



Feathers apart

An introduction to bird topography

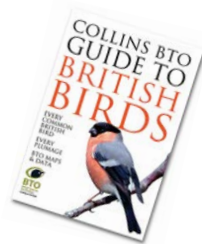


The early bird catches the worm

Although many birds are markedly different, some can look very similar. In those cases, being able to tell apart the different parts of a bird's topography can help identify the species. Looking at the feathers can also help estimate a bird's age or gender. In this exercise, you'll learn all about axillaries, primaries and more!

What you'll need

- Pen and paper
- Bird guide



Set-up

1. Using the guide below, make yourself familiar with the different parts of a bird's anatomy.
2. Once you feel confident, try to identify the parts marked on the different birds on the final pages of the exercise.
3. Check your answers against the answer sheet – how did you do?

If you want to take it further

You can easily take this exercise outside by trying to identify different anatomical parts on birds visiting your garden or out in the park. Once you feel confident, you can learn more about ageing birds using bird topography.

What does BTO do?

BTO maintains the ringing scheme for birds in the UK and Ireland. Ringing aims to monitor survival rates of birds and collect information about their movements. This information provides vital support for conservation efforts as it helps to understand how these processes influence population sizes over time; identifying the mechanisms is the first step in reversing declines. To be able to correctly identify and age birds, ringers need to have an in-depth knowledge of a bird's topography. To find out more about the ringing scheme, please visit www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/ringing.



