

Seeing Birds through an Artist's Eyes

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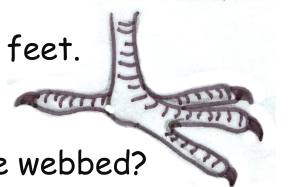
One of the best things about drawing birds is that I learn so much more about them. I am more alert to their appearance and habits, and feel much closer to them in the process.

When depicting a bird, I often ask questions about them, that I wouldn't have thought of otherwise. Here's some questions I had to find the answers to. Give them a try yourself.

1. I never paid much attention to the underside of bird's wings until I painted them. What color is the coverts (Shoulder feathers) on the underside of these birds' wings?

- Pileated Woodpecker Black? White? Red?
- Blue Jay Black? White? Blue?
- Loon Black? White? Spotted?

2. When I made my first Sandhill Crane sculpture, I made a mistake in the feet. What's wrong with this foot?



Too many toes? Not enough toes? The back toe is too long? Crane toes are webbed?

3. When I made the Sandhill Crane sculpture, I also realized that I didn't know what the familiar red patch on top of its head looks like in the back.

Which one looks like the back of a Sandhill's head?



4. In one of my drawings, I depicted the variety of things that a Great Blue Heron eats. Which of the following is NOT found on a heron's menu?

Salmanders? Turtles? Snakes? Cattails?

6. I have learned many fascinating facts, about birds, but I also learned that many 'facts' are actually myths. Which of the following is fact and which is myth?

- If a loon lands on wet pavement, mistaking it for a pond, it can't lift off and will die there.
- Great Blue Herons sometimes try to swallow fish that are too large and choke to death.
- Small songbirds can bring down hawks by vomiting and defecating on them.
- Hummingbirds migrate to Alaska by riding on the backs of Canada Geese.
- If an eagle catches a fish that is too heavy to lift, it will swim to shore, clutching the fish.