

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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EXTENSION
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: The answers, respectively, are: has red garters, is a coot; lives in Fiji, whistles; probably knows Mrs. Gould; tends to nukupuu. All this deals with common names, not scientific names, the latter of which in the case of the yellow-bellied sapsucker (ba ha ha ha ha heeee!) is *Sphyrapicus varius*, which isn't half as funny. Sources included the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/Yellow-bellied_Sapsucker.html; the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/id/fram1st/i4020id.html>; and a totally cool, totally total list of the world's birds' common names in English, <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/names.html>.

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Q. Dear Twig: "Yellow-bellied sapsucker." Is that a real bird?

A.: Yep, it sure is. It's a small, shy woodpecker that lives in **North America**. And it sure has a funny name. Part of the name comes from how the bird feeds. It pecks holes in **tree trunks** and then eats or "sucks" up the **sap** that drips out. In fact it laps up the stuff with its tongue. So maybe its name should be **saplapper**. Ha!

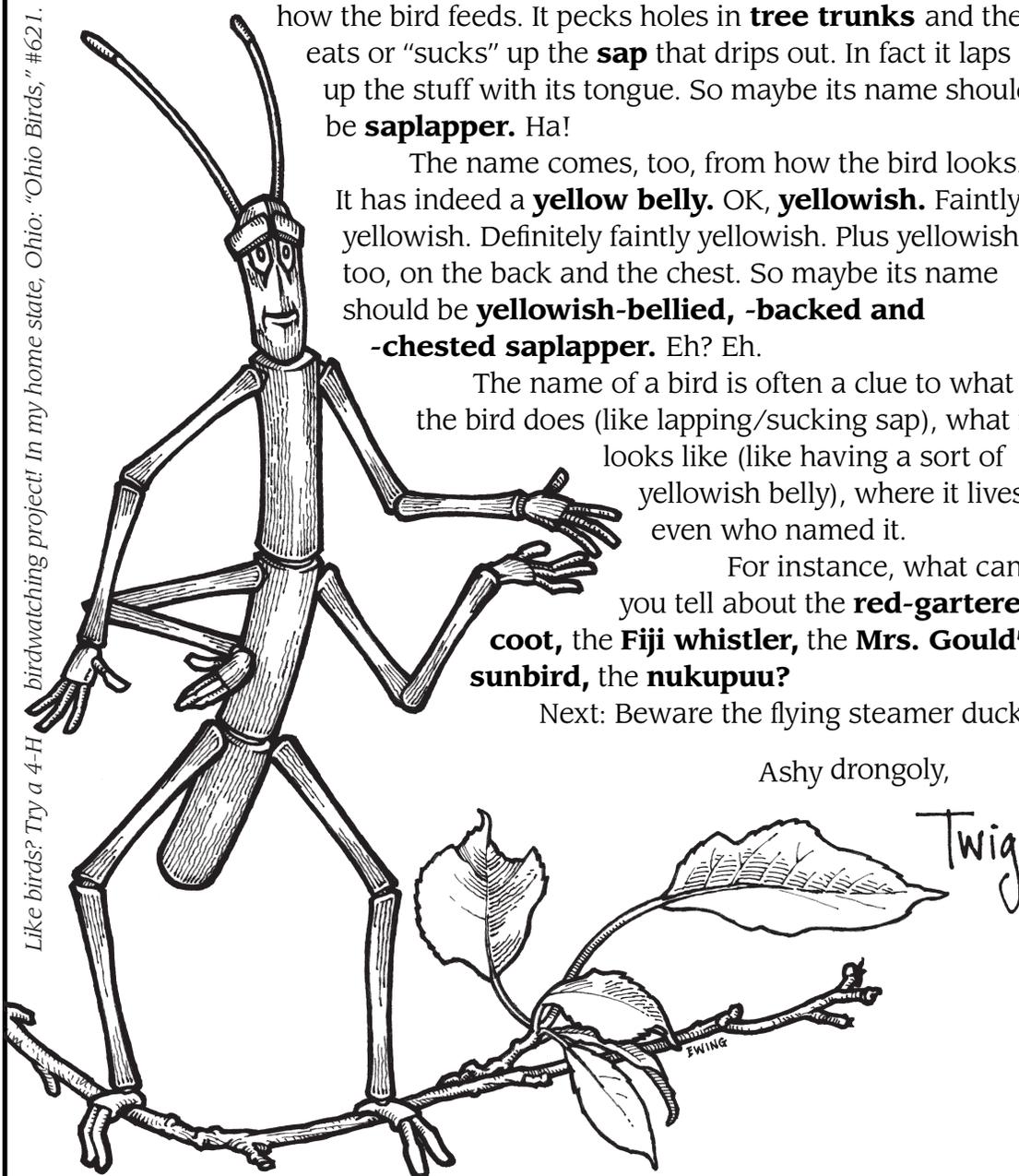
The name comes, too, from how the bird looks. It has indeed a **yellow belly**. OK, **yellowish**. Faintly yellowish. Definitely faintly yellowish. Plus yellowish, too, on the back and the chest. So maybe its name should be **yellowish-bellied, -backed and -chested saplapper**. Eh? Eh.

The name of a bird is often a clue to what the bird does (like lapping/sucking sap), what it looks like (like having a sort of yellowish belly), where it lives, even who named it.

For instance, what can you tell about the **red-gartered coot**, the **Fiji whistler**, the **Mrs. Gould's sunbird**, the **nukupuu**?

Next: Beware the flying steamer duck!

Ashy drongoly,



Like birds? Try a 4-H birdwatching project! In my home state, Ohio: "Ohio Birds," #621.

From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).