

## Big Bird's Species Still Source for Debate

### Canary, chicken, condor stand as most popular of bird species suggestions

By Katie Ingmire

Posted: July 9, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

As an 8 feet, 2 inch tall staple character on the PBS children's show "Sesame Street," Big Bird is a "towering" figure in the television community. Last month's death of Big Bird costume creator Kermit Love has brought the character further into the national spotlight, and "Sesame Street" viewers are quite familiar with the features of Love's creation; however, Big Bird's "species" remains a more controversial topic.

The "conflict" over Big Bird's species stems from two mediums: print and television. In his book "Sesame Street Unpaved: Scripts, Stories, Secrets, and Songs," David Borgenicht lists Big Bird's scientific name as *Bigus canarius*. The name would presumably translate into the pseudo-English phrase "Big canary."

A 1981 episode of the PBS television program "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" suggests otherwise. When Big Bird visited the Neighborhood of Make-Believe on the show, he told the character X the Owl he was a golden condor, a fictional bird species. Later in the episode, the character King Friday XIII asks Big Bird if he's related to the cassowary. Big Bird tells the king he's more like a condor.

Some BirdChannel.com forum users had different views about Big Bird's species' classification. Of the nine users who offered species suggestions, five said Big Bird was a chicken or a cross between a chicken and another bird species. Ostrich garnered the second-highest number of votes at four. Only one user said Big Bird could be part canary.

"Big Bird is clearly a canarich or an ostary (canary, ostrich cross)," wrote BirdChannel user Ickybird. "Ostrich because of his size, tail and feet, and canary because of his bright yellow color and his desire to sing all the time (although not well)."

BirdChannel user Ladyhawke50 even offered an explanation about Big Bird's evolutionary history, claiming Big Bird evolved from the bird-like dinosaur of the genus *Gigantoraptor*. Now, the user says, Big Bird looks like "an ostrich with a cockatoo crest."

"He shares many of the traits of a cockatoo: cognitive learning, a good sense of humor and Big Bird likes to roller skate, dance and sing just like our cockatoos," Ladyhawke50 said.

Some wrote that Big Bird might even have "relatives" in the entertainment industry. Users suggested small, yellow avian Woodstock from the Peanuts comic strip, animated cartoon bird Woody Woodpecker and Loony Tunes' Tweety Bird.

Though his species might not be clearly defined, Big Bird's influence on children around the world is undoubted.

"He helps his young human counterparts learn basic life skills and lessons with a happy, compassionate disposition," LadyHawke50 wrote. "I think that's why evolution colored him sunny yellow."