



Feathered Friends

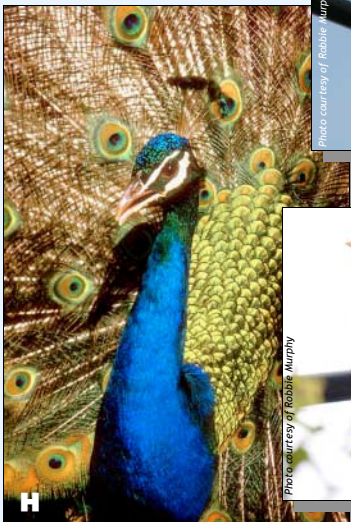
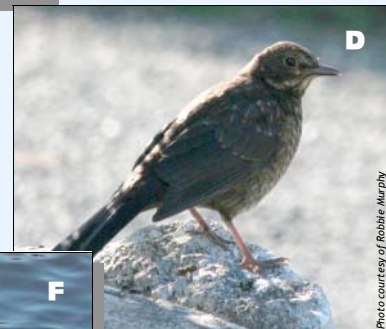
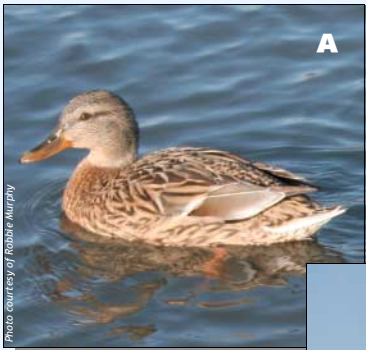
Male and female birds often have different coloured plumage (or feathers). The male can be very colourful and striking in appearance, while the female may look dull and drab in comparison. The female, when she is minding her eggs on the nest, wants to blend in with her surroundings and her drab colouring provides camouflage. Males often need to put on a display to attract a mate. Their bright colouring can show that they are healthy and in good condition and it can also show other birds that the area is occupied. The difference in plumage between the male and the female birds is often more obvious during the breeding season. The birds moult (or lose) their feathers depending on the time of year.

There is a difference in plumage between juvenile (young) birds and adult birds. Juvenile birds often have mottled feathers to help camouflage them while in the nest. They will moult their feathers at least once before their adult feathers appear.



The plumage of an adult seagull (bottom) and of a juvenile gull (top).

Opposites Attract...



Below are the male and female of four species of bird. Can you help them find their partner and use the clues to select the correct name?

- Mallard** – a member of the duck family.
- Stonechat** – a small bird that eats insects.
- Peacock** – the male has a magnificent tail.
- Blackbird** – the male gives this bird its name.

Answers: Mallard - A (female) & F (male);
Peacock - B (female) & H (male); Stonechat C
(female) & E (male); Blackbird D (female) &
G (male).