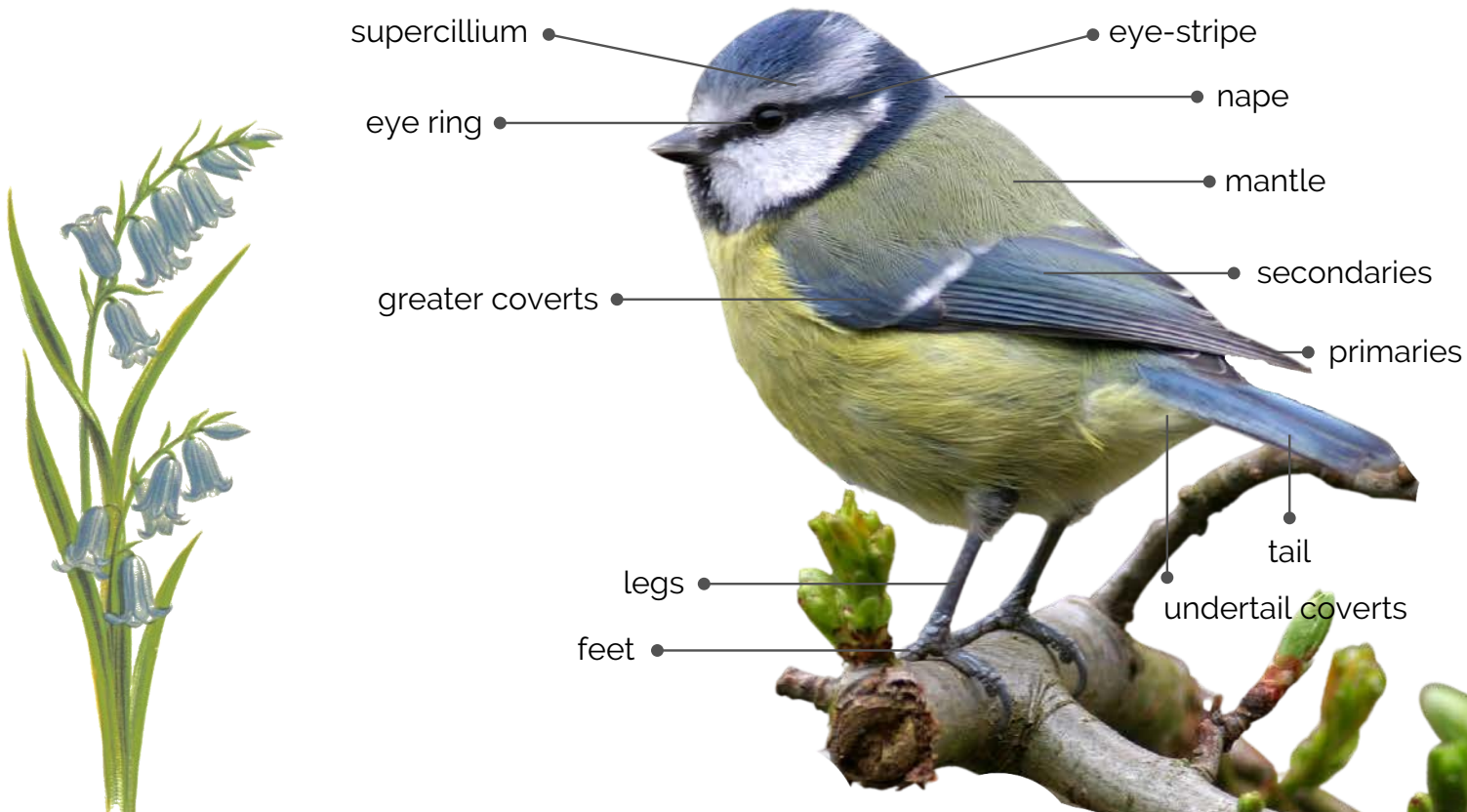
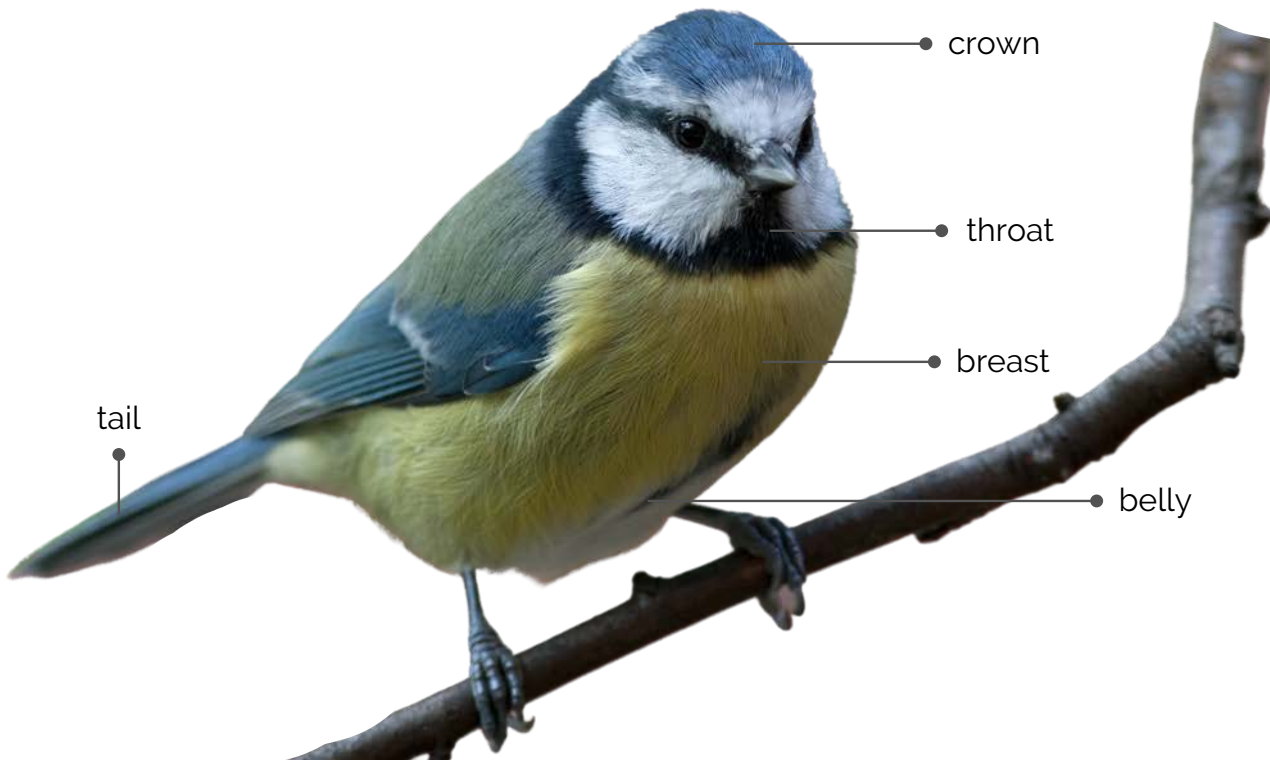


