

# HIDE-AND-SEEK EXPERTS

When embarking upon an investigation it is very important to be aware of all the anti-investigation tactics your subject will use. That way you'll know exactly where to look.

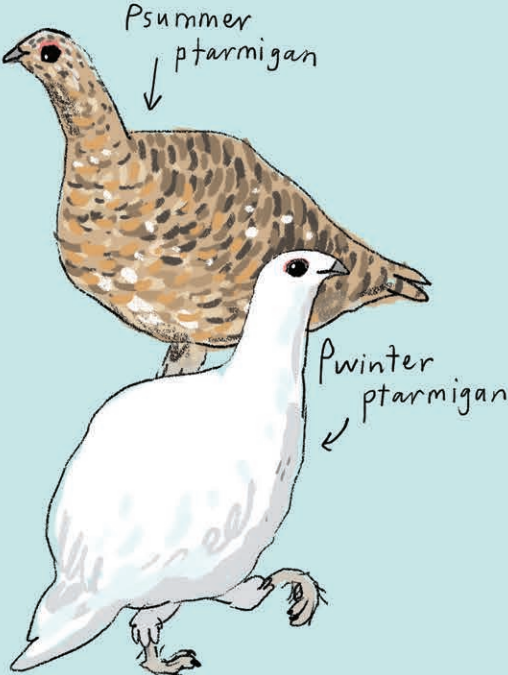


Before you ask, no I DON'T taste like orange choc chip!

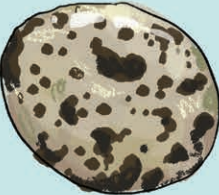


It's common for harmless insects to mimic poisonous ones, but very rare for birds. Adult cinereous mourners are grey-brown, but their chicks look like very big, hairy, toxic caterpillars. They even stick their necks out and squirm like one!

Ptarmigans (the P is silent) change their outfits seasonally. In winter they're almost invisible against a snowy backdrop, and in summer they are dressed as lichen-covered rocks.

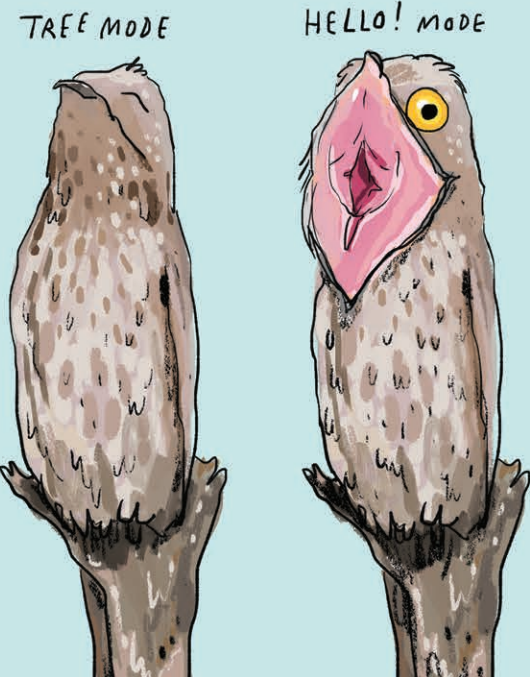


Bitterns are patterned just like the rushes they live amongst. They stand like this to blend in extra well.



Dotterel chicks are like fluffy versions of the eggs they hatch from, speckled like beach pebbles.

Tawny frogmouths look more like tree branches than tree branches do sometimes. Until they open their eyes and mouth.



# EVERY DAY IS REplete WITH INVESTIGATIVE OPPORTUNITIES



Staring out the window



Participating in team sports



Eating lunch outside



Riding a bus



Focusing on the background of boring TV shows



Being dragged outside for some fresh air



# NESTS

If you live somewhere with noticeable seasons, the best time to look for bird nests is in winter when deciduous (that's the opposite of evergreen) trees lose all their leaves. You can spot the dense clumps of last summer's nests. A blustery storm might knock them to the ground. The nests won't be in use at this time of year, so it's okay for you to look closely at the design and what they're made of. You might be able to guess what sort of bird made the nest, and next spring you can watch to see if those birds return to the same tree to make fresh nests.

If you're marvellously observant and spot a bird's nest during breeding season, back away and only keep watch from afar. The parent birds will need to come and go freely to get food for themselves and their chicks and they'll be too afraid if you're right there.

