

PREEN GLAND – DO WE KNOW ALL ABOUT FUNCTIONS OF ITS SECRETION?

Summary

Preen gland (also known as uropygial or oil gland) is a major skin gland that occurs in most birds. It is located dorsally at the base of the tail and produces oily secretion which birds smear onto their feathers with the beak. The preen gland secretion is a complex mixture of diverse organic compounds, mainly waxes, which may vary among birds depending on the species, season, age and gender of

bird, and diet. The functions of preen gland secretion are still under discussion. Most often they are said to provide plumage maintenance, protection of feathers against moisture, abrasion or ectoparasites; until recently the secretion was also regarded erroneously as the source of vitamin D. However, contemporary studies negate some of these functions and new ones are being suggested.