

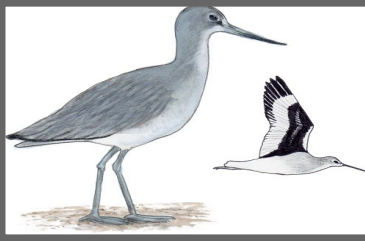


Cabrillo  
Marine  
Aquarium

# FISHIN' FOR F.A.Q.'S

Volume I

Issue 1



## COASTAL BIRDS

### Fun Facts

Millions of water birds use coastal ecosystems for breeding, foraging, migrating and nesting.

The group of birds known as shorebirds is comprised of the sandpipers, plovers, willets and related birds that forage along our beaches, mudflats and rocky shores.



Willetts (pictured above) are often seen alone. They walk deliberately, pausing to probe for crabs, worms and other prey in sand and mudflats, or to pick at insects and mollusks.

**A SCIENTIST THAT SPECIALIZES IN THE STUDY OF BIRDS IS KNOWN AS AN ORNITHOLOGIST**

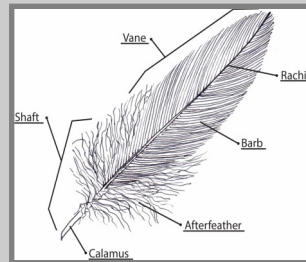
**Q.** Can birds see in color the way humans do?

**A.** Vision is the most highly developed & *acute* bird sense, and birds have a keen sense of color that is vital for finding food, choosing a mate, and more! Not only are birds able to see the familiar rainbow of colors, they can also see parts of the *ultraviolet (UV)* spectrum, that are invisible to the human eye. This means birds can determine subtle differences between similar shades of color, gradations that human eyes are unable to detect.

**Q.** What feature is super unique to birds?

**A.** Only birds have feathers, which is super unique to these beautiful creatures! Feathers are formed in special skin cells from a protein called *keratin*.

Feathers are used for flight, temperature control, and attracting a mate. Birds have six different feather types that vary in shape, structure, and function. The most familiar is the *contour feather*.



It consists of a central *shaft* and countless *barbs* that protrude from either side, forming *vanes*. The portion of the shaft that supports the barbs is called the *rachis*, while the bare portion that embeds in the skin is called the *calamus*.

### JUST FOR LAUGHS

**Q.** Why do birds fly south in the winter?

**A.** Because it's too far to walk

### At CMA

**Be sure to check out the Mudflat Exhibit and learn all the unique features & adaptations of shorebirds**

## FAST FACTS

**Diet:** fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, insects & other birds

**Clutch size:** 2 to 6 eggs

**Incubation period:** 27 to 29 days

**Egg description:** Pale blue, fading slightly with age

**Habitat:** both freshwater & saltwater habitats, grasslands & agricultural fields, ponds sheltered lagoons & lakes, marshes and shallow coastal areas

**Conservation status:** Stable populations in the U.S.

**Common Name:** Great Blue Heron

