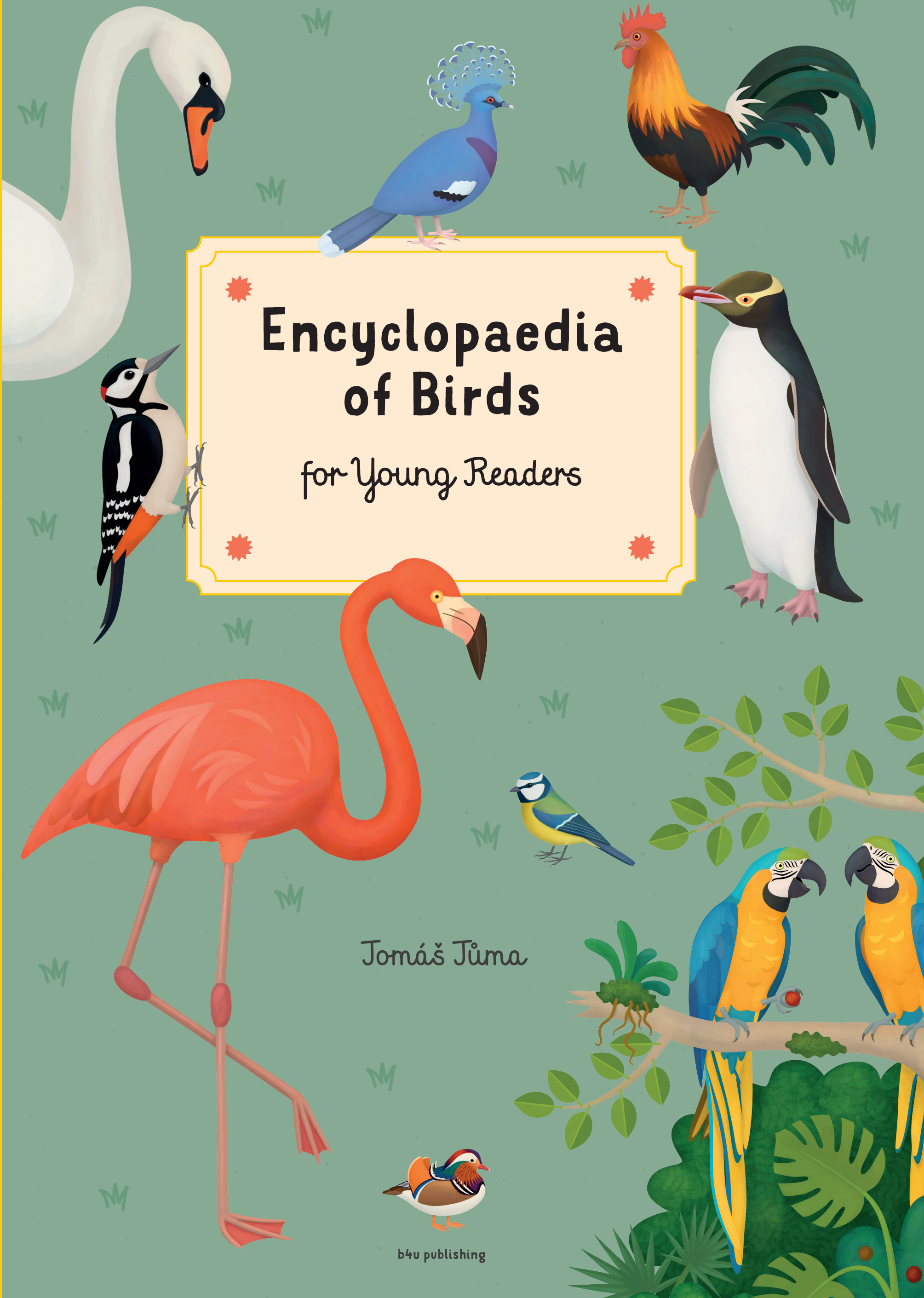


Encyclopaedia of Birds

for Young Readers

Tomáš Jůma



We climb trees

Two pairs of toes, one turned forward, the other back, are a clear indication that Piciformes spend most of their time in the trees. Woodpeckers hold themselves against tree-trunks using their firm tail feathers. Also characteristic of birds of this order is a strong, striking beak.