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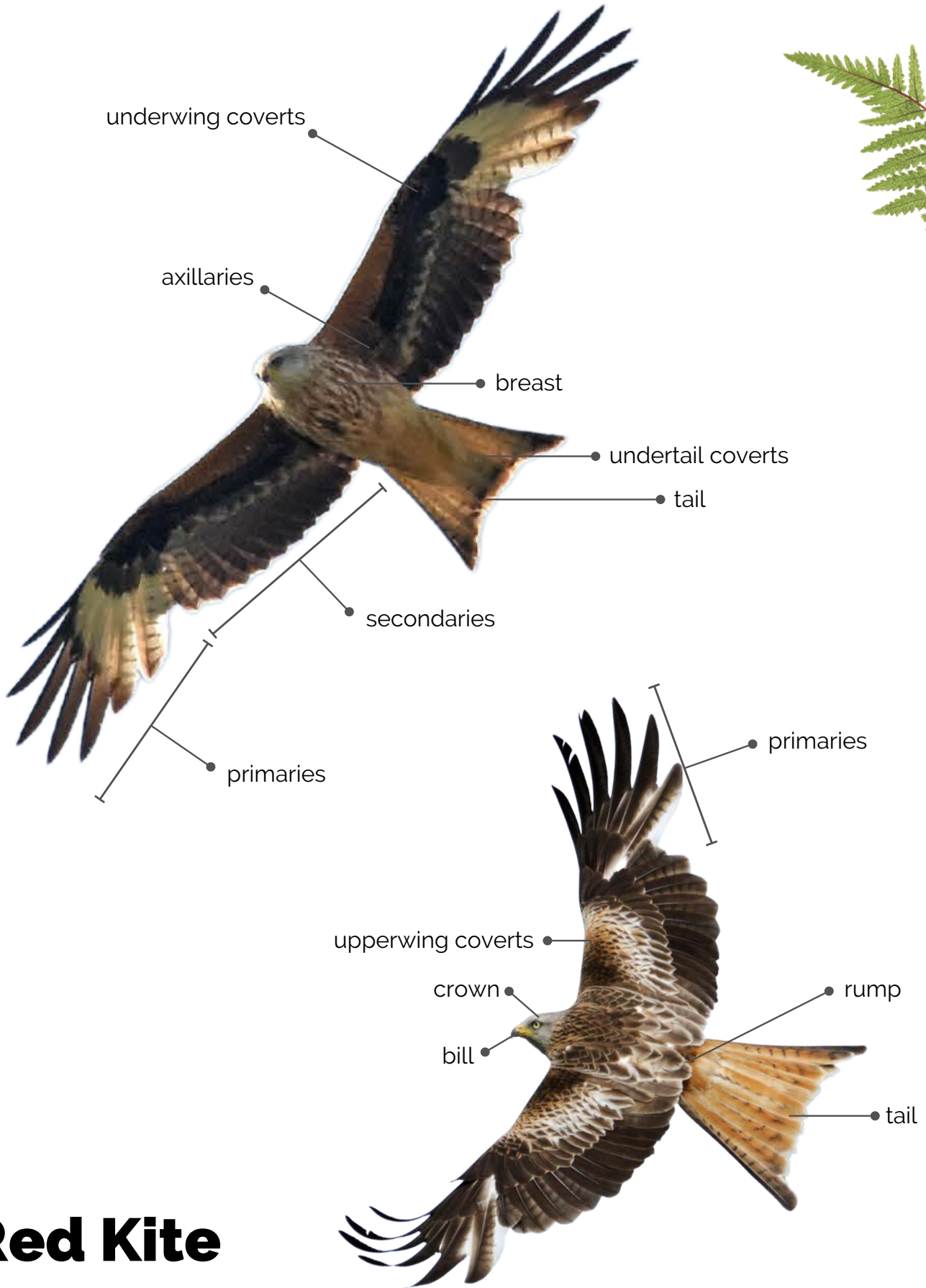
Blue Tit





