

ALL ABOUT FEATHERS

Feathers are made of keratin just like our hair and fingernails. This material makes the feathers light but strong. Feathers are made of four parts. The barbs are the individual feather strands that are connected to the middle structure called the rachis. Downy barbs are the fluffy feather strands near the bottom, and lastly is the calamus which is the tip that connects to the feather tracks.

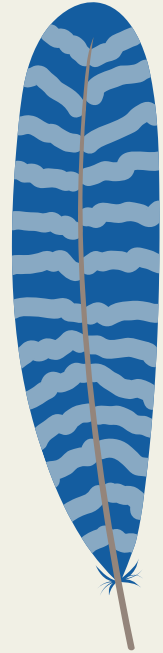


Flight

These strong, stiff feathers are found on the wings. They assist the bird with propelling through the air, and giving it lift. The wing flight feathers are also known as the regimens.

Tail

Tail feathers, also known as rectrices, are in charge of stability and control during flight. They help steer in the air and brake when landing. Most birds only have 12 tail feathers.



Contour/Body

The contour feathers are the outermost feathers responsible for showing colors and patterns. They are found everywhere but the beak, legs, and feet. The feathers are layered like roof tiles to keep the bird waterproof and insulated.



Semiplume

Semiplume feathers are located in between the contour and down feathers. They have a well-formed shaft and soft barbs which assist with insulation.

Down

The down feathers are closest to the body and the most important for insulation. They do not have a rachis and are randomly dispersed to trap body heat.



Filoplume

There are only a few barbs at the end of these feathers. They are found at nerve endings and send signals to the brain.

Bristle

Bristle feathers are found on the bird's head. They have few barbs and act as eyelashes for the bird.

