

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
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EXTENSION  
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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**Notes:** "Nothing has a more potent attraction for birds during hot weather than drinking and bathing places," says a great old Farmer's Bulletin by the U.S. Department of Agriculture called "How to Attract Birds" (1918). "Providing a water source for birds," a more recent Cornell Lab of Ornithology fact sheet says, "should provide you with a fantastic opportunity to observe bird behavior" (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/netcommunity/bbimages/gbbc-email/ProvidingWater.pdf>).

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**Q. Dear Twig: I saw a big hawk in my grandmother's bird bath.**

A. Cool.

**Q. What was it doing there?**

A. Probably getting a drink of water, taking a bath or both.

**Q. Why?**

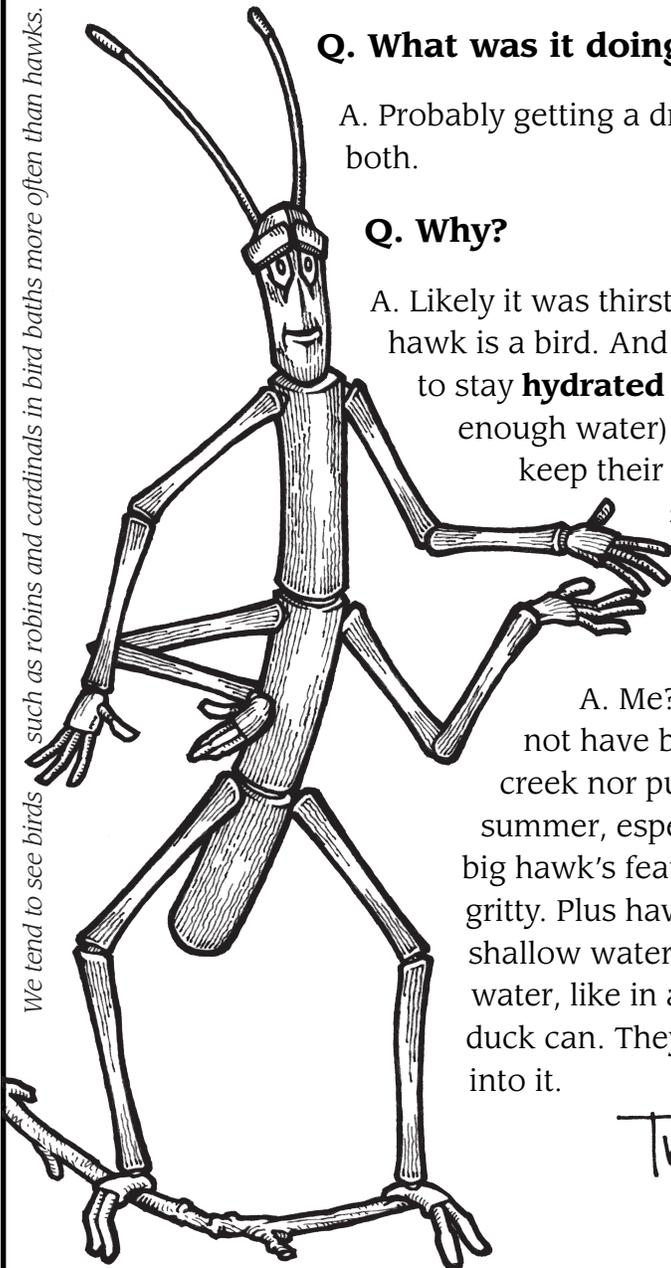
A. Likely it was thirsty, dirty, hot or all three. A hawk is a bird. And birds need water. They drink it to stay **hydrated** ("HI-drayt-ed"; supplied with enough water) and healthy. They bathe in it to keep their feathers clean. Sometimes they sit in it just to cool off.

**Q. Why not go jump in the lake?**

A. Me? The hawk. Well, there might not have been one around — nor a pond, creek nor puddle — especially in the summer, especially in a city, especially if the big hawk's feathers had gotten dirty and gritty. Plus hawks and other land birds prefer shallow water, like in a bird bath, to deep water, like in a lake. They can't swim like a duck can. They tend to need to tippy-toe into it.

Twig

We tend to see birds such as robins and cardinals in bird baths more often than hawks.



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