

BIRD BEAKS

Birds have beaks of many shapes and sizes, with each having evolved for a specific purpose. Some of the types, and their purpose are illustrated below.

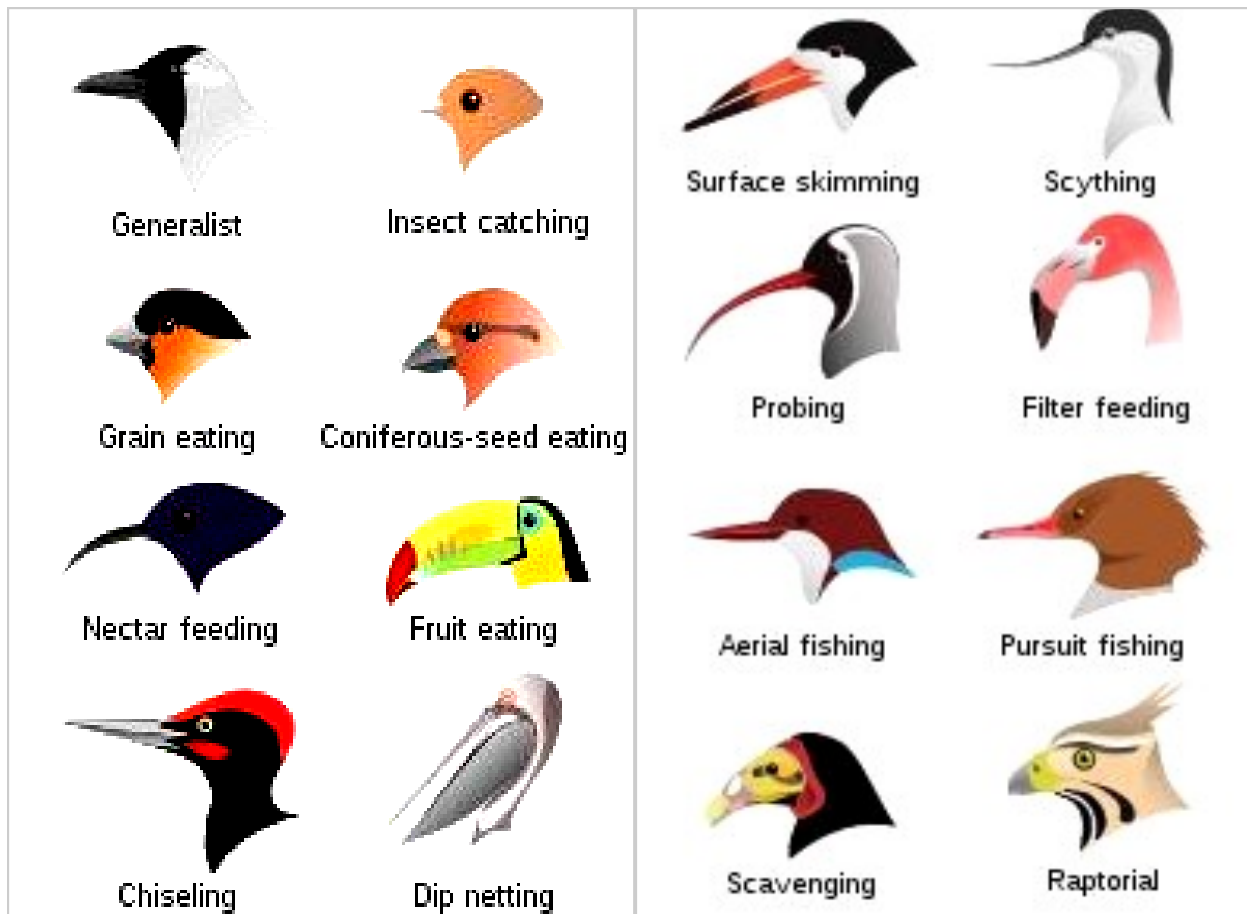


Illustration: L. Shyamal

When Darwin observed the finches on the Galapagos Islands, he realised that birds' beaks have evolved to fit the ecological niche they fill. For instance, Raptors have downward curving beaks for ripping up meat. Hummingbirds have long thin beaks for reaching nectar deep inside flowers. Spoonbills' beaks allow them to filter-feed in shallow water.

Beaks don't have teeth and are not used for chewing. Birds swallow their food whole, and it is ground up in the gizzard. The beak is worn down by use, so it grows continually throughout the bird's life. Some species, have a hard tip to the beak, this is dead tissue used for heavy-duty tasks such as cracking nuts or killing prey. While some birds, such as ducks, have a sensitive tip

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia