Order Struthioniformes, Ratites

All members of this order are flightless and display structural modifications associated with flightlessness, including an unkeeled sternum, reduced wings, clavicles absent or reduced, feather barbs not connected (no barbicels), coracoid fused with scapula, and feathers that are distributed over the body of adults (apteria absent or reduced). The young are downy, precocial, and nidifugous at hatching (although the kiwis have a slightly more complicated developmental schedule; see below).

Family Struthionidae, Ostriches (1/1)

Distribution.— Formerly Africa north to Syria and the Arabian Peninsula; restricted now to central and southern Africa.

Characteristics.— The largest living bird, Ostriches weigh up to 136 kgs and stand 2.4 m high. Ostriches have massive legs and only two toes (toes 3 and 4), a modification for running. The head, neck, and thighs are bare, and the rectrices and wing feathers are modified plumes. The caeca are large, an adaptation for eating vegetable matter. The sexes are dimorphic: males are larger than females and are black and white; females are gray and white.

Habitat.— Savannas, semi-arid and arid open areas.

Habits.— Ostriches are gregarious and nomadic, travelling in flocks of 10–50, frequently in association with ungulate herds. They are strong runners (up to 55 kph), running with their rudimentary wings held out, probably for balance. Ostriches are primarily herbivorous, eating seeds, berries, plant leaves, flowers and roots, and some animal matter.

Breeding.— Ostriches are mostly polygamous (but may be monogamous where resources are scarce), forming complex breeding groups consisting of a territorial male and several females. The females lay 20 or more eggs in a single nest (a shallow depression on the ground): typically one female is “dominant”, remaining with and helping the male incubate the eggs, while the “subordinate” females may lay eggs in the nests of several males but do not usually incubate. The dominant female rearranges the eggs in the nest, occasionally tossing out the eggs of the other females. The white eggs are the largest by weight (1.2–1.6 kgs) but smallest in ratio to adult weight. Both sexes incubate, the male mostly during the night and the female during the day. Incubation is 40–42 days. The young are cared for by both adults for up to a year. Sexually maturity is attained after four years.

Conservation.— Although its range has contracted considerably over the last century, the Ostrich is not globally threatened but requires protection in some areas (particularly in North and West Africa). The Arabian subspecies was extinct by 1941.

Family Rheidae, Rheas (2/2)

Distribution.— South America. The Greater Rhea (Rhea americana) inhabits the Brazilian and Argentinean Pampas (grasslands). The Lesser Rhea (Pterocnemia pennata) is found in the Andean foothills from Peru and Bolivia south.

Characteristics.— Rheas are flightless running birds that superficially resemble ostriches. They are the largest birds in the New World, standing up to 1.5 m tall and weighing up to 23 kgs. Unlike ostriches, however, rheas have 3 toes on each foot, they have feathered head, neck, and thighs, they lack tail plumes, and their wings are very short with a spikelike horny outgrowth on the wrist. Their plumage is soft and gray, and the sexes are mostly similar.

Habitat.— Open plains, grasslands, and savannas.

Habits.— Rheas are gregarious and live in mixed groups of males, females, and juveniles, normally numbering from 5–30 birds. They are primarily herbivorous, but will eat occasional insects and small vertebrates. Like Ostriches, they often forage in association with large mammal herds (deer, alpacas, sheep, cattle, etc.).

Breeding.— Like Ostriches, rheas are polygamous. Males defend territories and mate with a small number of females (2–12). The females all lay their eggs in a single nest (13–30 eggs in total per nest) which consists of a shallow, unlined or sparsely lined scrape prepared by the male. Unlike Ostriches, male rheas alone incubate the eggs (6 weeks) and care for the young (another 6 weeks). The young often remain together until they attain sexual maturity (2–3 years).
**Conservation.** — The Greater Rhea and a subspecies of the Lesser Rhea (the Puna Rhea) have recently experienced population declines due to intensive agriculture and hunting pressure.

