

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 about two feet long, with large wings and a fan-shaped tail, all covered in black, brown, russet, and cream feathers. The part of its body that might remind you of a punk rock star is its 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 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.

Hoatzins 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 a unique bird, and all of its different qualities make it a very interesting member of the tropical rainforest.



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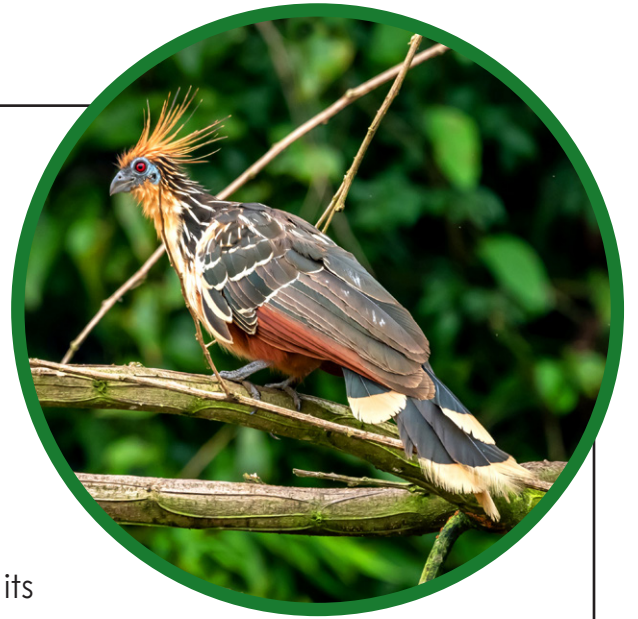
1. Why is the hoatzin sometimes called a *stink bird*?
  - a. because its feathers have a pleasant aroma
  - b. because its manure and digestive system give off foul odors
  - c. because it makes its nest from materials that do not smell nice
  - d. because it spends much of its time near plants that 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 one.  
\_\_\_\_\_ 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 from the article with its correct definition on the right.

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. _____ russet    | a. thick   |
| 2. _____ cream     | b. a showy tuft on an animal's head                              |
| 3. _____ tomahawk  | c. antonym for graceful  |
| 4. _____ crest     | 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. light ax used by Native American people                       |
| 7. _____ digestive | g. reddish-brown color; rust color                               |



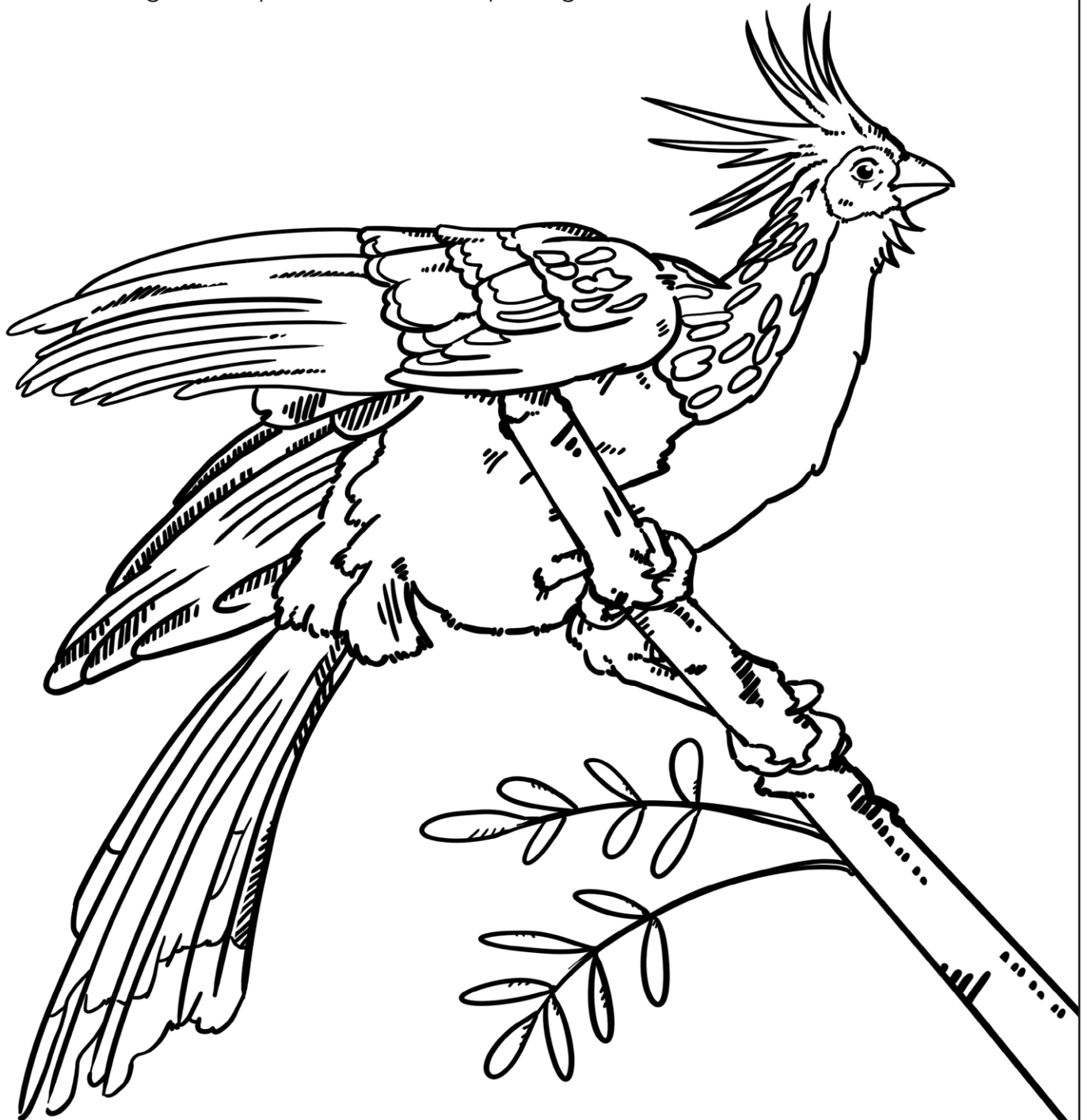
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Color the picture of the hoatzin bird. Be sure the colors are consistent with the bird's actual coloring, which you learned in the passage.



## ANSWER KEY

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- Why is the hoatzin sometimes called a *stink bird*?
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  - because its manure and digestive system give off foul odors**
  - because it makes its nest from materials that do not smell nice
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- The pronunciation of the word *hoatzin*...
  - has a long i sound
  - has a long o sound
  - begins with the same sound as the word *hair*
  - begins with the same sound as the word *water***
- What foods do hoatzins eat?

**They eat mostly leaves, fruits, and flowers.**

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- Hoatzins are most likely to be seen...
  - climbing trees and basking in the sun near a river**
  - flying high in the sky above the rainforest
  - in underground burrows, near streams
  - on the ground, near a waterway in the rainforest
- Tell whether each sentence below is a fact or opinion. Write **F** or **O** next to each one.

**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 from the article with its correct definition on the right.

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  4. b crest
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