

# Zippering up a Feather: Preening



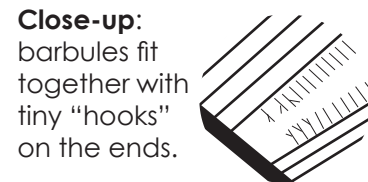
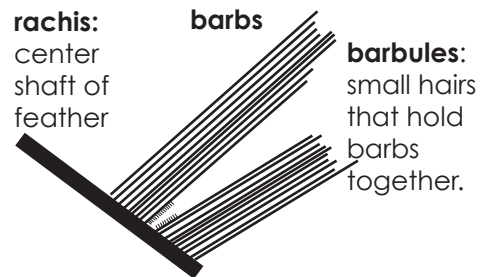
Feathers have several functions:

1. Flight
2. Insulation (help retain heat and release heat from the body)
3. Protection (serving as a full body covering to avoid injury, and to withstand the weather.)

When a bird's feathers get ruffled in the wind, the bird will sit and preen. When the bird preens, it takes each barb in its beak and lays it flat against the next barb. The bird grooms itself with its beak, smoothing its feathers back together.



The individual barbs of the feather have tiny hair-like structures on them called barbules which have tiny hooks on the ends. These barbules "zipper" together. Some say they "Velcro" together.



Gently pinch the feather between your fingers and squeeze the barbs together, right next to each other, so that the barbules can weave together. If possible take a few minutes to look at the feather parts under a microscope. Draw, label.