Try weaving together a few twigs and pieces of grass and you'll be in awe of how clever birds are. And they have to do it with their mouths.



## BUILDING MATERIALS

You can leave nice bits and pieces lying around during nesting season and wait for birds to carry them away.



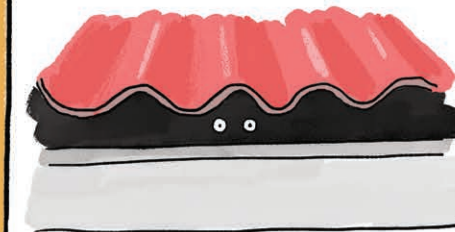
### BLACKBIRD

A carefully woven basket with a smooth mud bowl inside, only about a grown-up's height off the ground.



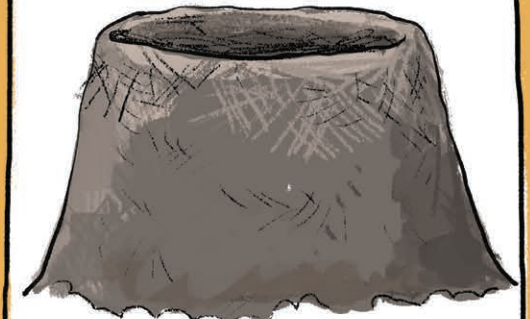
### STARLING

Starlings will build their nests in any cosy hole they can find.



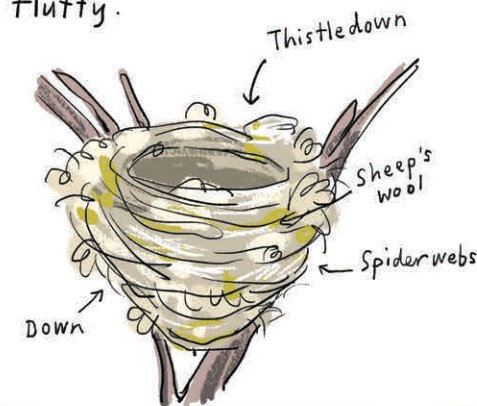
### FLAMINGO

A mud castle on the ground near the water, tall enough to keep the egg and chick dry.



### EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH

A snugly cup made mostly from anything soft and fluffy.



### HOUSE SPARROW

Large and loose, made from long pieces of dry grass. Built in very high branches.



(They'll also build nests in found holes like starlings.)

### BANDED DOTTEREL

Nothing more than a little dip in the beach pebbles, almost invisible!



### SWALLOW

Made from lots of mud like a pottery bowl. Built in sheltered nooks like a cave or an old shed.



### ADELIE PENGUIN

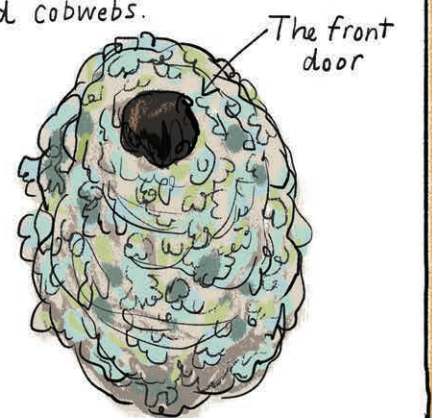
A pile of little rocks. These make good nests in Antarctica because they allow snow and ice to drain away.



Collecting enough pebbles is hard work so penguins will steal from their neighbours when they can.

### LONG-TAILED TIT

An extremely snug design with walls and a roof. Uses lots of lichen, feathers, and cobwebs.