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Red Kite

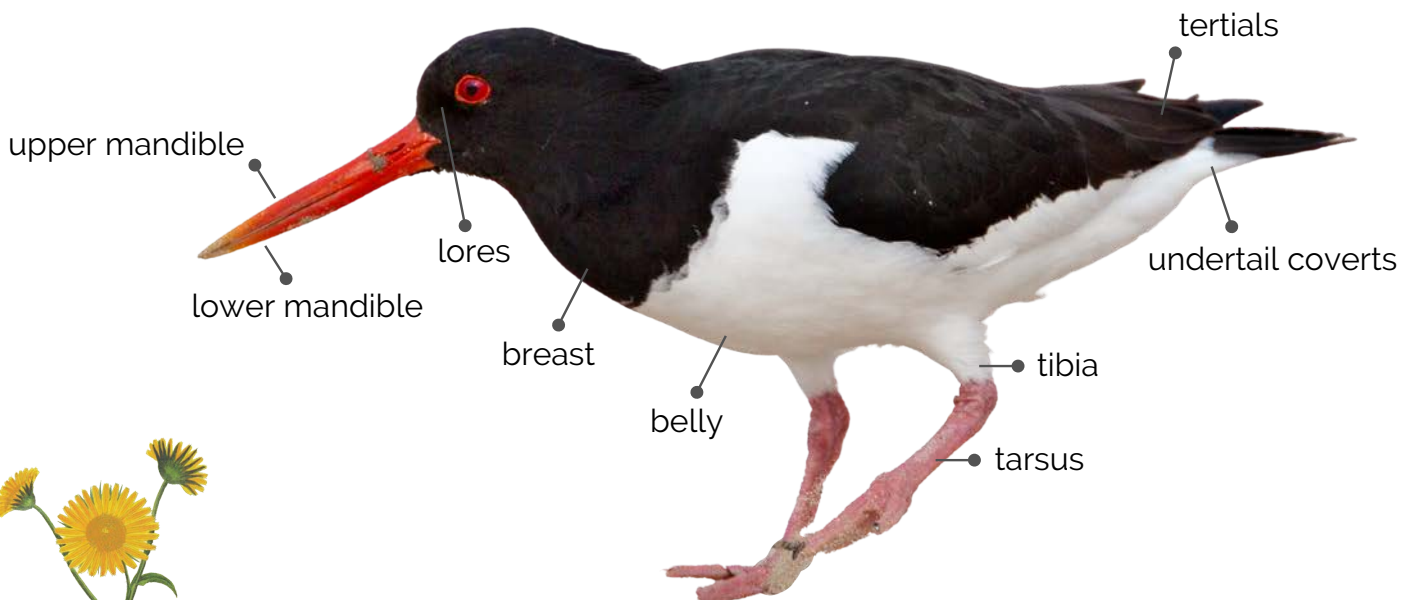
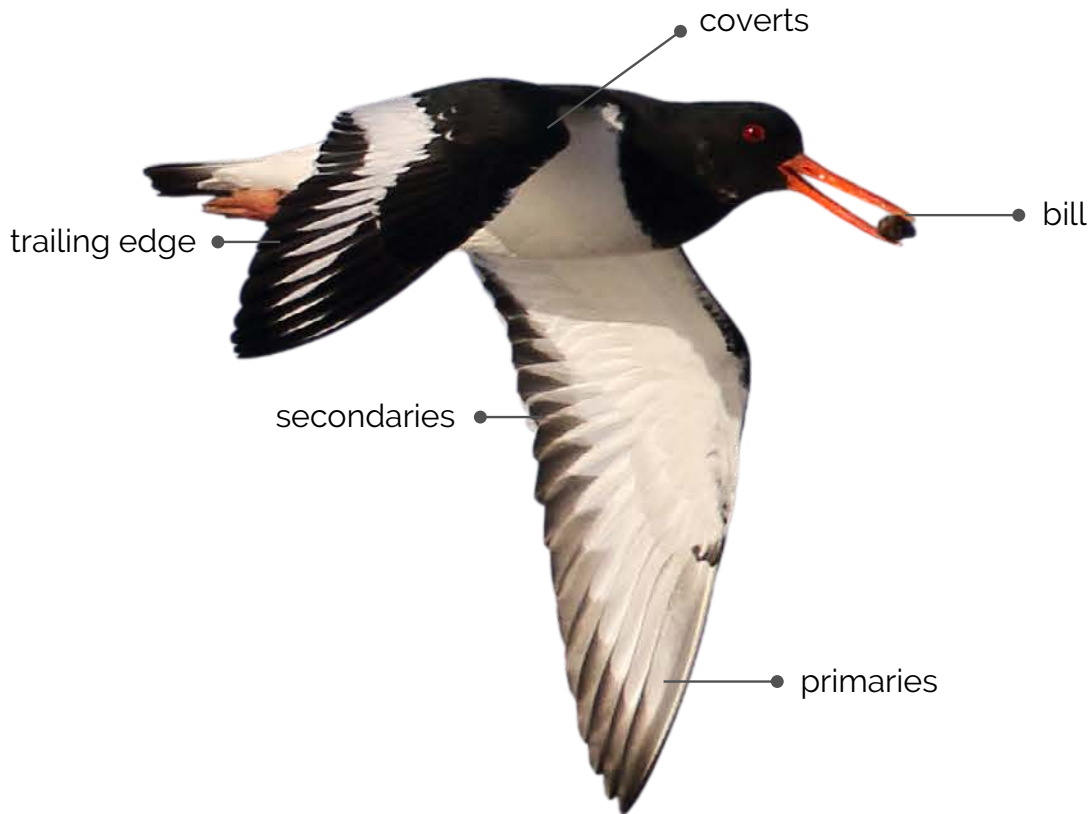


