

# Bird Glossary

For those interested in a far more detailed list, we highly recommend:

*A Dictionary of Birds* by Bruce Campbell and Elizabeth Lack.

*The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds* by John Terres.

## **abdomen**

Ventral part of the bird. Synonym: belly.

## **alula**

Three feathers springing from the base of the primaries. Synonym: alular quills.

## **alular quill coverts**

Feathers overlying the bases of alula.

## **alular quills**

Three feathers springing from the base of the primaries. Synonym: alula.

## **auricular**

Area around ear opening. Synonym(s): ear patch, ear coverts.

## **axillary**

Ventral area between the body and the wing. Synonym: wingpit.

## **back**

Dorsal part of the bird.

## **belly**

Ventral part of the bird. Synonym: abdomen.

## **bill**

Beak.

## **body**

Main mass of the bird as distinguished from its appendages.

## **breast**

Front part of the chest.

## **breast band**

Stripe across the breast.

## **breast spot**

Small, differently colored area on the breast.

**cap**

Top of the crown.

**cere**

Fleshy area between the beak and face.

**cheek**

Area bounded by lore, eye, auricular, and lower mandible.

**chest**

Front part of the body.

**chin**

Part of the face below the bill.

**cloaca**

The single opening in birds used for both reproduction and excrement.

**cloacal kiss**

Term used to describe copulation.

**collar**

Rear portion of crown. Synonym(s): nape, hindneck.

**comb**

Colored area over eye found in males.

**commissure**

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): gape, rictus.

**crest**

Tuft on the head.

**crissum**

Feathers covering underside of base of tail. Synonym: undertail coverts

**crown**

Top of the head.

**culmen**

Upper ridge on bill.

**dihedral**

Wings of a flying bird held at an angle appearing to form a "V."

**ear patch**

Area around ear opening. Synonym: auricular.

**ears**

Rounded, earlike areas on the face. Synonym: facial discs.

**eye**

Organ of sight.

**eye line**

Line of feathers in front of and behind the eye.

**eye ring**

Pale-colored feathers encircling the eye.

**eyebrow**

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): supercilium, superciliary line.

**eyelid**

Skin-fold covering the eye.

**face**

Front part of the head.

**facial discs**

Rounded, earlike areas on the face. Synonym: ears.

**feet**

Terminal part of the leg.

**flank**

Area between the belly and the wings, more posterior.

**flank stripe**

Band on the flanks.

**flight feathers**

Primaries and secondaries.

**forehead**

Part of the face above the eyes.

**foreneck**

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): throat, jugulum, throat patch.

**frontal shield**

Extension of the bill onto the forehead.

**gape**

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): commissure, rictus.

**gonys**

Lowermost ridge on lower mandible.

**gorget**

Iridescent throat feathers on a hummingbird.

**greater secondary coverts**

Feathers overlying bases of secondaries.

**gular region**

Between the chin and the foreneck.

**head**

Upper part of the body.

**head stripes**

Bold lines on the head.

**hindhead**

Rear portion of crown. Synonym: occiput.

**hindneck**

Back of the neck. Synonym(s): nape, collar.

**horns**

Paired contour feathers arising from head.

**inner primaries**

Group of primaries closest to the body.

**inner secondaries**

Group of secondaries closest to the body.

**inner wing**

Shoulder, secondaries and secondary coverts.

**iris**

Colored part of eye.

**jugulum**

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, throat, throat patch.

**knee**

Joint in the middle part of the leg.

**leading edge of wing**

Front edge of the wing in flight.

**leg**

Limb used for supporting the bird.

**lesser secondary coverts**

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): marginal coverts, shoulder.

**lore**

Area between the eye and the bill.

**lower mandible**

Lower part of the bill.

**lower mandibular tomia**

Cutting edges of lower mandible.

**malar stripe**

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): whisker, mustache, malar streak.

**mandibular ramus**

Prong-like, posterior projection from bill.

**mantle**

Upper surface of the wings and the back.

**marginal coverts**

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): lesser secondary coverts, shoulder.

**median line**

Stripe through the crown.

**median secondary coverts**

Feathers overlying bases of greater secondary coverts.

