

WONDERFUL WORLD OF
RAPTORS



CAROLINA RAPTOR
CENTER

Raptors & Birds of Prey. ARE THEY THE SAME?



Raptors are fascinating birds known for their hunting skills. They have sharp talons, curved beaks, and excellent eyesight.

These features help them catch and eat their prey. Some examples of raptors include falcons, hawks, eagles, and owls. Scientists have been studying these birds to better understand which ones should be called raptors. So, what makes a bird a raptor and how has our understanding changed over time?

Visit the Carolina Raptor Center's presentation:

What is a Raptor?

Match the Vocabulary

Instructions: For each term, draw a line connecting it to its definition.

Vocabulary Term

ornithologists

Vocabulary Term

interchangeable

Vocabulary Term

diurnal

Vocabulary Term

apex

Vocabulary Term

nocturnal

Definition

Active during the day.

Definition

Scientists who study birds.

Definition

The highest point or peak.

Definition

Able to be used in place of one another.

Definition

Active at night.

Short Answer Questions

Question

1. What are the key physical characteristics that traditionally define a raptor?

Question

2. Why were owls initially excluded from the raptor classification?

Question

3. How does the modern definition of a raptor differ from the traditional definition?

Short Answer Questions

Question

4. What is the significance of the indented foveae in raptors?

Question

5. Why are vultures considered raptors even though they are more closely related to storks?

Question

6. What is the main reason why the classification of raptors has broadened in recent years?

Short Answers: Answer Key

1. What are the key physical characteristics that traditionally define a raptor?

Answer:

Traditionally, raptors were defined by their sharp talons, hooked beak, and keen eyesight, all of which are adaptations for hunting and consuming prey.

2. Why were owls initially excluded from the raptor classification?

Answer:

Owls were initially excluded from the raptor classification because they are nocturnal birds, while the traditional definition of a raptor focused on diurnal birds.

3. How does the modern definition of a raptor differ from the traditional definition?

Answer:

The modern definition of a raptor focuses on evolutionary history and a common ancestor, rather than solely on physical characteristics and behavior.

4. What is the significance of the indented foveae in raptors?

Answer:

The indented foveae in raptors are an evolutionary benefit that magnifies their vision, allowing them to spot prey from great distances while soaring through the sky.

5. Why are vultures considered raptors even though they are more closely related to storks?

Answer:

Vultures are considered raptors because they share a common ancestor with other raptors and have maintained a similar vertebrate-eating lifestyle, even though they primarily consume carrion.

6. What is the main reason why the classification of raptors has broadened in recent years?

Answer:

The classification of raptors has broadened because scientists are now focusing on evolutionary history and a common ancestor, rather than just physical characteristics and behavior, as was done traditionally.

View Carolina Raptor Center's presentation: **Raptor Superpowers**

Describe the six qualities that make raptors exceptional predators in the wild.



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FREE READERS



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Wonderopolis: What Is A Raptor?](#)