# A HANDSOME CHAP

## A MALLARD DRAKE IN HIS BREEDING PLUMAGE



Feathers that shine emerald green in the sunlight

Thinking about his favourite puddle

Chubby Cheeks

Bill the colour of marigolds

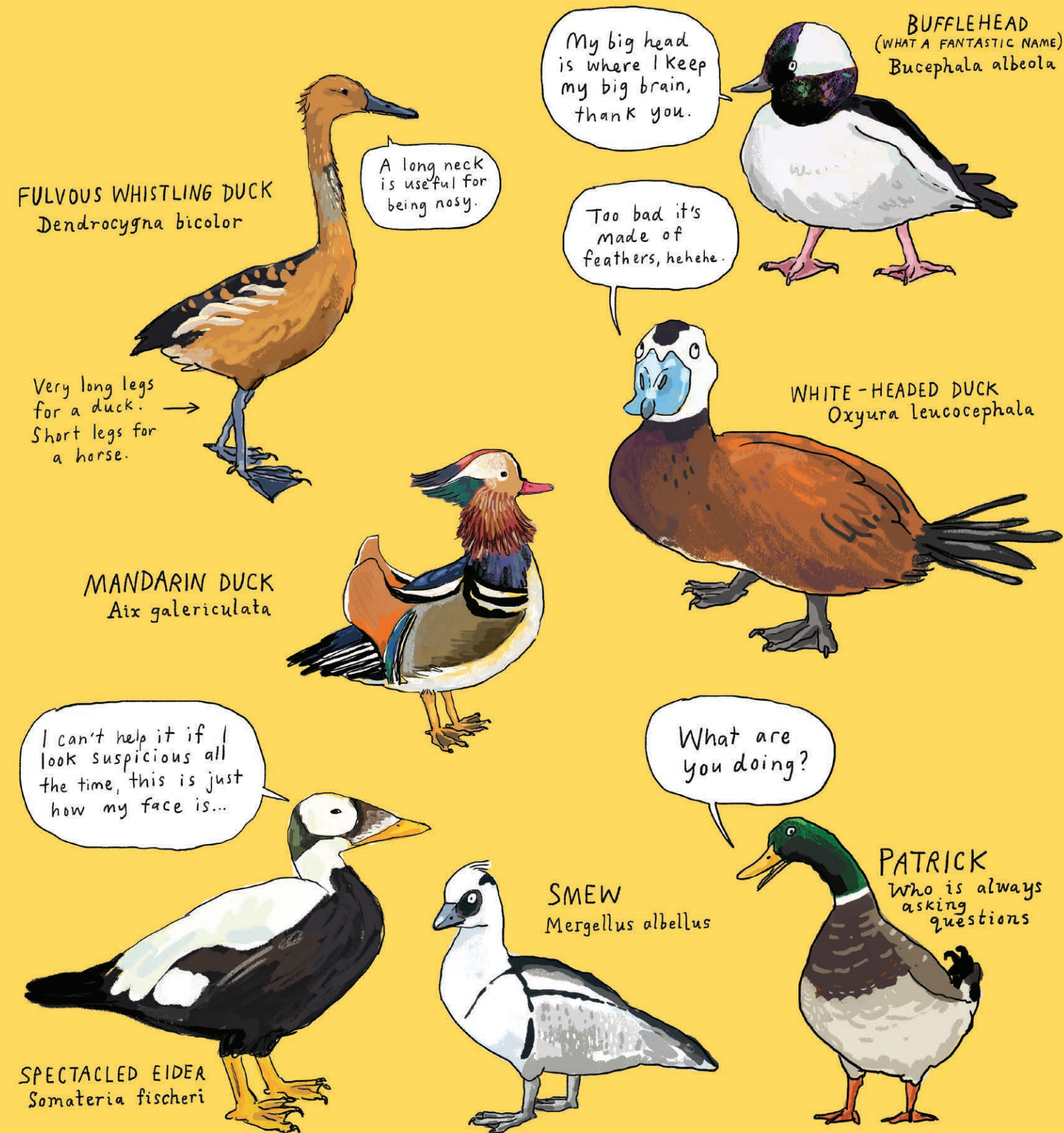
Drakes have a higher-pitched, raspier voice than hens. Only female mallards say "QUACK!"

