

Name: _____

Strange Bird of the Rainforest

Rainforest Series, Part 2

by Mikki Sadil

Of all the beautiful, strange, and unique birds found in the rainforest, there is probably only one that might remind you of a punk-rock star. This is the Hoatzin (*wat-sin*), a living descendent of the *Archaeopteryx*, the first bird-like creature from the dinosaur age.

The Hoatzin is a small bird, about two feet long, with large wings and a fan-shaped tail, all covered in black, brown, russet, and cream feathers. The part of his body that might remind you of a punk-rock star is his head. It is very small, with a silver beak shaped like a tomahawk, two maroon eyes in a featherless bright blue face, and a four-inch Mohican-like crest.

The Hoatzin is known as the Stink Bird of the rainforest. Hoatzins eat primarily leaves and some fruits and flowers of the plants that grow in the marshy areas of the rainforests where they live. They have a digestive system that is similar to a cow's, which means they use bacterial fermentation to break down the food they eat, just like a cow does. This digestive process leaves a very disagreeable manure-like odor that gives them the nickname of Stink Bird. The odor serves a purpose, however, as it keeps away most of the land animals who would be their predators.

The Hoatzin live in the tree branches and dense shrubs that hang over the waterways of the rainforest. They are noisy birds, and use hisses, groans, croaks, and grunts to communicate with one another. While these birds may be among the most beautiful in the rainforest, you won't see them soaring gracefully above the trees. In fact, they're clumsy fliers, who prefer to use their sharp claws to climb up and down trees, rather than fly freely one place to another. They spend much of their day clambering around on tree branches and taking long sunbaths, and only fly when it's absolutely necessary.

The Hoatzin is an unique bird, but all of his different qualities make him an interesting member of the tropical Rainforest.



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1. Why is the Hoatzin sometimes called a *Stink Bird*?
 - a. because it's feathers have a pleasant aroma
 - b. because their manure and digestive systems give off foul odors
 - c. because they make their nests from materials that do not smell nice
 - d. because they spend much of their time near plants that give off noxious odors

2. The pronunciation of the word *hoatzin*...
 - a. has a long i sound
 - b. begins with the same sound as the word *hair*
 - c. has a long o sound
 - d. begins with the same sound as the word *water*

3. What foods do hoatzins eat?

4. Hoatzins are most likely to be seen...
 - a. climbing trees and basking in the sun near a river
 - b. flying high in the sky above the rainforest
 - c. in underground burrows, near streams
 - d. on the ground, near a waterway in the rainforest

5. Tell whether each sentence below is a fact or opinion. Write F or O next to each sentence.

_____ Hoatzins use hisses, groans, croaks, and grunts to communicate.

_____ Hoatzins are among the most beautiful birds in the rainforest.

_____ Hoatzins have featherless faces.

_____ The Hoatzin is a descendant of the Archaeopteryx, the first bird-like creature from the dinosaur age.

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

_____ 1. russet

a. thick

_____ 2. cream

b. antonym for graceful

_____ 3. tomahawk

c. tribe of Native Americans known for their spiked, mohawk hairstyle

_____ 4. Mohican

d. referring to a body's ability to take in and break down foods

_____ 5. dense

e. light brown color; brownish-white color

_____ 6. clumsy

f. reddish-brown color; rust color

_____ 7. digestive

g. light ax used by Native American people long ago

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In the article, "Strange Bird of the Rainforest," you learned about a colorful rainforest bird called the Hoatzin.

In your opinion, what is the most beautiful wild bird that lives in your area? Write a short essay to describe the bird's appearance and habits.

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Color the picture of the Hoatzin birds. Be sure the colors are consistent with the bird's actual coloring, which you learned in the passage.



ANSWER KEY

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1. Why is the Hoatzin sometimes called a *Stink Bird*? **b**
 - a. because it's feathers have a pleasant aroma
 - b. because their manure and digestive systems give off foul odors**
 - c. because they make their nests from materials that do not smell nice
 - d. because they spend much of their time near plants that give off noxious odors
2. The pronunciation of the word *hoatzin*... **d**
 - a. has a long i sound
 - b. begins with the same sound as the word *hair*
 - c. has a long o sound
 - d. begins with the same sound as the word *water***
3. What foods do hoatzins eat?
They eat mostly leaves, fruits, and flowers.
4. Hoatzins are most likely to be seen... **a**
 - a. climbing trees and basking in the sun**
 - b. flying high in the sky above the rainforest
 - c. in underground burrows, near streams
 - d. on the ground, near a waterway in the rainforest
5. Tell whether each sentence below is a fact or opinion. Write F or O next to each sentence.
 - f** Hoatzins use hisses, groans, croaks, and grunts to communicate.
 - o** Hoatzins are among the most beautiful birds in the rainforest.
 - f** Hoatzins have featherless faces.
 - f** The Hoatzin is a descendant of the Archaeopteryx, the first bird-like creature from the dinosaur age.

ANSWER KEY

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

f 1. russet

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