

Bird Adaptations

What makes a bird a bird? They have two legs, two wings and feathers for a start. Wings, feet, beaks, and bodies come in a variety of different shapes and sizes and serve many different functions. This activity is fun because birds are so common your children will be able to easily create their own varieties while you can sneak in some education about animal adaptations.

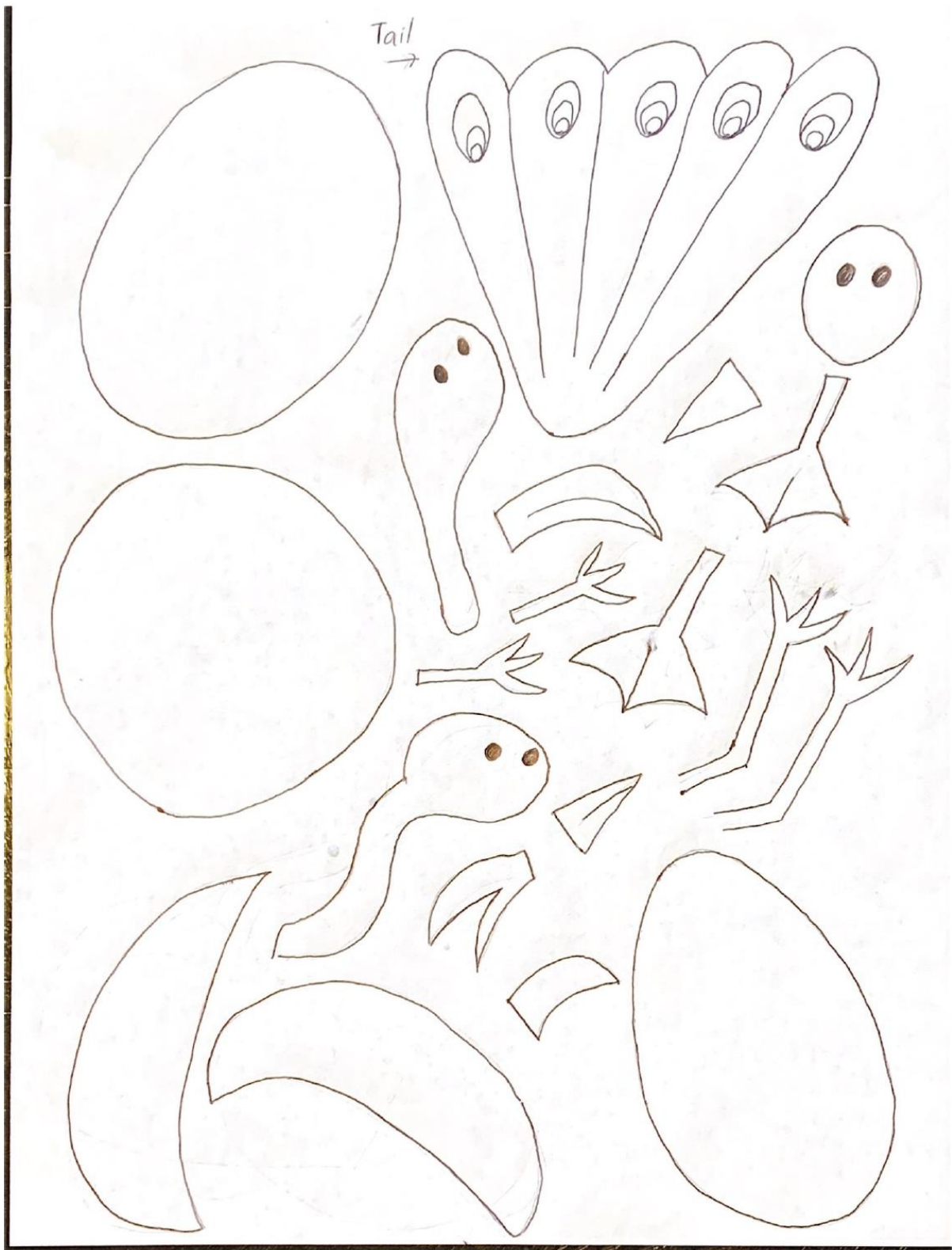
Adaptations are variations in organisms that allow them to survive and be better suited to their environment. Some bird feet have talons (long claws) for example, to help catch food, others have webs that help the bird swim. Some feathers are adapted to be bright and showy to attract a mate, (think peacocks) while many female birds have developed duller feathers in shades of brown to camouflage with their nests.

