

The strangest birds in the animal kingdom

BY LATOYA MALAIKA

The animal world is full of strange, silly, and flashy creatures. Here are the birds that we think are the most special. Here is why they caught our attention.

1. The secretary bird is a bird of prey that mostly hunts by walking on the ground, taking long, slow steps, kind of like a person. It is notorious for its very powerful kick, which is up to five times its own body weight. It eats insects, rodents, lizards, snakes, small birds, amphibians, and even baby tortoises.

2. The cream-coloured woodpecker looks a lot like Pikachu from Pokémon, but instead of blasting lightning bolts, it zaps ants and termites, which are its main food.

3. The horned screamer has a long white spike on its head, so it looks a bit like a unicorn. Scientists think the spike does not really do anything except making it attractive. This bird is also famous for its weird and super loud voice. It eats mostly water plants, grass, leaves, stems, roots, and flowers.

4. The bird we find most amazing on this list is the lyrebird. Why? Because it can remember and copy hundreds of different sounds. Like a parrot, it repeats noises it hears around it and can make sounds like a camera clicking, a chainsaw cutting wood, a car alarm beeping, and even an emergency siren.

5. The three-wattled bellbird has one of the loudest bird



The secretary bird can pick up to five times its own body weight.

calls ever recorded; about 100 decibels if you are standing close by. That is as loud as a motorcycle or a power saw. Some people say you can hear its call from nearly one kilometre away. Many folks say the sound is just like an emergency alarm. This bird mostly eats fruit, especially wild avocados from a plant family called Lauraceous.

6. The harpy eagle has some of the biggest claws of any eagle in the world. Its wings can stretch up to seven feet wide, that is taller than most grown-ups. Its grip is so strong it can crush bones. This powerful hunter is known for grabbing full-grown monkeys and sloths right out of trees. It mostly eats mammals like sloths, monkeys, opossums, porcupines, and coatis, but it also hunts iguanas.

7. The bowerbird is often called nature's architect. That is because the male builds

fancy stick houses called bowers to not to live in them. He just wants to show off. Many types of bowerbirds decorate their creations with colourful things such as berries, flowers, shells, and even bottle caps. Its diet includes insects, spiders, nectar, flowers, seeds, and leaves.



The shoebill has a giant beak shaped like a shoe.

8. The club-winged manakin makes one of the strangest sounds in the bird world. How? By shaking its wings at about 100 times per second. That is way faster than you can blink. The sound it makes is a weird, almost machine-like hum. Unlike hummingbirds, which beat their wings fast to fly, the manakin uses special feathers on its wings just to make noise when it is trying to impress a mate.

9. The shoebill looks like a bird that was made to scare people. It has a giant beak shaped like a shoe, and that beak can crush its prey with crazy strong force. The shoebill stands completely still for a very long time, like a statue or a sneaky reptile, before suddenly attacking. Its prey includes lungfish, snakes, baby crocodiles, frogs, turtles, and large fish. This is not a bird you would want to meet in a dark forest.

10. The Kakapo is the heaviest parrot in the world and also one of the only parrots that cannot fly. Adult males weigh between 2 to 4 kilograms, while females are lighter, weighing between 1 and 2.5 kilograms. This bird stays awake at night and smells strangely sweet, like flowers or candy. When it feels scared, instead of running away, it just freezes like a statue.

11. Often called the "stinky bird", the hoatzin's digestive system works similarly to a cow's. It is able to ferment leaves inside a specialised stomach, which gives it a strong manure smell. Baby hoatzins are also born with claws on their wings, making them look like tiny dinosaurs. They mainly eat flowers, leaves, and fruit.

Ochuku

OCHUKU



By Mbuguah