★ **Toco toucan**

The beaks of toucans and aracaris grow to a remarkable size. Yet these beaks are so light, they are no impediment to the birds' deft flight from treetop to treetop.

★ **Chestnut-eared aracari**

The diet of the chestnut-eared aracari consists mainly of the fruit of tropical trees. It is found in the forest lowlands of Amazonia and in the Andes Mountains.

★ **Emerald toucanet**

The emerald toucanet lives in the mountain forests of South America, making its nest in the hollow of a tree. In addition to fruit, its diet includes eggs and small animals.



★ **Black woodpecker**

In its search for insects in the wood and under the bark of trees, the woodpecker uses its strong beak as a chisel. It is such a skilled carpenter that it digs out a cavity in the trunk to make its nest in.

★ **Great spotted woodpecker**

We hear the drumming of the great spotted woodpecker in the forests of Europe and Asia. When climbing tree trunks, they use their firm tail feathers for support.

★ **European green woodpecker**

The European green woodpecker, too, is in the team of deft climbers. It often forages for food on the ground, and we see it in gardens and parks.

★ **Eurasian wryneck**

The wryneck enjoys eating ants. Like its larger woodpecker relatives, it gathers its prey with its long, sticky tongue.

★ **Red-and-yellow barbet**

This highly visible inhabitant of the open forest plantations of Africa likes to nest in burrows in riverbanks or termite mounds.

★ **Bearded barbet**

The striking beak of the bearded barbet has tooth-like protrusions that help it gather fruit. It is found in Africa where there is an abundance of fig trees.

Owls

I can hear you!

Striking, noble and mysterious, owls have a curiously rotating head, a bewitching gaze and an upright posture. Most of them are very well equipped for hunting at night. Owls have keen distance vision, as well as the ability to locate the source of a sound with superb accuracy. An owl is so quiet in flight that its prey hears it, by the flapping of its wings as it sails through the air, only when there is no escape.

★ Barn owl

A widely distributed owl with a characteristic heart-shaped veil around its eyes, it hunts small animals, especially rodents. It is active at dusk and night-time.

★ Eurasian eagle-owl

The arrangement of feathers on the head of this large owl looks like a pair of ears. The body length of the largest members of the species is around 75 centimetres, their wingspan around 180 centimetres.

★ Great grey owl

Thanks to its extraordinarily sensitive hearing, the great grey owl can track movements of creatures deep under the snow.

Snowy owl

Barn owl

Eurasian eagle-owl

Great grey owl

Burrowing owl

Long-eared owl

Pel's fishing owl

Northern hawk-owl

Elf owl

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★ Snowy owl

The snowy owl is adapted for life in the harsh wintry conditions of the tundra. Thanks to its white coat, it blends in with the snow. It hunts in daylight.

★ Burrowing owl

The burrowing owl spends its life on the ground, building its nest in a burrow. It prefers to hunt in daylight. It lures its prey with fragrant baits comprising droppings and food.

★ Long-eared owl

When it is sitting in a tree, a long-eared owl isn't easy to spot: its feathers and markings look like bark. Its head is adorned with longer ear-shaped feathers.

★ Elf owl

The world's smallest owl lives in warm, arid areas of North America. Its favourite abode is a hollow in the saguaro cactus.

★ Pel's fishing owl

This African owl doesn't need to master the art of silent flight, as other owls must: its speciality is fishing, and fish cannot hear it under the water.

★ Northern hawk-owl

From the air or a branch, this quick, agile hunter follows the movements of rodents on the ground, waiting for the right moment to swoop and attack with its sharp claws.

We live at the waterside II.

If you like wading, it is good to have long toes. For agile movement on a lake or on the sea, it is good to have webbed feet, with toes pointing forward – as feet like this operate like oars. For the skilled fish-hunter, a throat pouch is a useful addition.

Great white pelican

Despite its size, the pelican is an excellent swimmer and a good flyer. It catches fish underwater, by puffing out its large pouch.

Great frigatebird

An extraordinarily good flyer, it catches fish from the air, sometimes stealing them from other birds. In the mating season, the male puffs out his red throat pouch.

Blue-footed booby

Rightly proud of its blue feet, this booby shows them off when courting. It often catches fish by diving for them headfirst from a great height.