Elegant neck

Crisp white collar

This lump on the tip is called a nail

## CURIOUS DUCKS OF THE WORLD

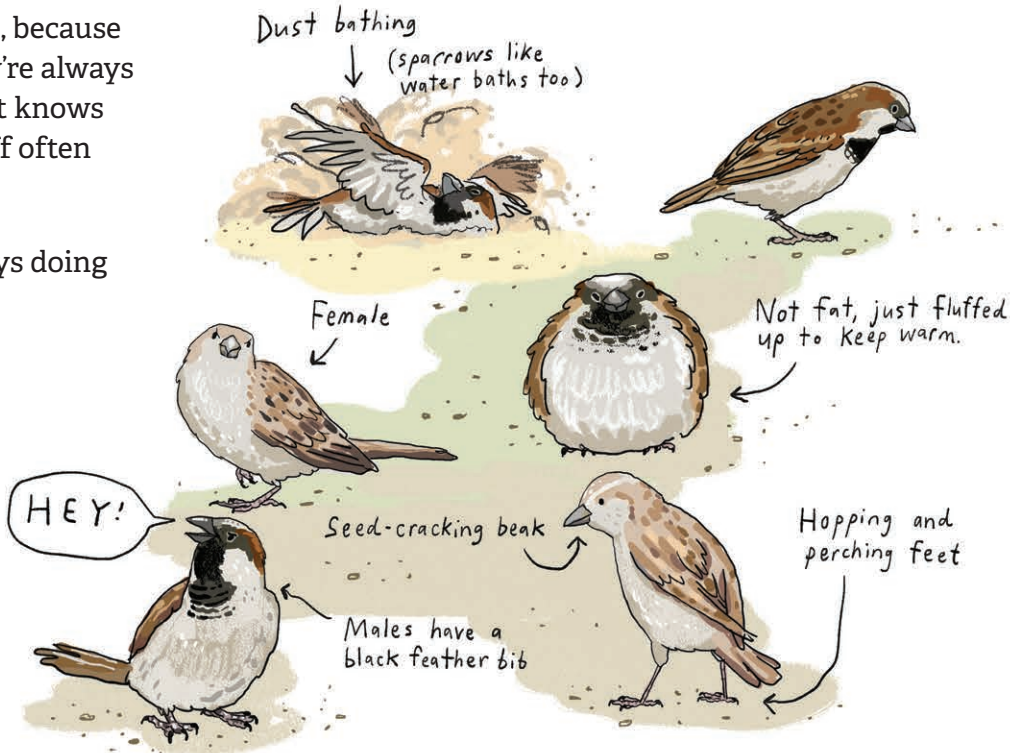
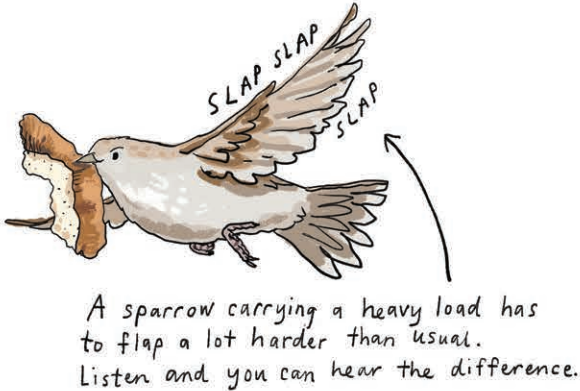




# HOUSE SPARROWS

It's easy for people to overlook sparrows, because they don't have bright feathers and they're always just there. Any detective worth their salt knows that the sneakiest, most interesting stuff often happens in plain sight.

They're fantastic to watch. They're always doing something and chatting about it loudly.



Sparrows don't scratch in the dirt for worms. Adult sparrows mostly eat seeds (or cracker crumbs and dropped sandwiches), but they can't feed those to their chicks. During nesting season, you might notice sparrows searching the eaves of houses for spiders, or hunting in trees for fat caterpillars to take back to their babies.

Sparrows can be brave or shy, depending on where they live and how many humans they're used to seeing.

Town sparrows are after everyone's crumbs, so they'll hop under park benches while people are still sitting on them, or they'll wait until someone's gone to the toilet at a cafe before helping themselves to a warm scone.





