

MORE BIRD FACTS

WHAT IS A CROP?

A crop is a thin-walled expanded portion of the alimentary tract used for the storage of food prior to digestion that is found in many animals, including birds, gastropods, earthworms, leeches, insects, and even some dinosaurs.

In a bird's digestive system, the crop is an expanded, muscular pouch near the gullet or throat. It is a part of the digestive tract, essentially an enlarged part of the oesophagus. As with most other organisms that have a crop, the crop is used to temporarily store food. Not all birds have a crop. In adult doves and pigeons, the crop can produce crop milk to feed newly hatched young.

Scavenging birds, such as vultures, will gorge themselves when prey is abundant, causing their crop to bulge. They subsequently sit, sleepy or half torpid, to digest their food.

Most raptors have one; like falcons, hawks, eagles and vultures (as stated above) but owls do not.

NESTS

For some species, a nest is simply a shallow depression made in sand; for others, it is the knot-hole left by a broken branch, a burrow dug into the ground, a chamber drilled into a tree, an enormous rotting pile of vegetation and earth, or a mud dome with an entrance tunnel. Some species of cave swiftlets of the genus *Collocalia* make their nests entirely from their saliva, which dries and hardens to form a bracket on the cave wall into which the birds lay their eggs. The smallest bird nests are those of some hummingbirds, tiny cups which can be a mere 2cm (less than one inch) across and 2–3 cm (about one inch) high. At the other extreme, some nest mounds built by the Dusky Scrubfowl measure more than 11m (34 feet) in diameter and stand nearly 5m (15 feet) tall. Although nests are primarily used for breeding they may also be reused in the non-breeding season for roosting and some species build special *dormitory nests* or *roost nests* (or *winter-nest*) that are used only for roosting.

Nests are built each year in most species but some birds refurbish their old nests. The large eyries of some eagles are platform nests that have been used and refurbished for several years.

Source: Wikipedia