

Curlew Feather Forage

One of the main characteristics of a bird is that its body is covered with feathers and not fur (like mammals) or scales (like reptiles). Did you know that birds have different types of feathers and each type of feather is shaped differently and has a different purpose?

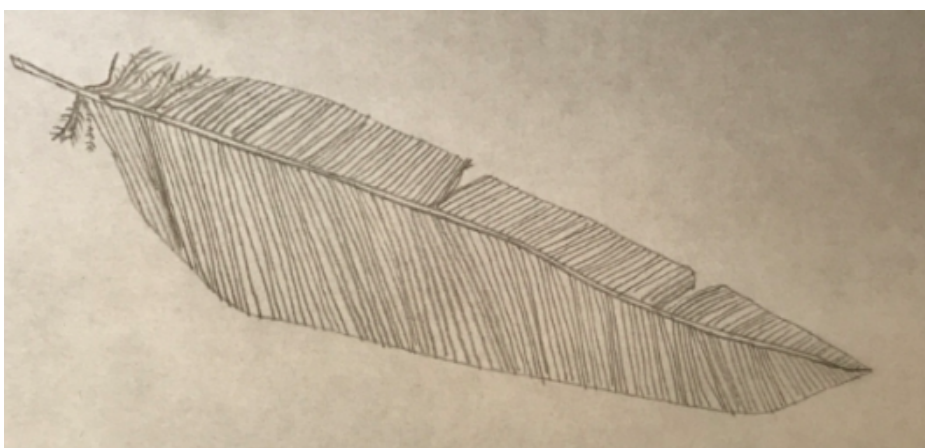
Different types of feathers



Tail Feathers are usually stiff and long. Birds usually have 12 tail feathers and most of them are **symmetrical**. A curlew's tail feathers are very important for flying, they stop the birds from wobbling and also help steer.

Symmetrical – When you can draw a line down the middle of a shape and both sides of the line are exactly the same, we call this shape symmetrical. For example, circles and squares are symmetrical.

Asymmetrical – When you draw a line down the middle of a shape and the two halves are not the same.



Wing Feathers are similar to the tail feathers. The feathers of the wing are mostly very strong and important in helping the curlews fly. The wings are used for the birds to get high off the ground and also to push them forward.

Wing feathers are **asymmetrical**. The longest and narrowest feathers are found on the far end of the wing.



Contour Feathers are the feathers that you can see covering the curlew's body. See how the contour feathers change from being very soft and fluffy at the bottom and less fluffy at the top. The top part of the feather is waterproof which stops the curlew's skin getting too wet and cold when it is out in the rain.

Down Feathers look very different to the wing and tail feathers. They are short and very soft and fluffy. You can't see the down feathers when you look at a curlew because they are hidden under all the other feathers but they are what keep the birds nice and warm on a cold evening or when wading through some cold wet mud. It's a bit like having a warm duvet wrapped under your clothes!



Activity:

Have a wander around your garden, park or local nature reserve and see how many feathers you can find on the ground. Can you work out what type of feather they are? Maybe you could make a scrap book of what you find or use your feathers to make some art work.

Explore..... Time to Feather Forage!

Which type of feather is most common?

Once you have found some feathers and identified which type they are, can you work out which you have found the most of? Fill in the tally chart below and make a bar graph to show how many of each type of feather you have.

Feather Type Tally Chart		
Feather Type	Tally	Frequency (total number)
Wing feathers		
Tail feathers		
Contour feathers		
Down feathers		
Unidentified feathers		

How to do Tally

A tally is a way of counting the feathers.

I Means 1

II Means 2

III Means 3

IIII Means 4

IIII- Means 5

Eg. If I found 3 Wing Feathers the tally would look like: III.

If I found 7 wing feathers the tally would look like: IIII- II.

Feather Type Bar Chart