**mustache**

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): whisker, malar streak

**mouth**

Cavity bounded by the bill.

**nape**

Back of the neck. Synonym(s): hindneck, collar.

**nasal canthus**

Anterior corner of eye.

**nasal fossa**

Depression in which nostril is located.

**neck**

Part connecting the head to the main part of the body.

**neck patch**

Inflatable sac on neck used by males in courtship display.

**nictitating membrane**

Translucent, vertical fold under the eye lid.

**nostril**

External naris.

**occiput**

Rear portion of crown. Synonym: hindhead.

**operculum**

Swollen structure in pigeons overarching the nostril.

**outer primaries**

Group of primaries farthest from the body.

**outer secondaries**

Group of secondaries farthest from the body.

**outer tail feathers**

Part of the tail farthest from the center.

**outer wing**

Alula and primaries.

**patagial mark**

Dark patch on leading edge of underside of inner wing.

**pelagic**

Living on the open ocean rather than coastal or inland bodies of water

**pinnae**

Projecting feathers.

**plumes**

Large, conspicuous, showy, feathers.

**primaries**

Flight feathers attached to the "hand."

**primary coverts**

Feathers protecting and covering the primaries.

**primary numbering**

System for assigning a number to each primary.

**pupil**

Contractile aperture in iris.

**rectrices**

Conspicuous feathers forming posterior margin of tail.

**remiges**

See primaries and secondaries.

**rictal bristles**

Stiffened feathers near bill.

**rictus**

Base of the bill where the mandibles join. Synonym(s): gape, commissure.

**ruffs**

Fringe of feathers growing on the neck.

**rump**

Area between the uppertail coverts and the back.

**scapulars**

Area of feathers between the back and the wings.

**secondaries**

Flight feathers attached to the "elbow."

**secondary coverts**

Feathers protecting and covering the secondaries.

**shoulder**

Feathers overlying bases of median secondary coverts. Synonym(s): lesser secondary coverts, marginal coverts.

**side**

Area between the belly and the wing.

**side of neck**

Area of neck between foreneck and hindneck.

**spectacle**

Eye ring and supraloral line together.

**speculum**

Highly colored area on secondaries of several ducks.

**subterminal band**

Stripe before tip of tail.

**superciliary line**

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): supercilium, eyebrow.

**supercilium**

Line of feathers above the eye. Synonym(s): eyebrow, superciliary line.

**supraloral line**

Line of feathers above the lore.

**tail**

Feathers extending from the rear of the bird.

**tail coverts**

Under and uppertail coverts.

**tail numbering**

System for assigning a number to each tail feather.

**tarsus**

Part of the leg between the knee and the foot.

**temporal canthus**

Posterior corner of eye.

**terminal band**

Stripe at tip of tail.

**tertiaries**

Feathers adjoining the secondaries.

**throat**

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, jugulum, throat patch.

**throat patch**

Front part of the neck. Synonym(s): foreneck, throat, jugulum.

**tibia**

Part of the leg above the knee.

**toe**

Digit attached to the feet.

**trailing edge of wing**

Rear edge of the wing in flight.

**underparts**

Belly, undertail coverts, chest, flanks, and foreneck.

**undertail coverts**

Feathers covering underside of base of tail. Synonym: crissum.

**underwing**

Underside of wing.

**upper mandible**

Upper part of the bill.

**upper mandibular tomia**

Cutting edges of upper mandible.

**upperparts**

Back, rump, hindneck, wings, and crown.

**uppertail coverts**

Feathers covering upperside of base of tail.

**upperwing**

Upperside of wing.

**vent**

Opening of the cloaca or anus.

**whisker**

Area at the sides of the chin. Synonym(s): mustache, malar streak.

**wing**

Moveable feathered appendage.

**wing bars**

Pale tips of greater and median secondary coverts.

**wing coverts**

Primary and secondary coverts.

**wing lining**

Median, lesser and marginal coverts on underwing.

**wing stripe**

Paler area at base of flight feathers.

**wingpit**

Ventral area between the body and the wing. Synonym: axillary.

**wrist**

Area at base of the primaries.

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