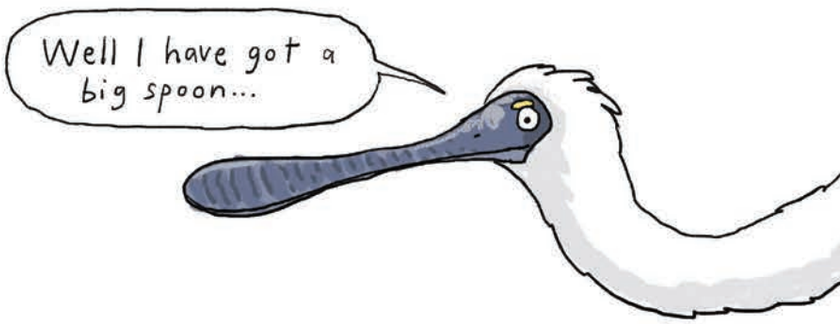
Conveniently, you can investigate birds even when you can't see any. They leave clues everywhere.



In the same way a famous detective can tell what you had for breakfast by the pattern on your socks…



YOU can learn how to tell what a bird had for breakfast by the shape of its beak.





DINOSAURS IN THE GARDEN

Thrillingly, the ancient ancestors of that sparrow outside your window were carnivorous dinosaurs called theropods.

When most dinosaurs went extinct, flighty little theropods survived because they were small, could travel by air and weren't fussy about what they ate.

Then evolution did its work for the next 65 million years and gave us all these magnificent creatures to live alongside us in our cities, streets, parks and backyards.





And what do you do with all this information when your brain is bulging with observations and knowledge? Some suggestions:

Impress your friends and family



Crime busting



Always have something to say to fill an awkward silence



Disaster management



So get out of bed (or just open the curtains), sally forth and detect avians wherever you go and at any time. Even daydreaming about what it would feel like to be a bird—that counts. Revel in the ludicrous and the beautiful, and remember, the world is very, very strange.

INVESTIGATIVE STRATEGIES

Some birds are much bolder than others. Sometimes it's because they've seen SO many people that they're not afraid, and in other cases it's because they've seen so few people, they don't know there's anything to be scared of.

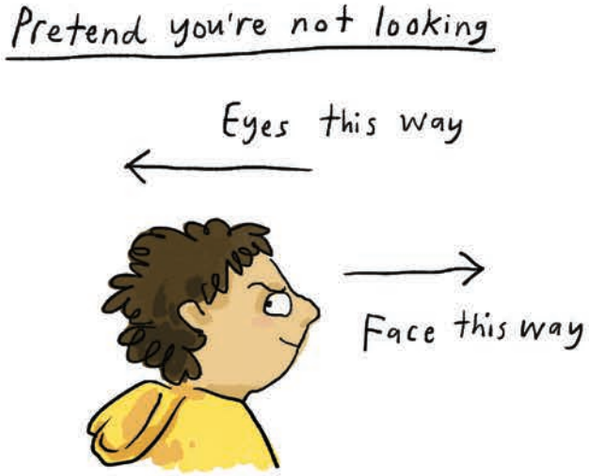
In parks and towns, many birds will come close because you look like you could drop some food. Around wild birds, you need to employ more advanced techniques.



You could dress like a tree or a rock if it helps you get into character.



You can put birds at ease by acting as if you don't even care that they're there. If you stalk them like a predator, that's what they'll think you are.



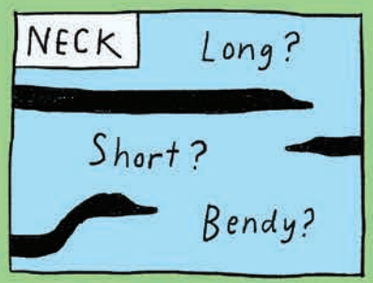


If you stumble across a dead bird, don't touch it as birds can carry disease that's harmful to humans. If you are careful, you can look at it or poke it (in a sensible way) with a stick. It might be the only time you ever see really close-up details, like whiskers and foot scales. If you have been near a dead bird, don't suck on your fingers or put them up your nose. That's dangerously foolish! Wash your hands thoroughly!

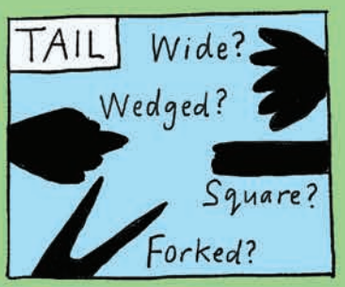


INVESTIGATING A BIRD THAT'S TOO FAR AWAY

When birds are way up in the sky, it can be tricky to see their usual distinctive features. It's hard to spot their beaks, and you can't usually see their feet at all, let alone count their toes. But a different set of clues reveals the identity of even the most distant bird.