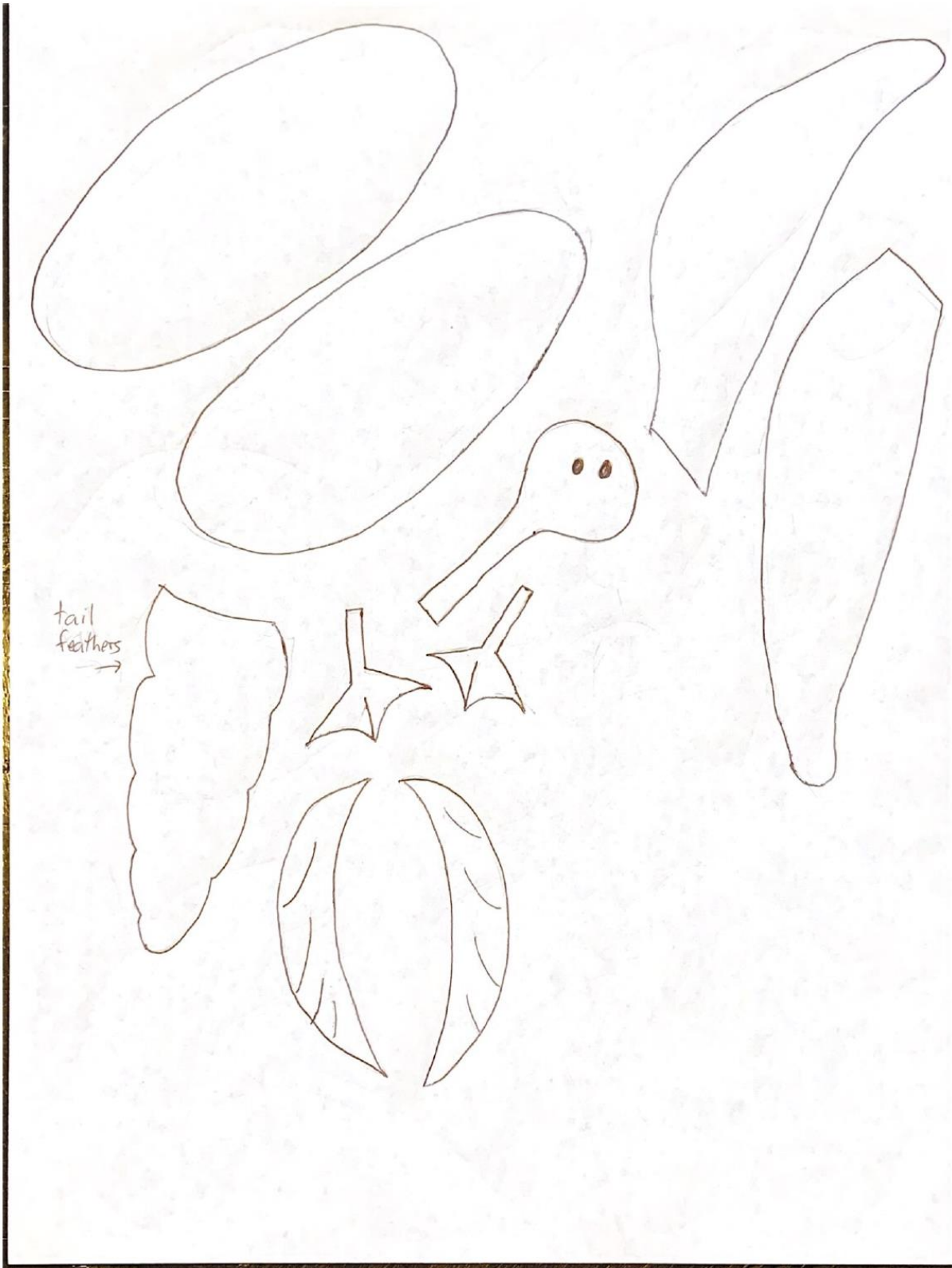
Activity

Find pictures of birds online, or look for birds around your neighborhood and talk about the different places they live, what they eat, where they live, and think about how the shapes of their beaks, bodies, and feet help them do those things. Do you notice that many water birds, egrets and herons for example, have long legs and long necks? Talk about why this might be. (Hint- they stand among the weeds where their long legs blend in with the plants and their long necks and long slender beaks allow them to quickly snatch fish from the water to eat.) Birds of prey have talons to catch their food. Songbirds might have small pointed beaks to catch flying insects. Does the color of their feathers help them stand out or blend in?



Now the fun part. On three separate papers, draw a lake, a forest and a field/park. In the picture above a tree, blue patch of “water” and green patch of “grass” were used. Print and cut out the bird body part templates below. Start with a bird body and ask your child which habitat they want to add it to. Then ask what bird parts are missing and start building your birds. You can add new shapes if you like, color them, or print on patterned paper. For younger kids focus on just having the correct body parts and for older kids you can talk about what body parts the birds might need if they lived in each habitat. Create a story as you build or turn the finished birds into puppets by adding a popsicle stick.





tail
feathers
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