**Family Casuariidae, Cassowaries (1/3)**

**Distribution.** — New Guinea (including adjacent islands) and northern Australia.

**Characteristics.** — Cassowaries are large birds (standing 1.1–1.7 m high) and are distinguished by a large bony casque on top of a bare (and colorful) head, brightly colored neck wattles, reduced to wirelike quills, and no rectrices. Their thick, course plumage is mostly black, and while the sexes are often indistinguishable, females tend to be larger and more brightly colored. They have a daggerlike claw on the inner toe that reaches 10 cm in length.

**Habitat.** — Large tracts of dense rainforest and swamp forest, sometimes around forest edges. In New Guinea where all three species coexist they segregate mainly by altitude.

**Habits.** — The casque on the head is thought to be used as a "prow" for pushing through dense forest vegetation while the bird’s body is protected by thick plumage and wiry wing quills. The long claw on the inner toe used for defense. Cassowaries are mostly solitary except during the breeding season, and appear to maintain territories year-round. They are mainly frugivorous but will occasionally eat invertebrates, small vertebrates, and carrion.

**Breeding.** — The nest is built by the male and consists of a shallow scrape on the forest floor. The female lays 3–5 large pale green eggs before dispersing to mate with another male. The male alone incubates and rears the young.

**Conservation.** — The single biggest threat to cassowaries is habitat destruction and forest fragmentation.

**Family Dromaiidae, Emus (1/1)**

**Distribution.** — Australia.

**Characteristics.** — Second in size only to the Ostrich (1.5–1.85 m tall). Head and neck partially feathered, the skin of the head and neck is blue; plumage course and hairlike, tail quills absent. Gray-brown above, lighter below. Male larger than female.

**Habitat.** — Plains, savannas, open woodlands, semi-deserts, and agricultural land with suitable cover. Still abundant in some areas (i.e. national parks), and even in some highly cultivated regions.

**Habits.** — Usually solitary or in pairs, sometimes forming small flocks. Run with bouncy swaying motion in bursts up to 50 kph.

**Family Apterygidae, Kiwis (1/3)**

**Distribution.** — New Zealand.

**Characteristics.** — The smallest of the ratites, standing only 35 cm high; wings rudimentary, tail virtually absent; legs short, stout, toes three; bill long, narrow, and flexible, with nostrils located near the tip; plumage course and hairy; brown or grayish. Skeleton solid. The female is slightly larger than the male.

**Habitat.** — Dense, swampy forests.

**Habits.** — Nocturnal and solitary. Kiwis hide in burrows or under tree roots during the day, coming out to forage at night. The long bill is used to probe the ground for worms. Foraging is assisted by a well-developed sense of smell. Although they feed primarily on worms, they will occasionally eat fruit, insects, and vegetation.

**Breeding.** — The nest is built in an underground burrow. Eggs 1–2, chalky, white, and enormous (about ½ a kilogram); the largest egg of any bird in relation to body size (⅓–⅕ the body weight). Male only incubates (75–80 days). Young hatch fully feathered, but with a yolk sac still attached to the stomach, which provides nourishment for ten or so days. They are brooded by the male, but feed themselves when they are old enough to leave the nest.
Order Tinamiformes, Tinamous
Contains a single family (Tinamidae) restricted to tropical and subtropical Central and South America. See the family account for distribution and characteristics.