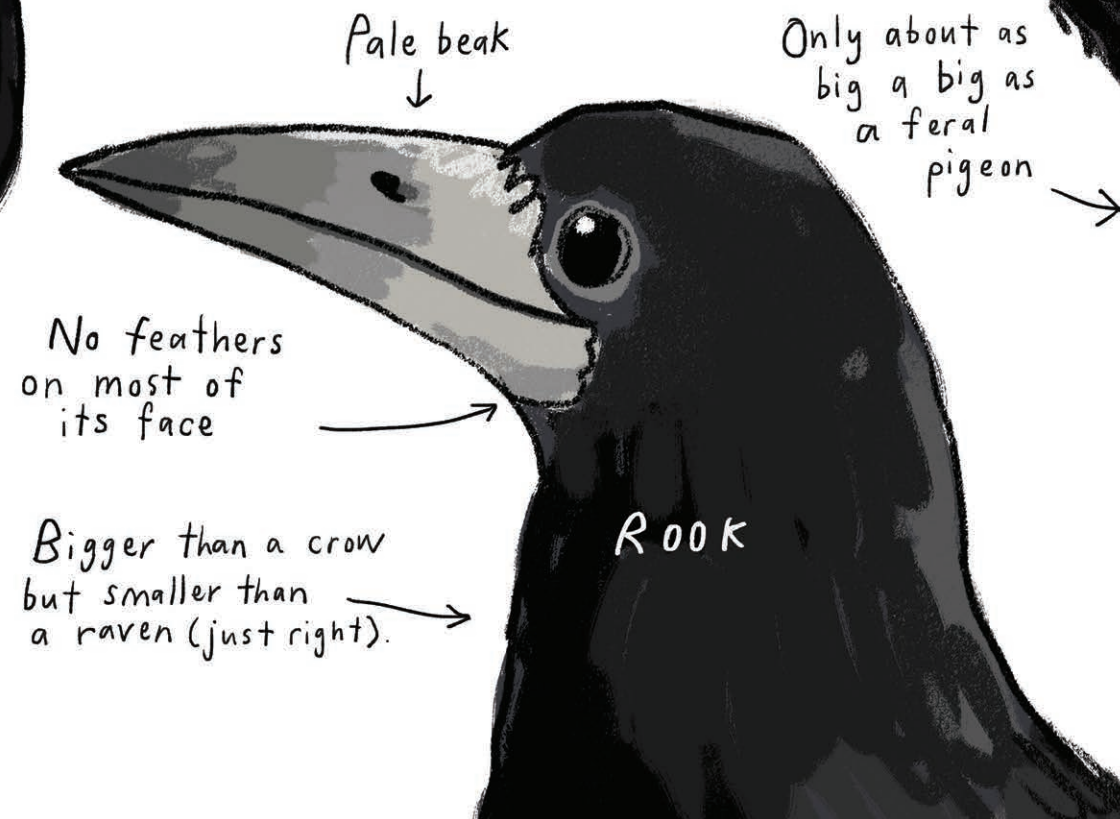
# CORVIDS

The corvus family includes rooks, ravens and which all look pretty similar. They're all black with big beaks, but they're not identical if you take them time to look carefully.

The call of a crow is often used in movies to make places feel spooky, but a crow isn't spooky! People even call groups of them 'a murder of crows'.

This isn't very fair because corvids are exceptionally clever birds, and can be sweet and generous too. If you're always really nice to the crows in your neighbourhood they'll bring you gifts.

The opposite is true too. If you're mean to a crow it'll remember what you look like and scowl at you every time you walk past. What's more, that crow will tell all its friends and they'll gang up on you. So always remember your manners.



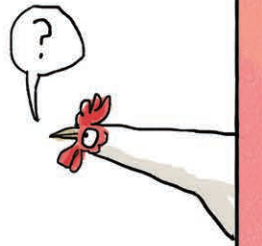
## HOW TO PICK UP A CHICKEN



1. First, earn the chicken's trust:

Put wheat or fat caterpillars in your hand and hold it flat.

Make soft clucking noises.



Don't wiggle your fingers or they'll look like peckable worms.

2. When the chicken is within reach, confidently but calmly put your hands over her back like this.



IF she flattens herself against the ground it's because she thinks you're a rooster trying to mate with her.

3. Hold her wings firmly against her body so she doesn't flap and get injured.



4. Press her comfortably next to your body like so...



5. Tell her all your secrets.

(Let her go as soon as she gets wriggly.)





# BEAUTIFUL *and* SILLY CHICKEN BREEDS

Like dogs and cats, domestic chickens come in hundreds of different breeds. People who keep special breeds of domestic birds, like pigeons and chickens, are called fanciers.

Fanciers compete against each other to have the fanciest bird. They don't make them do obstacle courses though.



