

Glossary of Bird-Related Terms

aquatic living or growing in water

bill-sweeping display in which a pair of birds sweep their bills back and forth over the bark near their nest hole. Often the birds have crushed insects in their bills. Typical behavior of species such as White-breasted Nuthatch.

birdhouse another name for a nest box

breeding cycle the time period beginning at nest building through egg laying and raising young to the point of independence

brood (n) the young of a bird that are hatched or cared for at one time

brood (v) to sit on and keep warm (chicks)

caching the storage of berries, seeds, and other food items in the crevices of bark, under leaves, in cavities, and the like. Retrieval of cached food items is not accidental, as in scatterhoarding.

carnivorous subsisting or feeding on animal tissues

cavity-nesting bird a bird that nests inside a hole in a tree trunk or limb or in a nest box

clutch total number of eggs laid by a female bird in one nest attempt

coniferous consisting of evergreen trees such as pines, firs, and the like

contour feather predominate feather type found on the body, wings, and tail of the bird (as opposed to other feather types: down, bristles, semiplumes, etc.)

deciduous has leaves that fall off or shed either seasonally or at a certain stage of development in the life cycle

fledge the act of leaving the nest or nest cavity after reaching a certain stage of maturity

granivorous feeding on seeds or grain

habitat the place or environment where a plant or animal naturally or normally lives and grows

hatch to emerge from an egg

hibernation winter dormancy in animals characterized by a great decrease in metabolism

incubation the act of rearing and hatching eggs by the warmth of the body

insectivorous feeding on insects

invertebrate lacking a spinal column

larvae the immature, wingless, and often wormlike stage of a metamorphic insect that hatches from the egg, alters chiefly in size while passing through several molts, and is finally transformed into a pupa or chrysalis from which the adult emerges

latitude south to north measurement of location

longitude east to west measurement of location

migration regular, extensive, seasonal movements of birds between their breeding regions and their wintering regions

nest box a box, typically made of wood, in which cavity-nesting birds can nest; sometimes called a birdhouse

nestling a young bird that has not left, or abandoned, the nest

nocturnal of, relating to, occurring, or active in the night

pair bond the association between two birds who have come together for reproduction; can be short-term (lasting only through egg-laying or the rearing of young) or lifelong

parasite organism that lives in or on an organism of another species (host) and derives its nutriment therefrom; usually a parasite causes some degree of damage to the host

predation the act of preying

roost (n) a support on which birds rest; a place where birds customarily rest; also a group of birds resting together

roost (v) to settle down for rest or sleep: perch

scatterhoarding behavior in which birds hide food items in bark crevices and under leaves, moss, or lichen. Retrieval of food items is accidental, not memory-based.

snag a standing dead tree

species related organisms or populations having common attributes and potentially capable of interbreeding

taxonomy scientific naming of organisms and their classification with reference to their precise position in the animal or plant kingdom

terrestrial living or growing on land

thermoregulation (ion) the act of maintaining a constant body temperature