Family Tinamidae, Tinamous (9/47)

Distribution. — Western Mexico to southern Argentina.
Characteristics. — Superficially resembles gallinaceous birds. Short wings and tail; legs strong; bill slender and slightly decurved; plumage tawny, brown, gray, cryptically patterned with heavy streaking, barring, or spotting. Sexes mostly similar.
Habitat. — Varies; dense lowland forests to savannas and grasslands.
Habits. — Primarily terrestrial birds; run rapidly and fly strongly over short distances. Usually solitary or found in small groups, but a few species are gregarious (especially grassland species.). Most are crepuscular, often calling at dawn or dusk. Ecologically like a quail or grouse, foraging for fruit, seeds, leaves, flowers, buds etc. (occasionally insects and small vertebrates) on the ground. Furtive and difficult to find: when approached, tinamous avoid detection by walking quietly away or crouching and flushing explosively.
Breeding. — Those species studied are polyandrous. The female courts, the male builds the nest, incubates, and rears the young. Females may lay eggs successively in the nests of several males, while several females may lay in any one nest. The nest is built on the ground, frequently at the base of a tree (sometimes between buttress roots) or stump and is well concealed. Nests range from unlined hollow to a cup built of grass or sticks. Eggs 1–12, glossy, colorful (red, yellow, blue, or green). Incubation approximately 3 weeks. Young highly precocial, downy, and nidifugous.

Order Sphenisciformes, Penguins
Contains a single family (Spheniscidae) restricted to the Southern Hemisphere. See the family account for distribution and characteristics.

Family Spheniscidae, Penguins (6/17)

Distribution. — Penguins are found in the Southern Hemisphere only. Most species are widely distributed across the sub-Antarctic north to about 30° south. Only two species (the Emperor and Adelie Penguin) are found exclusively on the Antarctic continent. One species (the Galapagos Penguin) is equatorial, but is found in association with a cold upwelling ocean current.

Characteristics. — Penguins are the most exclusively marine birds, and exhibit many adaptations to a marine way of life. Their wings are modified into flippers (the wing lacks elbow joint and cannot be folded), they have no flight feathers, the bill is heavy, the legs are short and placed far back on body, the feet are webbed, the tail is short, and the plumage is dense (the apteria are reduced) and waterproof, and strongly countershaded. The sexes are alike.
Habitat. — Oceans, islands, and coastal regions of Southern Hemisphere; leave ocean only to breed and molt.
Habits. — Swim extremely well, propelling with wings and steering with feet. Awkward on land. Most species forage and migrate in groups. Eat squid, fish, crustaceans. Penguins are the Southern Hemisphere equivalent of the Auks, Murres, and Puffins (order Charadriiformes, Family Alcidae) of the Northern Hemisphere.
Breeding. — Most species breed in large colonies; individuals may return to the same breeding site year after year. King and Emperor Penguins do not build nests, but incubate standing upright balancing a single egg on top of their feet and against the lower abdomen. Male Emperor Penguins alone incubate (62–64 days). After the eggs hatch the female cares for the young while the male departs to feed, returning later in the season to assist female in feeding the offspring. Nests of other species are made of whatever is on hand (i.e. pebbles or vegetation). Eggs usually 2. Incubation by both sexes, typically from a horizontal position. Two species (Yellow-eyed and Little Penguins) nest underground in burrows.

Order Gaviiformes, Loons
Contains a single holarctic family (Gaviidae). See the family account for distribution and characteristics.

Family Gaviidae, Loons (1/4)

Distribution. — Northern regions of the Northern Hemisphere.
Characteristics. — Large aquatic birds highly specialized for foot-propelled diving. Loons are characterized by long, sleek bodies, long necks, and straight, sharply pointed bills. They have small
pointed wings, short stiff tails, and stiff, compact, waterproof plumage. Their legs are set far back on body (and are encased in body up to ankle), their tarsi are laterally compressed, their three front toes fully webbed, and their bones mostly solid. Plumage coloration is black and white or gray above, white below. Sexes alike.

**Habitat.**— Breed on fresh water; northern ponds, lakes, sluggish rivers; in winter essentially marine.

**Habits.**— Usually solitary, sometimes in pairs. Superb swimmers and divers; may be able to dive to 200′, propelling with the feet and using wings for balance. Solid bones reduce buoyancy; specific gravity close to that of water; can sink below surface by expelling air from lungs and feathers. Awkward on land. Strong fliers, but need a running start from the water’s surface to become airborne. Eat fish primarily. Well-known for mournful, wailing cries. All are migratory.