SEBRIGHT



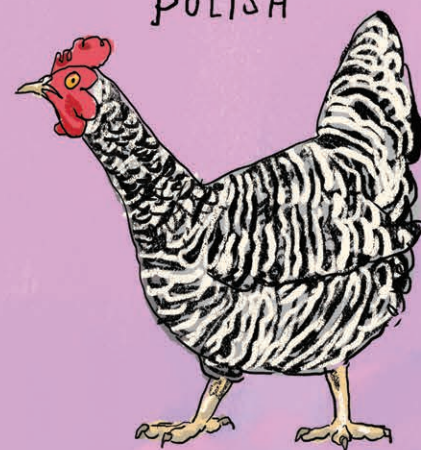
POLISH



## MODERN GAME



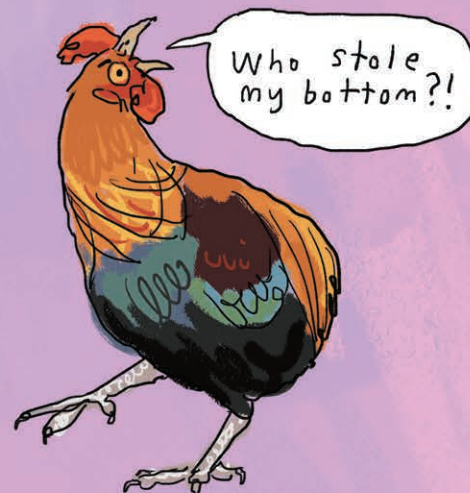
TRANSYLVANIAN  
NAKED NECK



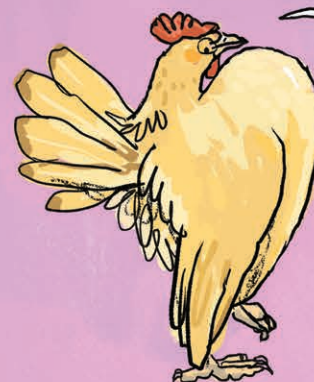
BARRED ROCK



PEKIN



RUMPLESS



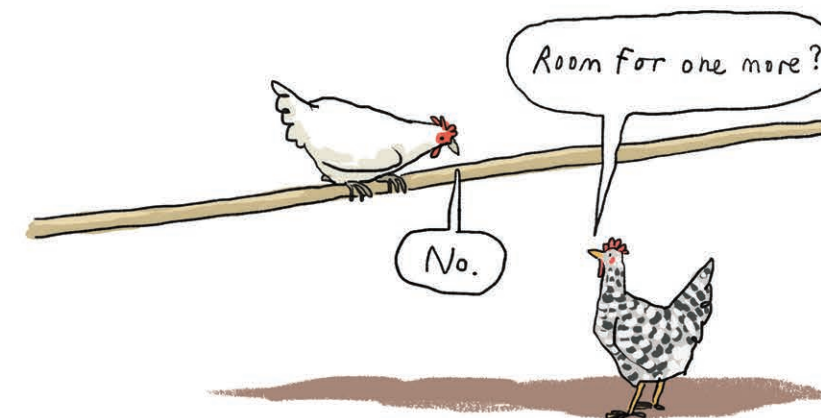
SERAMA



SILKIE

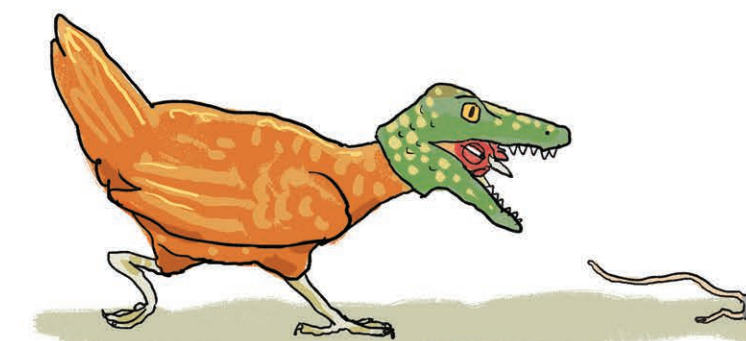
Who stole  
my bottom?!

Even I  
don't  
understand  
how this  
works.



They peck each other's faces to fight for their position in the pecking order. It can get quite mean and leave some hens with scabbed and bloody combs.