Northern gannet



Great frigatebird



Blue-footed booby



Shoebill



Great white pelican



Flightless cormorant



Great cormorant



Hamerkop



Anhinga

Northern gannet

It plunges into the water from a great height at speeds of up to 100 kilometres per hour, softening the impact by use of its air sacs and by folding its wings against its body.

Great cormorant

Thanks to its abilities as an underwater swimmer, the great cormorant is a very successful fisherman. It nests in a large colony near water.

Flightless cormorant

On the Galapagos islands it has no natural enemies. As it finds all its food in the sea, it has no need of wings.

Shoebill

Because of its comically large beak, at first sight we may imagine the shoebill to be clumsy. But this beak is sharp, too, and this bird can attack at lightning speed.

Hamerkop

It lives in Africa, where it inhabits wetlands, ponds and other bodies of water, feeding mainly on amphibians and fish. It builds its nest – the largest in the bird kingdom – in the trees, from twigs and mud.

Anhinga

The long, slender anhinga is an excellent underwater swimmer. It catches fish by piercing them with its pointed beak. It tosses its prey into the air before swallowing it.

Parrots I.

Pretty boy!



Bright-coloured parrots live in the tropics and southern hemisphere in great abundance. They are often bred in captivity, not only for their beauty but because they are highly intelligent and sociable. Some of them even learn to imitate human speech. Many species of parrot live to a great age. In its curved beak and very mobile tongue, the parrot has a universal tool – for the shelling of seeds, for instance. Its nimble toes (two facing forward, two back) are a great help with climbing and ‘handling’.

Hyancinth macaw

One metre long, this is one of the world’s largest parrots. Its population in the wild is under threat from illegal trappers and the deforestation of Amazonia.

Red-winged parrot

This bird comes from Australia. Its diet includes fruit, seeds, flowers and insects. Like most parrots, it builds its nest in a hollow in a tree.

Timneh parrot

This popular species is at home in Africa. It is such an excellent imitator of human speech that some individuals can learn hundreds of words.



Red-capped parrot

This multi-coloured Australian parrot lives as part of the same pair its whole life long, although it is often found in a larger flock.

Budgerigar

The most bred parrot comes from Australia. It gathers grass seeds in dry regions. It can last for one whole week without water.

Eastern rosella

It gathers its food on the ground and in the trees. When a larger flock alights on a garden or orchard with ripening crops, this visit will cause the farmer a real headache.

Birds of prey I.

Very sharp weapons!



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Birds of prey are best equipped for the hunt. They have extremely good vision, and their forward-facing eyes allow them to estimate distance. Mostly, they catch their prey with their strong legs and feet and sharp claws. They use their curved beaks to tear meat into small pieces. Large-winged bird-of-prey species can glide through the air effortlessly, even when carrying a large catch. Shorter wings allow greater manoeuvrability between trees.

Bald eagle

The North American eagle lives by the coast or an expanse of fresh water. Although it specializes in catching fish, it won't turn down a rabbit or another animal of similar size.

Griffon vulture

The circling of vultures in the sky is a sign that there is carrion in the vicinity. A feature of the vulture's anatomy is an unfeathered neck, which comes in handy during the removal of flesh and entrails from a carcass.

Northern goshawk

When hunting among the trees of the forest, the northern goshawk relies on its dexterity. It has no trouble catching various birds, squirrels and reptiles. It is widespread in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere.



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Eurasian sparrowhawk

The Eurasian sparrowhawk is like an acrobatic fighter pilot. It perches in large trees to lie in wait for other birds, or it lunges at them in flight.

Common buzzard

In Europe, birds of prey are so abundant that we often see them perching on telegraph poles or in trees, following the movements of voles in the fields. In the woods, we hear their distinctive wails above us.

Pied harrier

It flies low over the ground, making a careful search of the steppe or wetlands. It catches small mammals, frogs and insects in the grasses and reeds.



We all know that there are many birds in the sky, but did you know that there is a similar vast number on our planet's surface? The bird kingdom is weird, wonderful, vivid and fascinating. This encyclopaedia will introduce you to over a hundred of the world's best-known birds, as well as giving you a clear idea of the orders in which birds are classified. You will find an attractive selection of birds of prey, parrots, penguins, songbirds and aquatic birds from practically every corner of Planet Earth. The magnificent full-colour illustrations and easy-to-read text make this book a handy guide that every pre-schooler and young schoolchild will enjoy.



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