**Breeding.**— The nest is placed on the ground near the shoreline, and is built with any vegetation at hand. Eggs 2, brown, heavily spotted with black. Both sexes incubate the eggs and feed the nidifugous, downy young.

**Illinois species:**

- [ ] Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) Common migrant, rare winter and nonbreeding summer resident (N)

**Order Podicipediformes, Grebes**

Contains a single family (Podicipedidae) worldwide in distribution. See the family account for distribution and characteristics.

**Family Podicipedidae, Grebes (6/22)**

**Distribution.**— Almost worldwide.

**Characteristics.**— Highly specialized for diving. Superficially duck-like or loon-like, with long necks, slender, pointed bills (except the Pied-billed Grebe), legs placed far back on the body, toes lobate-webbed, plumage soft, thick, lustrous, and waterproof, tail short and degenerate. Sexes alike.

**Habitat.**— Breed on fresh water ponds, swamps, and marshes. Some species winter on salt water.

**Habits.**— Strong swimmers but weak fliers (steer with the feet, rather than the tail, in flight). Need a running start to become airborne. Frequently dive, rather than fly, to escape danger. Can sink below surface by expelling air from the body and feathers (by muscular action), swimming with the head above water only (the Pied-billed Grebe especially displays this behavior). Eat fish, insect larvae, crustaceans, etc. and a good quantity of their own feathers, perhaps to aid digestion or recycle minerals. Many species are migratory. Some are gregarious during the winter.

**Breeding.**— Usually solitary, but sometimes nest in loose colonies. Some species perform spectacular courtship dances. Nest a floating platform constructed of mud, reeds, cattails, etc., built in shallow water and anchored to a nearby clump of vegetation, and usually not well concealed. Eggs 3–10, white. Both sexes build the nest, incubate the eggs (20–30 days), and rear the young. Vegetation thrown over eggs when adult leaves nest. Nidifugous, downy offspring can swim almost immediately after hatching, and are carried about on adult’s back (hanging on when adult dives), but are fed by the adults for 44–79 days.

**Illinois species:**

- [ ] Horned Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) Common migrant, occasional winter resident
- [ ] Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) Occasional migrant (NE)
- [ ] Western Grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) Rare migrant
- [ ] Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*) Common migrant, uncommon winter and summer resident / Breeds (threatened) [M1]

**Order Procellariiformes, Tube-noses**

A large group of highly pelagic birds found primarily in the Southern Hemisphere. Procellarids superficially resemble gulls. Their nostrils extend onto the bill in short tubes, the bill is covered with horny plates, they have well-developed salt glands that aid in water balance (they can drink salt water), and their three front toes are webbed. Individuals of most species have vast feeding ranges. All lay a single white egg, while all but the albatrosses nest in underground burrows. Incubation and fledging periods are characteristically long. The adults feed their nestlings a clear yellow stomach oil, which may be vomited up when disturbed. Most species have a distinctive musky body odor. Four families, two presented here.

**Family Diomedeidae, Albatrosses (2/14)**

**Distribution.**— Primarily southern, but found worldwide except in North Atlantic. Some species range over the entire Southern Hemisphere. Distribution may be determined in part by...
wind patterns—the equatorial doldrums may act as a barrier to distribution; 3 species in northern Pacific.

Characteristics.—Large (much larger than gulls), with enormously long, narrow, pointed wings modified for intensive soaring; wingspan up to 3.4 m.; bill stout, strongly hooked; nostril tubes open through side of bill; most black above, white below, some brown or gray. Sexes alike.

Habitat.—Pelagic; nest on oceanic islands.

Habits.—Superb soarers, can cover great distances in search of food while expending very little energy (but need a good, stiff breeze in order to fly well); some may be able to circle globe; albatrosses rarely come to land except to breed. Eat fish, squid, plankton, and other marine organisms, caught near surface; also scavenger.