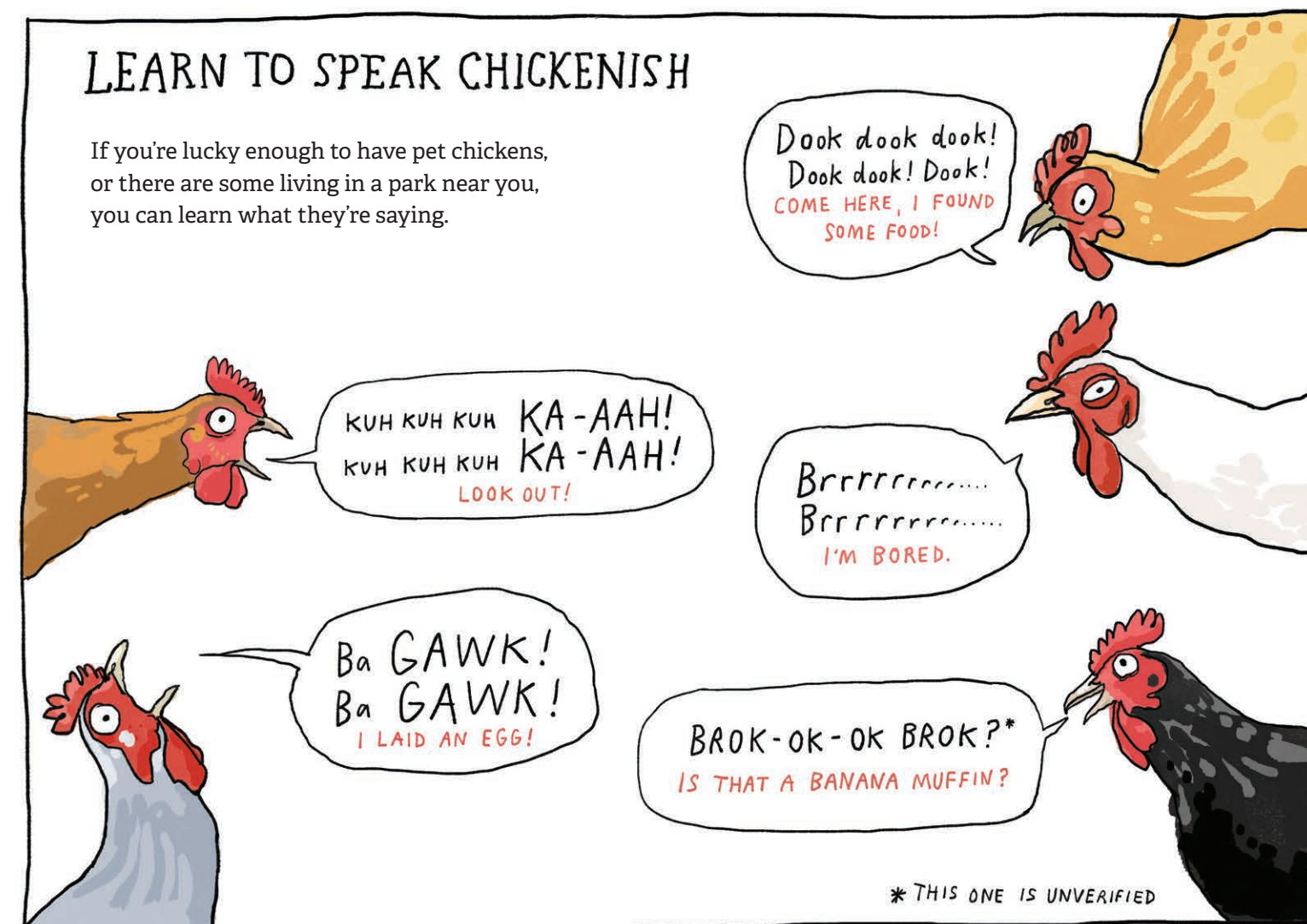
Given half a chance, chickens chase, kill and devour small animals like mice. They look very like their dinosaur ancestors when they do it.



The pecking order is how a flock of chooks decide among themselves who is boss, second boss, third boss...or bottom of the heap. The hens at the top of the pecking order get the first choice of roost, nesting spot and food. It's not always the biggest chicken at the top; she might just be the canniest.

# LEARN TO SPEAK CHICKENISH

If you're lucky enough to have pet chickens, or there are some living in a park near you, you can learn what they're saying.



\* THIS ONE IS UNVERIFIED



# OWLS

Owls are irresistibly charming birds, with their wide eyes and saucer faces. And compared to other birds, they have quite a lot of facial expressions.

