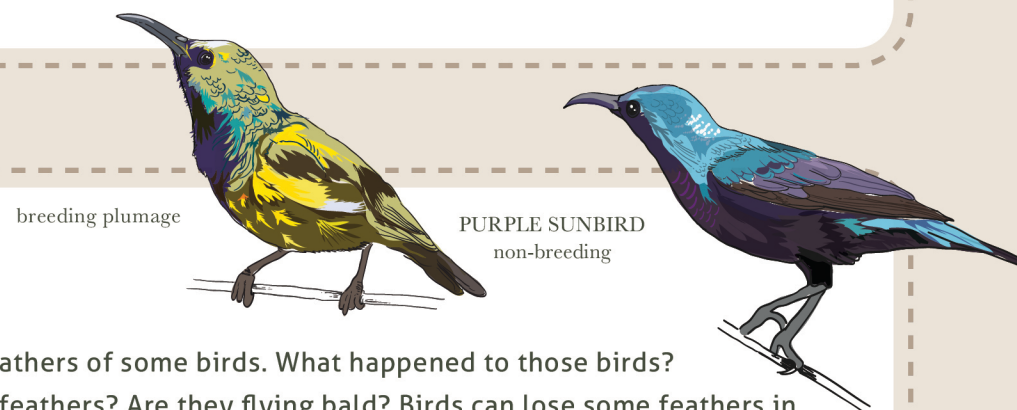


A FEATHER IN YOUR CAP



Did You Know

Birds have something that no other living animal has – feathers! We say 'living' animal because fossils of some dinosaurs, the ancestors of birds, have been found with feathers. This "dino fuzz" probably helped them stay warm and dry. Perhaps the feather colours also helped them show off or camouflage themselves from predators. Dinosaur feathers did not have much to do with flight, but today, feathers are what allow birds to fly.



Moulting

You've collected the feathers of some birds. What happened to those birds? Are they missing some feathers? Are they flying bald? Birds can lose some feathers in the normal course of their lives. If they lose entire feathers, they just grow them back. In fact, once or twice a year, they replace some or all of their feathers: they "moult". Have you noticed that some birds have breeding plumages, different colours and patterns depending on the season? Moulting is how they sport new colours in different seasons.

Fun Feathery Fact

The colours on some bird feathers are not pigments. These colours are made by bending light to create different hues.. This type of colour is called iridescence. Iridescent objects have some interesting properties: their colour changes with the angle at which you look at them!

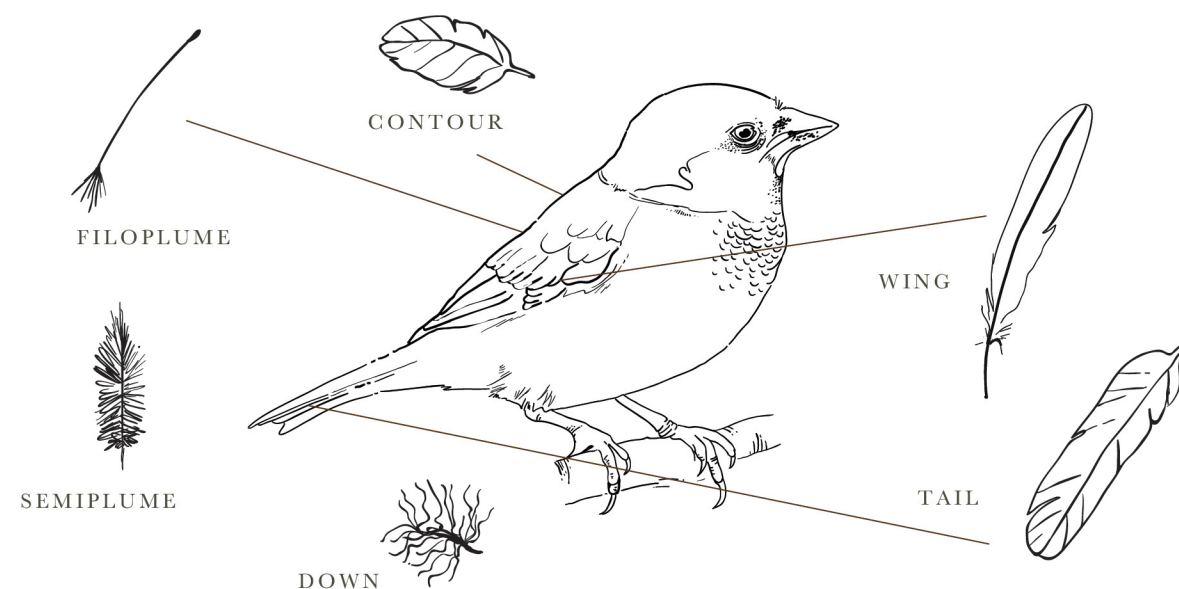


For the Field Diary

What you need: your field diary, a small paper bag/large envelope, and some friends.

- Search for feathers under trees, below nests, and under ledges where birds nest or roost. Make sure you don't disturb any birds in your quest! Also, don't pick up feathers that are lying among bird droppings.
- Once you find a feather, place it between the pages of your field diary and write down where you found it. Was there a nest nearby?
- Compare the feathers you find to the ones below. What kinds of feathers have you collected?
- Look at the picture of the bird above. Can you tell which part of the bird's body the feather is from?

Note: Make sure you wash your hands well after handling the feathers. Sometimes, looking at the size and colour patterns of the feather, it's possible to tell the kind of bird it comes from. Would you like to take a guess? Send us photographs of the feathers you find and we'll try to help you identify which bird they are from.



Write to us!

Write to us at edu@ncf-india.org and let us know what kind of feathers you found! Which birds have they come from? We would love to see your drawings!