Breeding.—Most species breed colonially on offshore or oceanic islands. Have elaborate courtship displays. Nest typically a mound of mud or sand or a scrape. Egg 1, white. Both sexes incubate: incubation 65–81 days. Both sexes feed nidicolous, downy young by regurgitation of stomach oil. It takes 2.5–3 months to fledge in smaller species, 8–9 months in larger species. The nesting cycle of the Wandering Albatross (a very large species) is so long that nesting takes place every other year rather than annually.

Family Procellariidae, Shearwaters and Petrels (12/70)

Distribution.—Oceans of the world.

Characteristics.—A large family. Medium-sized birds with nasal tube placed on top of the hooked bill, nostrils separated by medial septum; wings long, narrow, and pointed; tail short; plumage drab (white, black, brown, or gray, usually lighter below). Sexes alike.

Habitat.—Oceans; come ashore to breed.

Habits.—Swim well but dive poorly. Flap their wings in flight more than albatrosses do; flight rapid; typically skim ocean just over surface. Shearwaters forage by propelling themselves across water with their feet, cutting the surface with their bill. Eat fish and krill (some species eat carrion or other birds). All species are migratory; some undertake remarkably long-distance migrations.

Breeding.—Most nest colonially; primarily in burrows, some on ocean cliffs. Both sexes incubate and brood their nidicolous, downy young; feed young stomach oil (see order account). The breeding biology of the Slender-billed Shearwater (Australia) has been studied to a great extent. Adults incubate in two-week shifts, remaining in the burrow and forgoing food and water. The incubation period is 52–55 days. Both sexes feed by regurgitation, with a 2–3 day interval between feeling bouts. Within 4–6 weeks, nestlings out-weight adults. After about 14 weeks of feeding, the adults abandon the offspring, which then spend a week or so longer in the burrow developing and emerge at night to fledge.

Order Pelecaniformes, Full-Webbed Swimmers

Totipalmate (the only birds with all four toes webbed); large wings, legs short; bare gular pouch (highly modified in pelicans). Young fed by regurgitation by both sexes, and are nidicolous and altricial. Six families, four presented here.

Family Sulidae, Gannets and Boobies (1/9)

Distribution.—Widespread, occurring on all continental coasts except Antarctica.

Characteristics.—Large birds with long pointed wings, stout pointed bills, short legs, and large feet. The gular pouch is reduced in size relative to some other families in this order. The skin on the face, throat, and feet is often brightly colored (e.g. Blue-footed
Booby). The plumage is either white and black or all brown. The sexes are similar, but the female is larger.

Habitat.— Entirely marine. Breed mostly on islands.

Habits.— Sulids remain at sea except to breed, feeding on fish and (occasionally) squid captured primarily by plunge-diving from the air (sometimes from great heights) or diving from the water’s surface. Prey is pursued under water to depths of around 90 feet. Gannets are strongly migratory. Where several species coexist, they may avoid competition by foraging in different zones (i.e. close to shore, between islands, far from shore).

Breeding.— Colonial island breeders with elaborate courtship displays. Most species nest on ledges or cliffs; two species of Boobies (Red-faced and Abbott’s) nest in trees. The nest is lined with mud, seaweed, and other vegetation. Eggs 1–3, pale blue or green, chalky. Even when more than one egg laid, usually only one nestling survives. Both sexes incubate (42 days in shifts of one day) and rear nidicolous young and feed by regurgitation. The young are deserted by the adults after 10–12 weeks.

Family Phalacrocoracidæ, Cormorants (1/39)

Distribution.— Worldwide except the Pacific islands.

Characteristics.— Large birds with elongated bodies and necks, long, stiff tails, and short legs placed well back on the body. The bill is long, thin, and strongly hooked. As in some other diving birds, the pneumaticity of the bones is reduced. The plumage is permeable to water. Color varies: northern species tend to be dark, while southern species are grayish overall or with white underparts. Many species have brightly colored skin on the face and bill and are commonly crested. Sexes mostly similar.