There are about 200 different types of owl in the world.

## BURROWING OWL *Athene cunicularia*



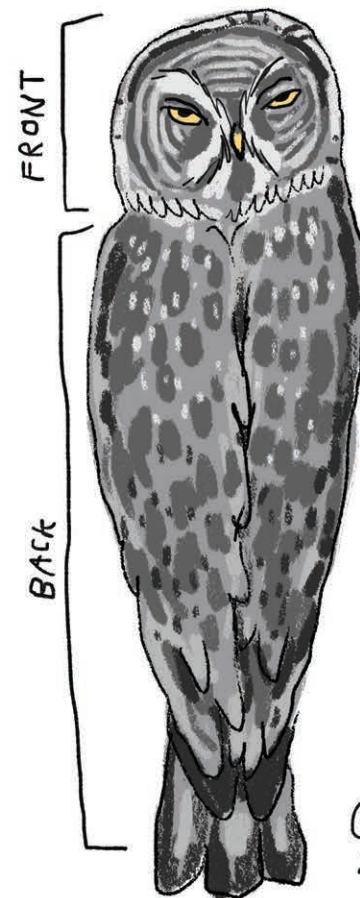
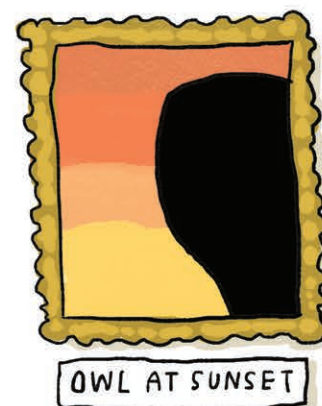
Hunts during the day and lives in holes in the ground.

Very leggy.

Although most owls are nocturnal, not all of them are.

## NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL *Glaucidium gnoma*

Hunts for little birds and mammals in the sunshine.



Because owls are always watching you it's very difficult to see the back of their head.

Maybe I have eyes there too...

Owls can turn their heads so far around it looks like they could go all the way anwd unscrew like a bottle cap. Fortunately their heads only rotate three-quarters of a full circle, so we don't have a headless owl problem.

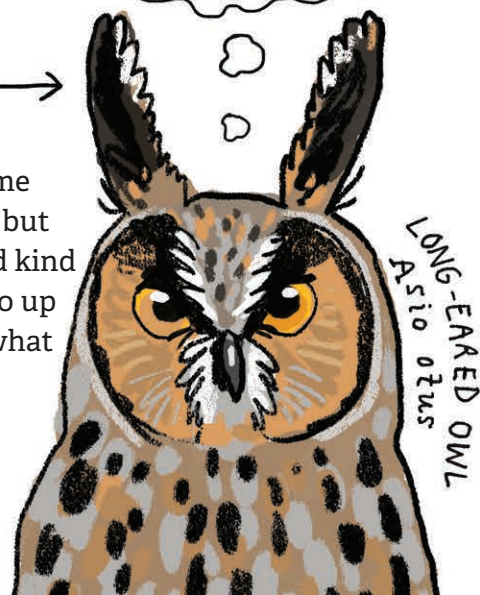
## GREAT GREY OWL *Strix nebulosa*



EAR TUFTS →

These tufty bits that some owls have look like ears, but they're just feathers, and kind of like eyebrows. They go up or down depending on what the owl is thinking.

I'm thinking about rabbits.



LONG-EARED OWL  
*Asio otus*



## Stealth mode

Even really big owls can fly in almost perfect silence. Most birds make a swooping sound as the air rushes over their wings, but an owl's wing feathers have a comb-like edge to break up the air and stop it whooshing.

## Facial disc

Owls use their big satellite dish faces to help them listen. Sound vibrations bounce off the disc and are directed towards the owl's ears.

## Saucer eyes

Really big eyes are better for seeing at night because they absorb more light. It's like how the pupil of your eye grows large when you're in the dark and then shrinks when you turn on a light.

## Lopsided ears

An owl knows exactly where a mouse is hiding by whether the tiny rustling noise was heard by its left or right ear first. Even more remarkably, owls have wonky ears. One is higher than the other on its head, so the owl knows if a sound is coming from high up or low down.

Feathered leggings

Zygodactyl feet

Knifey talons

## Tyto alba BARN OWL

You really captured my likeness!