



City Slickers Clue Cards



HOUSE FINCH

1. Originally a western U.S. species, a small number of these small birds were released on Long Island, New York, in 1940, and spread quickly through other parts of the U.S. and Canada.
2. Males and females are mostly a gray-brown color with heavy streaks on their chest and belly. The males have colorful heads, cheeks, necks, and rumps that are bright red to orange-yellow.
3. The color of a male's feathers vary from yellow-orange to bright red, depending on the food they eat. Certain pigments in their food affect their color—like you turning orange if you eat a lot of carrots.
4. These birds are not picky about where they eat—on the ground, in trees and shrubs, and at bird feeders. Their favorite foods are buds, seeds from trees and weeds, and fruits.
5. These birds use fine materials such as weeds, stems, roots, string, and feathers to build their nests.

ROCK PIGEON (FORMERLY ROCK DOVE)

1. These “city slickers” are often found on roofs, ledges, bridges, and parking garages—looking for food on the ground!
2. Both the male and female take care of the young. The male collects small twigs, one at a time, while the female actually builds the nest.
3. These birds eat almost anything, including seeds, waste grain, corn, and fruit. They also eat popcorn, bread, peanuts, and other scraps that humans leave behind.
4. These birds also are known as “winged rats” and “pigeons.”
5. These colorful birds have iridescent neck feathers in different colors and patterns; some even have feather “stockings” on their legs.

AMERICAN CROW

1. During the fall and winter, these urban birds may roost together in large groups, by the hundreds, thousands, or even tens of thousands.
2. These birds eat mostly vegetables, including a lot of corn, but also insects, spiders, millipedes, worms, snails, salamanders, lizards, and even small mammals and other small animals that are found dead. They also eat other birds' eggs, to the point of being a major predator for some.
3. They build their nests high up in pine and other coniferous trees. Their nests are built of large sticks.
4. Their call sounds like “Caw, Caw, Caw.”
5. These birds are glossy black all over and have dark eyes and dark bills.



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PEREGRINE FALCON

1. When hunting this bird can dive at speeds greater than 200 miles per hour, making it the fastest bird species in the world.
2. The name of this bird means “wanderer,” “traveler,” “foreigner,” or “roving,” which is appropriate because it is found on many continents around the world.
3. These birds scrape their nests into soil or gravel, usually on a high cliff, bridge, or building. Tall city buildings offer them the perfect vantage point for spotting and diving down on their prey.
4. This bird has dark blue-gray coloring on its back and wings, with a whitish underside and belly. On its face is a distinct dark gray mustache.
5. These birds were listed as endangered in 1970, and were entirely gone from the Eastern U.S. until they were removed from the endangered species list in 1999 due to successful reintroduction efforts. One reason these birds are becoming familiar in big cities is that tall rooftops made good places to raise young birds hatched from eggs of captive birds. After these birds grew up, some of them returned to areas near their nest locations and successfully nested and raised their own young. Rock Pigeons (common in cities) are their primary food source.

EUROPEAN STARLING

1. This is the most numerous bird species in North America, with more than 200 million found across the continent. They can mimic other birds, such as hawks, but aren't very good at it.
2. In 1890 about 100 of these European birds were released in New York City's Central Park in an effort to introduce to North America all the birds mentioned in William Shakespeare's writings.
3. Using a variety of materials, including grasses, twigs, feathers, and even trash, these birds build their nests in protected places like tree cavities and birdhouses, making it hard for other cavity-nesting birds to find a nesting place.
4. These birds mainly eat berries and insects but also snack on fruits, grains, seeds, and even garbage.
5. These glossy black birds with purple and green iridescent heads have a bright yellow beak in the summer, but by fall their bright yellow beak has turned dark brown or black, and their feathers have small white speckles.

Following Up

City Slickers

What Did You Learn?

1. Why do you think certain bird species are so common in urban areas? What information in the Clue Cards supports your ideas?
2. If you were going to study why some birds have adapted well to city living, what would you study? How would you go about it?

Wanted: Your Feedback

1. What do you think participants learned about urban birds?
2. Which bird did most participants figure out with the least number of clues?
3. Which bird did most participants have the most difficulty trying to identify?
4. What would you do differently if you were to do this activity again?

Question for Reflection

How can you help birds that are less adapted to urban conditions survive in an urban environment?