Habitat.— Coastal areas, rivers, lakes, swamps. Cormorants are less pelagic than most other members of this order, but are still mostly marine.

Habits.— Dive from the water’s surface to forage. Eat fish, crustaceans, amphibians, etc. Permeability of feathers is an adaptation for diving, but cormorants must spread their wings to dry (and are commonly seen drying with wings spread).

Breeding.— Colonial nesters with elaborate courtship displays. Nests are built by both sexes in a tree or on the ground. Clutch size typically 2–4 pale green, chalky eggs. Both sexes incubate and feed nidifugous young.

Illinois species:

Double-crested Cormorant (Phalacrocorax auritus)

Uncommon migrant, rare summer and winter resident/Breeds [M2]

Family Anhingidæ, Anhingas (1/2)

Distribution.— Worldwide in tropical and subtropical regions.

Characteristics.— Similar to cormorants in appearance, but more slender and with sharply pointed bills; legs short and placed far back on the body. Plumage is permeable. Males are black and streaked and dotted with white on wings and upper back (breeding males develop plumes on head and neck); females are brown on the head and neck.

Habitat.— Unlike other members of this order, anhingas are found inland around wooded shores of lakes, swamps, and rivers.

Habits.— Frequently swim with only the head and neck above water, diving to forage on fish, crustaceans, amphibians, and insects which are impaled on the bill. Occasionally seen soaring. Because anhingas lack waterproofing plumage oils (like Cormorants) they must spread their wings to dry. North American species are migratory.

Breeding.— Colonial breeders, frequently in association with herons and cormorants. Nest a bulky platform of sticks, typically built in trees overhanging the water. Eggs 3–6, blue-green and chalky. Both sexes incubate (one month) and feed nidifugous young by regurgitation; young fledge after 6–8 weeks.

Order Ciconiiformes, Herons and Allies

Generally large birds with broad, rounded wings and (except for the New World Vultures) long legs. All are carnivorous and/or scavengers. Their eggs white or bluish, sometimes spotted. Both sexes incubate and raise altricial young. Six families, four presented here.

Family Ardeidæ, Herons, Egrets, Bitterns (20/65)

Distribution.— Almost worldwide except northern North America and northern Eurasia.
Birds of the World

Illinois species usually in shallow water. Some mostly aquatic animals captured by wading, stalking, or waiting, gregarious. Some nocturnal or crepuscular (e.g. night herons). Eat on shores of lakes and rivers.

Habitat.— Usually associated with water; swamps, marshes, or along shores of lakes and rivers.

Habits.— Flight strong; fly with neck drawn in. Many species gregarious. Some nocturnal or crepuscular (e.g. night herons). Eat mostly aquatic animals captured by wading, stalking, or waiting, usually in shallow water. Some “canopy” feed by spreading wings in an umbrella-like fashion; presumably the shadow cast by the wings attracts small fish and other prey.

Breeding.— Most breed colonially. Nest a platform of sticks built in trees, cattails, or placed on the ground. Eggs 3–7. Both male and female incubate and care for nidicolous, downy young. Note.— Green-backed Herons sometime use bait while fishing.

Illinois species:

- American Bittern (Botaurus lentiginosus) Rare migrant, and summer resident / Breeds (endangered) [M3]
- Least Bittern (Ixobrychus exilis) Uncommon migrant and summer resident / Breeds (endangered) [M4]
- Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias) Common migrant, local winter resident (S), locally common summer resident / Breeds [M5]
- Great Egret (Ardea alba) Common migrant, locally common summer resident / Breeds [M6]
- Snowy Egret (Egretta thula) Rare migrant, local summer resident / Breeds (threatened) [M7]
- Little Blue Heron (Egretta caerulea) Uncommon migrant, local summer resident / Breeds (S) (endangered) [M8]
- Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis) Common but irregular migrant, local summer resident / Breeds [M9]
- Green Heron (Butorides virescens) Common migrant and summer resident / Breeds [M10]
- Black-crowned Night-Heron (Nycticorax nycticorax) Common migrant, uncommon summer resident / Breeds (endangered) [M11]
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (Nyctanassa violacea) Uncommon migrant and summer resident / Breeds (threatened) [M12]

