

EC Avian Trivia and Significa:

1. When a Manx shearwater was taken from its nest on the Isle of Man and flown to Boston, 3,200 miles west across the Atlantic, it took the poor bird about twelve days to get home.
2. Mao Zedong's war on sparrows led in part to a famine that killed an estimated 30 million people.
3. The vulture is responsible for the "sky burials" in Nepal.
4. The sharp vision (aka "swarm intelligence") of starlings mostly accounts for their murmurations.
5. In WW I, German hawks were trained to attack French and US homing pigeons.
6. A combination of sight, infrasound, smell, magnetic sensitivity, and sun-compassing allow some migrating birds to find their way virtually from one pole to the other. In one year, the Arctic tern travels 44,000 miles.
7. Sandhill cranes have been taught a new migration route by means of humans piloting ultralight planes.
8. Occasionally, the testimony of a parrot has permitted in a court of law.
9. On test flights, the common rock pigeon has spotted floating targets on the first pass 93% of the time while humans scored 38%.
10. If not for a single mention of starlings in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, the US would have none of these pestiferous birds.
11. One African Gray parrot's words before dying in his sleep were: "You be good. See you tomorrow. I love you."
12. Wolves often use ravens as prey spotters who dine on the remains.
13. An Atlanta mockingbird's imitation of a car alarm forced one resident to move out of town.
14. The adult bee hummingbird, the world's smallest bird, weighs as much as a small paper clip.
15. Once baby swifts leave the nest, they may spend 9-10 months in the air without ever landing.
16. Migrating swallows crossing the Mediterranean Sea sometimes catch a ride on a ferry/freighter.
17. Given a supply of thin wire, ravens will retrieve food in a deep glass they cannot reach with their beak or feet.
18. One automated car wash in Maryland lost 16,000 quarters (\$4000) to magpies, swallows, and sparrows.
19. The "Lord God bird," a relative of the pterodactyl, is a nickname for the ivory-billed woodpecker.
20. To keep from running out of breath under water, Emperor penguins count an average of 237 wing beats before heading for the surface.
21. After John James Audubon painted a bird, he often ate it.
22. Passenger pigeons were once so numerous, one flock that Audubon observed flying 60 MPH darkened the sun for three days.
23. European cuckoos, "notorious symbols of infidelity," can invade a nest, lay an internally incubated egg, and swallow a rival's egg in c. 10 seconds.
24. An estimated 37% of North America's birds in 2016 were classified as "vulnerable to extinction."
25. Benjamin Franklin promoted the wild turkey as a symbol of the US because he felt the bald eagle, a predator, is "a bird of bad moral character."
26. Plastic curtains were hung in the Grand St. Bernard tunnel between Italy and Switzerland to dissuade migrating swallows from using them.
27. When nest building, the African weaver ties two different knots, makes four different stitches, and decorates its mud-lined, grass nest with living fireflies.
28. Ravens wintering in Whitehorse, Canada cover the light sensors on the streetlights with their wings to turn on the heat.
29. Chinese cormorants can count to seven but not higher.
30. It only took about thirty years for the entire population of English blue tits to learn to pierce the aluminum seals on milk bottles.