

Bird Terms: The Terms You Need To Know

Definitions of words used by pet bird enthusiasts with the pet bird slant.

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Allopreening: The communal grooming of feathers birds practice when living in flocks. More information about allopreening [here](#).

Aves: The class of birds or a category in biological taxonomy ranking.

Aviary: A very large enclosure, usually outside, that houses multiple birds. Some include bird-safe plants and trees.

Aviculture: The breeding and keeping of birds in a domestic setting.

Bristles: Feathers that look more like hair, found mostly around a bird's eyes, nares and beak.

Cere: A soft, waxy-looking structure above the beak.

Cloaca: The terminal area of the digestive, renal and reproductive systems; divided into three sections: coprodeum, urodeum and proctodeum.

Clutch: A group of eggs laid by a female bird during one nesting period.

Coverts: Smaller feathers covering a bird's large wing and tail feathers.

Crop: At the base of the esophagus, a pouch-like enlargement of the gullet that acts as a storage area for food and passes metered masses of food into a bird's gastrointestinal tract.

Cuttlebone: A dietary supplement of calcium carbonate, from cuttlefish. More about the cuttlebone [here](#).

Dimorphic: A visible difference in the size, coloring or other physical characteristics between male and female birds.

Down feathers: Hidden under the contour feathers on adult birds. Very soft and insulating feathers.

Eye pinning: The rapid dilation and contraction of a bird's irises. Eye pinning indicates excitement or fear.

Feather picking: A behavior occurring when a bird over-preens itself, leading to feather damage.

Flock: A social group of birds.

Grit: A fine rock or gravel fed to certain bird species that aids the grinding of food in the gizzard. Parrots do not need grit.

Hand-fed: A pet bird fed by humans until it was weaned.

Hardbills: Birds such as canaries and finches that mainly eat seeds and nuts.

Hookbill: Another name for a parrot; refers to its curved beak.

Hornbills: Birds of the family Bucerotidae that have a large bill surmounted with a protruding "horn" called a casque.

Lore: Area between the eyes and the bill on each side of a bird's face.

Lutino: A color mutation in a bird, such as in a cockatiel, ranging from white to creamy yellow.

Mandible: Lower bird bill; Maxilla – Upper bird bill

Millet: A low-fat, high -carbohydrate seed.

Molt: When a bird loses its feathers and grows new ones.

Nape: Back of the bird's neck.

Nares: Two round openings in the cere that carry air into a bird's sinus cavity.

Neonate: A bird in its first few days of life. It is blind and helpless.

Nest box: A small wooden or metal enclosure, which parrots can lay eggs in.

Nestling: A baby bird still in the nest.

Neutral room: An unfamiliar room or space in an owner's home where the bird is nonterritorial.

Night thrashing: When a bird is startled at night and blindly flies around its cage (predominantly in cockatiels).

Nocturnal: Birds that are active at night.

Passerine: Of or relating to the Order (a category in a biological taxonomy ranking) called Passeriformes, which includes finches, canaries and other small perching birds.

Pellets: A manufactured food source designed for bird's nutritional needs.

Pied: A pattern mutation that shows up as patchy, splotchy feather coloring.

Preening: The bird's self-grooming, which helps clean and maintain feathers.

Primaries: Main flight feathers on the outer part of the wings.

Psittacine: Of or relating to the Order (a category in biological taxonomy ranking) called Psittaciformes, which consists of the various hookbills.

Sexing: Determining the gender of a bird.

Softbills: Birds, such as mynahs or toucans, which mainly eat soft foods, including fruit, insects or nectar.

Vent: The outer opening of the cloaca; through this single opening all cloacal contents exit the body.

Waxbills: Finch-like birds of the family Estrilididae. However, not all finches are classified as waxbills.

Weaning: The process where a baby bird goes from being fed warm, wet, mushy food to eating solid foods on its own.