

## Those Beaks are Made for Eating

A Great Blue Heron wades into the shallow waters of a lake to strike at a fish. A Downy Woodpecker drills into a tree to eat the insects inside. A Northern Cardinal shreds a sunflower seed it found on the ground. These birds are all eating, but in different ways. It all depends on their beak!

### Beaks Aplenty

Just like all people have a mouth and nose, all birds have beaks. Also called bills, beaks come in all shapes and sizes, and different types of birds eat different foods. Raptors like Bald Eagles and Great Horned Owls use their fierce feet to catch fish, rodents, and small animals. Then they use their hook-shaped beaks to help them tear their meal into bite-sized pieces. Great Blue Herons also eat fish, but they catch their prey using their long, pointed beak like a spear.

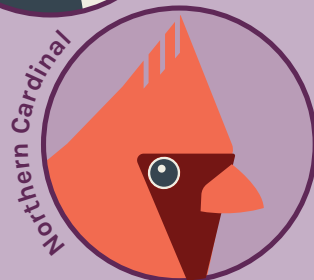
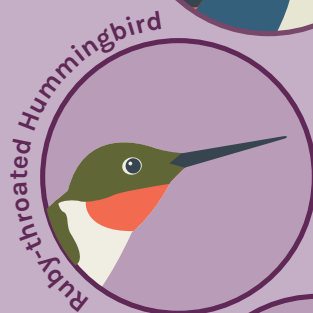
Some birds don't eat meat at all—the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, for example, prefers plant nectar. These birds have a long, narrow beak that can fit into the center of flowers and protect their tongue while they mop up the sugary goodness. And then there are birds that eat other plant products. Seed- and nut-eating birds, like Northern Cardinals, have a thick, triangle-shaped beak that can crack open hard shells.

A triangle-shaped beak is no match for a tree—that's why woodpeckers, like the Downy Woodpecker and Pileated Woodpecker, have a chisel-shaped bill. Their beak is tough enough to chip-off bark from a tree and then to drill into it to find insects for lunch.

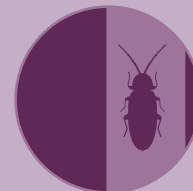
Get the answers at  
[massaudubon.org/youngexplorers](http://massaudubon.org/youngexplorers).

### Match the Beak

Can you match the beak to what its owner might eat? Look at the shape of the beaks and think about whether each would help a bird eat each type of food.



seeds



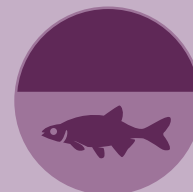
a bug in a tree



mouse



a flower



a fish