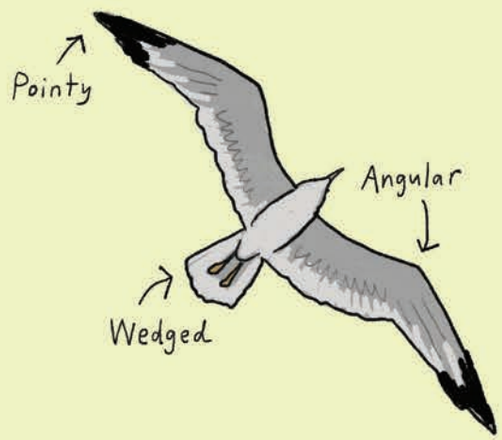






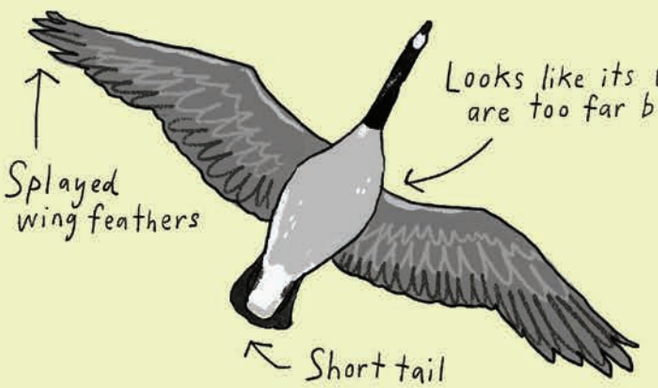


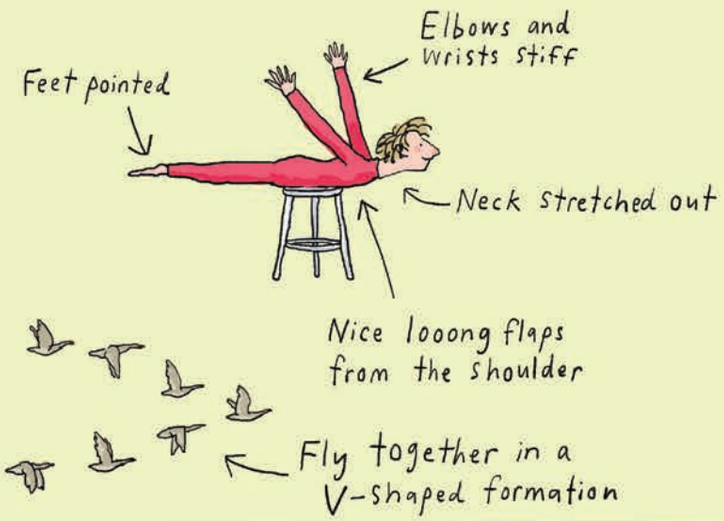
Gull





Goose





Pigeon



Little head

Noisy fliers, lots of rushing air sounds, so you'll hear them coming.

Wings look quite compact for its body size

Tail can make this very wide fan shape



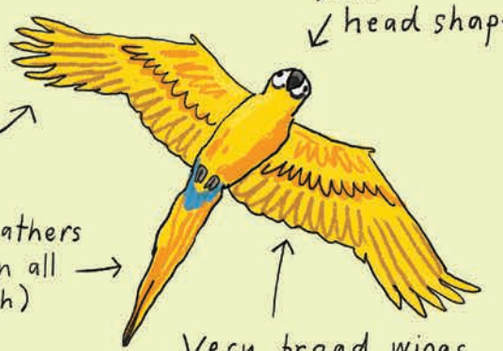
Fast flapping, but with pauses to swoop and dive (don't fall off your stool!)

Feet neatly tucked in

You'll need to use your mouth to make accurate whooshing noises

Parrot

Blunt head shape



Feathers separated at the tips

Trailing tail feathers (not this long on all parrots though)

Very broad wings

A consistant, steady, full-armed flap



Pretend your legs are your long tail

Finch

Very fluttery flaps

No sharp bends in its wing



Prefers flocks

Move your tail up and down as you go

Bring your arms almost together underneath you with each wing beat



Has a rhythm like this Flap flap flap flap ... Pause ... Flap flap flap fl





A big squawk of thanks to Dr Colin Miskelly
and Dr Edin Whitehead, ornithologists (and good eggs).

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From the author of
The Observologist, a guide to
the art and science of omnibirding.

Some birds are so commonplace it's easy to forget how extraordinary they are. These creatures have a secret eyelid, hollow bones and a two-part brain. They dress in feathers.

Omnibird explores what's remarkable about the birds all around us and the clues we can all use to become avian investigators.

Once your sleuthing begins, you'll find the fascinating in eggs, feathers and flight patterns. You'll discover why there are different kinds of beaks and toes, and get better at listening to bird calls. (Try talking back!) You'll probably daydream about what it feels like to be a bird.

You'll discover things that are ludicrous, beautiful, or just very, very strange—or maybe not so strange, once you know why.

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