



Step by step

What do a bird's feet tell you about its life?

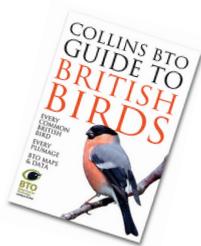


Bird feet

All animals are specifically adapted for their habitat, their diet and their lifestyle, and birds are no different. There are many types of feet in the bird world, but can we tell where a bird lives based on what its feet look like? In this experiment, we'll try and find out!

What you'll need

- Somewhere you can watch birds; your garden, a park, or the zoo
- Binoculars (optional)
- Bird guide
- Notebook & pen
- Graph paper & pencil



Set-up

1. Observe the birds at your location, using your binoculars if you have some.
 2. Identify the species of bird you're looking at.
 3. Fill in the name of the species in the table, and continue your observations. Where do you think this bird lives and what do you think it eats? Looking at its feet might help. Fill this data in your table.
 4. Continue to do this for as many species as you can.
 5. Once you've got all your species and predictions, go home and research the birds you saw using your field guide or the Internet. Where do the birds live and what do they eat? Were you right in your predictions? Fill in the rest of the table.
 6. Create a pie chart of your predictions. How often were you right about its habitat? And how often were you right about its diet? Were its feet a good predictor of where it lives and what it eats?
- ! Don't try to get too close to birds you're observing or you might scare them away!

If you want to take it further

You could further expand this experiment by also looking at the shape of the bill of birds, or even their feathers (plumage). The bill is an important adaptation that allows a bird to eat specific types of food, so it can be useful to look at when you're trying to learn more about the bird's lifestyle.

What does BTO do?

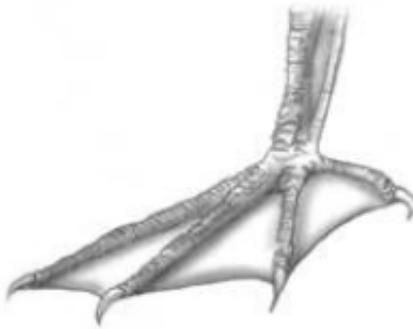
BTO is always interested in different birds and any deformities they might have. You can report plumage abnormalities at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/about/background/projects/plumage or bill deformities at www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/gbw/about/background/projects/bgbw.





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What do a bird's feet tell you about its life?



1. Swimming



2. Perching



3. Water & land



4. Grasping



5. Running & scratching



