



Flight feathers are found two places on birds: the

wings and tail. Flight feathers are long, and on the wings, have one side of the vane wider than the other. They also have stronger barbules which give them more strength for flight.

Contour feathers give shape and color to the bird. They are found everywhere except the beak, legs, and feet. Contour feathers are colored only at the ends (the only part that we see). At its base, a contour feather becomes downy which helps insulate the bird.



Down feathers have little or no shaft. They are soft and fluffy. Down feathers help insulate birds by trapping air. Some birds, such as herons, have special down feathers called powder down which breaks up into a fine powder. The bird then spreads this fine powder all over its body to act as a water repellent.

Semiplume feathers are a cross between down and contour feathers. Unlike down, they do have a well formed shaft. However, they do not have well developed barbicels which make them soft. Semiplume feathers are found underneath contour feathers and are used for insulation.



Bristle feathers are very stiff with only a few barbs found at the base. Bristle feathers are found around the mouth of insect eating birds where they act as a funnel. They can also be found around the eyes