Family Threskiornithidae, Ibises and Spoonbills (14/34)

Distribution.— Almost worldwide (especially in tropical and subtropical regions): absent from northern North America and northern Eurasia.

Characteristics.— All have bare patches on the face; neck and legs long; hind toe slightly elevated, foot semi-palmate; plumage usually white, brown or black, but one species is red (Scarlet Ibis) and one pinkish (Roseate Spoonbill). Lack powderdowns. Ibises have long, thin, strongly decurved bills, while spoonbill bills are broadly spatulate at the tip. Sexes similar.

Habitat.— Varies; usually associated with water.

Habits.— Most are strongly gregarious, breeding and traveling in flocks. Fly with neck extended and often soar. Northern species are migratory. Eat mostly aquatic animals, insects, snakes, and some vegetation. Spoonbills swing the head from side to side while feeding.

Breeding.— Colonial breeders. Nest a platform of sticks placed in tree or shrub (Ibises) or on marshy ground (Spoonbills). Eggs 2–5, white or blue, some spotted. Both sexes incubate and care for nidicolous, downy young.

Family Ciconiidae, Storks (6/19)

Distribution.— Almost worldwide, but absent from North America north of Mexico and Florida, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands.

Characteristics.— Large wading birds with long, broad wings; neck and legs long; bill long, massive, and straight or decurved; feet semi-palmate (front toes webbed basally), middle toe not pectinate; lack powder downs; hind toe elevated; face or head and neck bare in some species. Plumage usually black and white, or all black or white. Sexes alike.

Habitat.— Varied; usually in association with water.

Habits.— Strong fliers, often seen soaring; fly with neck outstretched. Temperate species are migratory. Most are gregarious.
Usually forage in marshy habitats, but also in cultivated fields etc. Eat fish, amphibians, insects, occasionally other animals, and carrion.

**Breeding.** — Many storks are colonial breeders, some are solitary. Most perform a courtship dance. Nest a platform of sticks built in trees, on cliffs or on buildings. Eggs 3–5. Both sexes incubate and care for nidicolous, downy young.

**Family Cathartidae, New World Vultures and Condors (5/7)**

**Distribution.** — New World only; tropical and temperate North and South America.

**Characteristics.** — Head and neck bare, usually colored yellow, orange, or red (black in Black Vulture); some with ruff around neck; bill heavy, rounded, and hooked; toes long, not hooked for grasping; hallux reduced and elevated; inner and middle toes with rudimentary web; wings very long and broad (the Andean Condor has a wingspan of 3 m.); voiceless; plumage black or dark brown, usually lighter to whitish on the primaries (one species white and black). Sexes alike.

**Habitat.** — Varies: forests, grasslands, deserts, mountains.

**Habits.** — Soaring birds, usually solitary but congregate where food is plentiful; some will roost communally. Eat primarily carrion, some catch living mammals and birds.

**Breeding.** — Nest on cliffs (especially under overhangs), in hollow trees and stumps, or on the ground; use no nesting material. Eggs 2–3, white to greenish-gray, some spotted. Both sexes incubate (6 weeks), rear downy, nidicolous young. Young fledge in 10 weeks.

**Notes.** — Formerly placed in the order Falconiformes.

**Illinois species:**

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<tr>
<th>Illinois species</th>
<th>Breeding (S)</th>
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<td>[ ] Black Vulture (<em>Coragyps atratus</em>) Uncommon local resident in the southern tip of the state</td>
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