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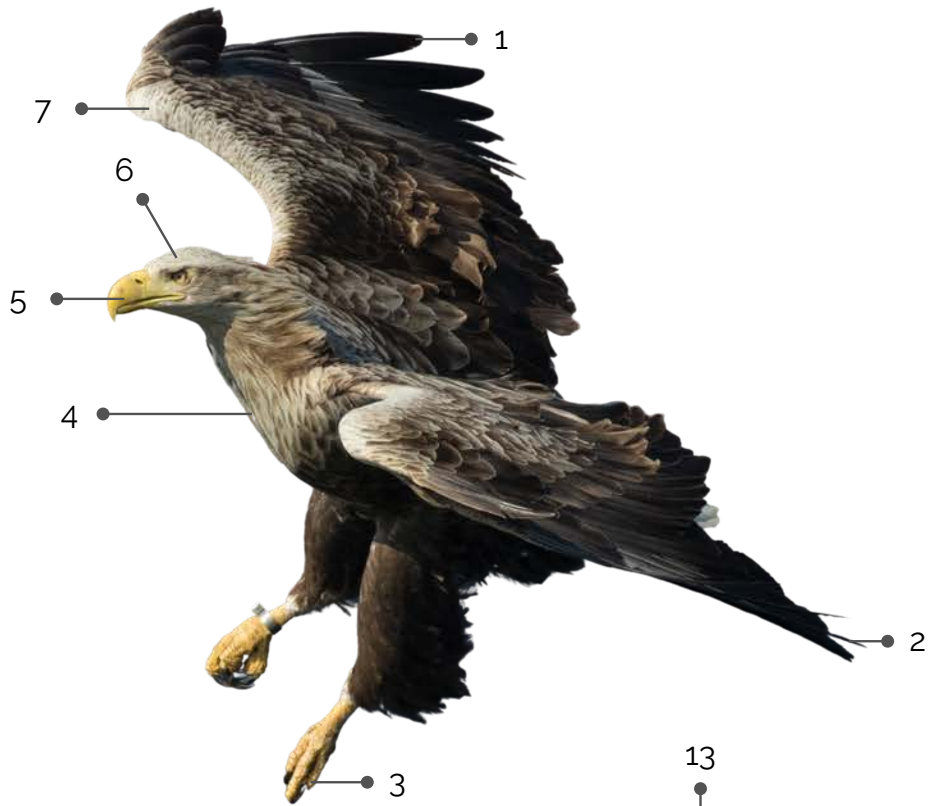
Oystercatcher





