

# How long do birds live?

Many wild birds have surprisingly short lives, but a few birds, such as albatrosses and parrots, have life spans nearly equal to that of humans. The first year is the most difficult for most birds and the percentage that die can be very high. For example, more than 80% of quail that hatch in one year will not survive to reach breeding age the following year.

Birds that are well cared for in captivity, such as the educational birds that you will see here at the center, generally have a longer life than do wild birds. Sometimes captive birds may have disorders or diseases (cataracts, cancer, etc.) that seldom occur in the wild simply because the birds do not live long enough to exhibit these problems.

Below is a list of birds and approximate maximum ages. Much of this is guesswork, as age data on wild birds is very incomplete. The *average* life span is usually lower than the *maximum* life span given here. Often, these maximum ages are from birds that represent less than 1% of the total adult population for that species. Incomplete data also makes it

very difficult to determine an average life span and in some birds, such as American Goldfinch, males and females may have different average life spans. (In this case, male goldfinches usually live longer than females.)

Species listed in **Bold** are those you can find at Cascades Raptor Center.

Species	Life expectancy		
	Life span in captivity (years)	Average (after 1st year) (years)	Life span In the wild (max. known years)
Snow Goose	?	15+	27 yrs., 6 mo.
Trumpeter Swan	32.5	24	24+
Mallard	?	4	29 yrs., 1 mo.
California Quail	?	?	6 yrs., 11 mo.
Laysan Albatross	?	30+	50 yrs., 8 mo.
American White Pelican	?	13+	31 yrs., 6 mo.
Great Blue Heron	?	?	24 yrs., 6 mo.
<b>Turkey Vulture</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>17+</b>
<b>Osprey</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>11-12</b>	<b>26 yrs. 2 mo.</b>
<b>White-tailed Kite</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>5 yrs., 11 mo.</b>
<b>Bald Eagle</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>30 yrs., 9 mo.</b>
<b>Northern Harrier</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16 yrs., 5 mo.</b>
<b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>~3</b>	<b>19 yrs., 11 mo.</b>
<b>Cooper's Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>9?</b>	<b>20 yrs., 4 mo.</b>
<b>Northern Goshawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>16 yrs., 4 mo.</b>
<b>Red-shouldered Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>3+</b>	<b>19 yrs., 11 mo.</b>
<b>Swainson's Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19 yrs., 7 mo.</b>
<b>Red-tailed Hawk</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>28 yrs., 10 mo.</b>
<b>Ferruginous Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>23 yrs., 8 mo.</b>
<b>Rough-legged Hawk</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>20+</b>
<b>Golden Eagle</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>3-7</b>	<b>28 yrs. 4 mo.</b>
<b>American Kestrel</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14 yrs., 8 mo.</b>
<b>Merlin</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11 yrs., 11 mo.</b>
<b>Gyr Falcon</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>13 yrs., 6 mo.</b>
<b>Peregrine Falcon</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6-10</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Prairie Falcon</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>2.5-5</b>	<b>17 yrs. 3 mo.</b>
Sandhill Crane	?	7	31 yrs., 3 mo.
<b>Barn Owl</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>&lt;2</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Western Screech-Owl</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Great Horned Owl</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>28.7</b>

Species	Life expectancy		
	Life span in captivity (years)	Average (after 1st year) (years)	Life span In the wild (max. known years)
<b>Snowy Owl</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>16 yrs., 9 mo.</b>
<b>Northern Pygmy-Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>Burrowing Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Spotted Owl</b>	<b>25+</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>30+</b>
<b>Barred Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>18 yrs., 2 mo.</b>
<b>Great Gray Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>13+</b>
<b>Long-eared Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>27 yrs., 9 mo.</b>
<b>Short-eared Owl</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>12 yrs. 9 mo.</b>
<b>Northern Saw-whet Owl</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>10 yrs., 4 mo.</b>
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	?	<2	12 yrs., 2 mo.
Downy Woodpecker	?	?	11 yrs., 11 mo.
Pileated Woodpecker	?	?	12 yrs., 11 mo.
Western Scrub-Jay	?	3	15 yrs., 9 mo.
<b>American Crow</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>14 yrs., 7 mo.</b>
<b>Common Raven</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>17 yrs., 2 mo.</b>
Yellow Warbler	?	?	10 yrs., 11 mo.
Spotted Towhee	?	2	10 yrs., 8 mo.
Song Sparrow	?	1-3	11 yrs., 4 mo.
Brewer's Blackbird	?	?	12 yrs., 6 mo.
American Goldfinch	?	5	10 yrs., 5 mo.

Most of this information for this chart was obtained in part from:  
Birds of North America Online <<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>>

Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Bird Banding Laboratory. Laurel MD. < <http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/homepage/long2890.htm> >

International Species Information System (ISIS) <<http://www.isis.org/CMSHOME/>>