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White-tailed Eagle



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Siskin

female



male



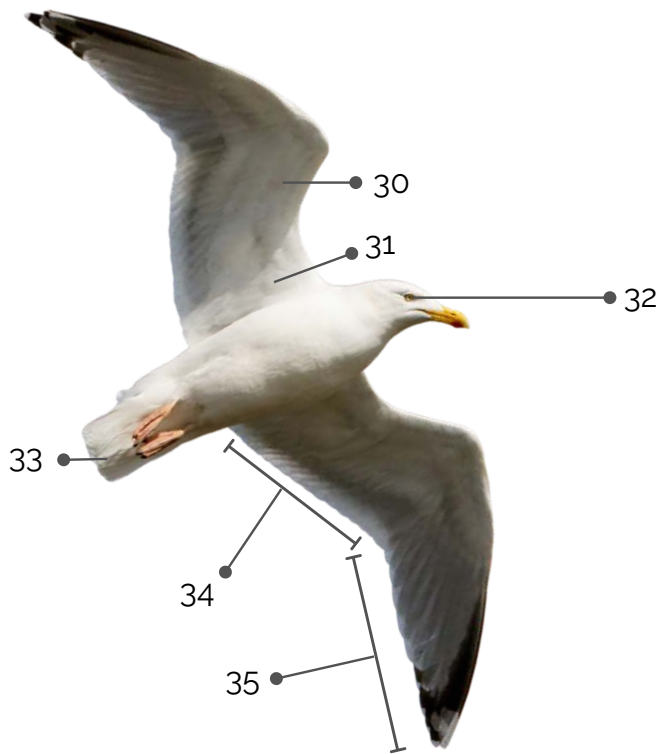


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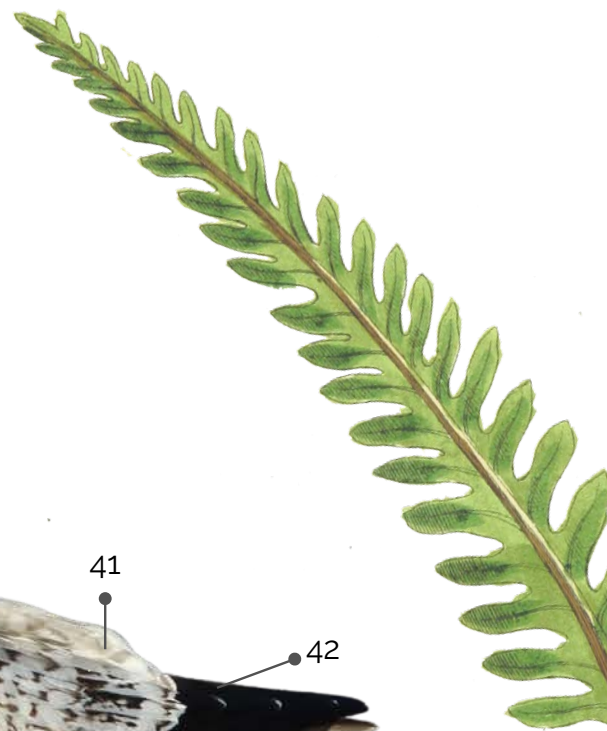
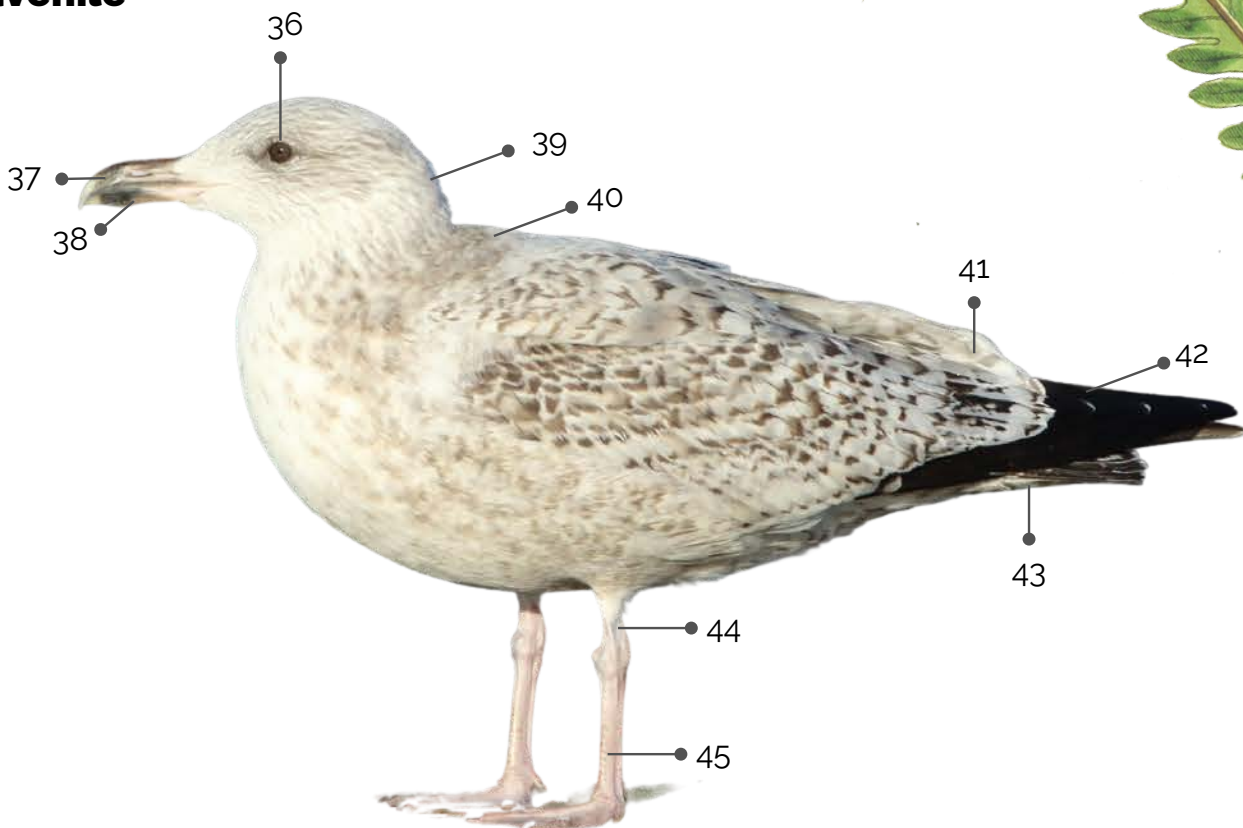
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Herring Gull



juvenile





Answers

1. Primaries
2. Tail
3. Feet
4. Breast
5. Bill
6. Crown
7. Upperwing coverts
8. Tail
9. Nape
10. Throat
11. Upperwing coverts
12. Tertiaries
13. Eye
14. Supercilium
15. Mantle
16. Greater coverts
17. Upper mandible
18. Lower mandible
19. Throat
20. Breast
21. Belly
22. Crown
23. Lores
24. Tertiaries
25. Secondaries
26. Primaries
27. Tail
28. Undertail coverts
29. Leg / tarsus
30. Underwing coverts
31. Axillaries
32. Eye
33. Tail
34. Secondaries
35. Primaries
36. Eye ring
37. Upper mandible
38. Lower mandible
39. Nape
40. Mantle
41. Tertiaries
42. Primaries
43. Undertail coverts
44. Tibia
45. Tarsus

