What is the collective noun for a group of flowers

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You may have heard of 'a school of fish', 'a pride of lions' or 'a pack of wolves', but have you ever come across 'a shrewdness of apes' or 'a confusion of wildebeest'? In this article, author and investigator of languages and interesting words Adam Jacot de Boinod takes a look at some of the more unfamiliar animal collective nouns. What is a collective noun? A collective noun is a countable noun that refers to a group of people or things. There are various animal collective nouns that you're probably already familiar with such as 'a flock of sheep' or 'swarm of bees', but there are also an astonishing number of intriguing animal collective nouns that you may not have heard of before. Collective nouns for different groups of animals: What is a group of crows gather in a public park. © P Derrett/iStock/GettyThe term 'a murder of crows' probably derives from 15th-century peasants' fears that these sinister-looking birds, with dark feathers and jet-black eyes, were witches in disguise or messengers of the Devil. They descended onto battlefields to pick at the fallen and, with their alleged prophetic powers, they appeared on roofs to portend that someone inside would soon die. Their other collective nouns include 'mob', 'parcel' and 'horde'. What is a group of wildebeest follow the seasonal rains. © Lennart van den Berg/GettyThe term 'a confusion of wildebeest' is so-called from the noise and disorientation of these animals when they gather for their giant migration, when around two million of them unite to search for greener areas. In the process many die in stampedes, which typically feature 500 wildebeest travelling at speeds of up to 50mph and which can last for 30 minutes; chaos ensues when they dash through treacherous waters, as they fall prey to predators. What is a group of geese called? Geese gather on a grassy field. © Dave Smith/EyeEm/GettyThe term 'a gaggle of geese' has been so-called since the 15th century because when they get quite noisy and rowdy. It's only when they're on the ground that they come in 'gaggles'; their other collective nouns depend on whether they've gathered on water 'plump' or flying ('skein', 'team' or 'wedge'): the latter two reflecting their graceful travelling en masse. More like this Hippos, Virunga National Park, Democratic Republic of the Congo. © DeAgostini/Getty The term 'a bloat of hippopotamuses', coined in 1939, comes from their large, indeed bloated bellies: a male hippo weighs around 8,000lb and is covered in subcutaneous fat that helps him float. Their stomachs are typically bloated from a diet almost exclusively of grass which they ingest and store for up to three weeks. A typical 'bloat' would consist of one male hippo amongst 10-20 females. What is a group of apes called? Mountain gorillas resting in Virunga Mountains, Rwanda. © AlamyThe term 'a shrewdness of apes' was coined in 1486, at a time when scientists wouldn't have attributed to apes the cognitive ability we now recognise in their brains and habits. 'Shrewdness' around the time of the 15th century meant wickedness and came from a sense of playfulness and mischief. However, today it denotes intelligence and astuteness. So, by a stroke of linguistic luck, the phrase has maintained its currency. What is a group of owls called? A family of burrowing owls in Florida, USA. © Carlos Carreno/GettyThe term 'a parliament of owls' comes from The Chronicles of Narnia novels, written by CS Lwewis in 1950s. It's a reference to Chaucer's poem The Parliament of Fowls, where the world's birds gather to find a mate. Lewis adapts Chaucer with a council of owls who meet to discuss the affairs of Narnia. Owls are thought to be wise ever since the Ancient Greeks depicted the birds accompanying and representing Athena, the goddess of wisdom. What is a group of jellyfish called? Jellyfish in a lake, Palau Micronesia. © Wendy A. Capili/GettyThe term 'smuck of jellyfish' is most likely to have come from simple onomatopoeia, derived from the sound, like a noisy kiss, a stranded jellyfish makes when it's stepped on. 'Smuck', like a plastic bag full of water being popped. They often become stranded together on beaches where they dry out and die. Their other collective nouns include crowd, bloom, brood, stuck, smuth, swarm, fluther and smack. What is a group of woodpeckers will typically only drill a nesting hole in trees with soft wood. © Gert Hilbink/GettyThe term 'A descent of woodpeckers', like other collective nouns for animals, is named after their peculiar habits. The most common of the three indigenous species is the green woodpecker which descends to the ground more frequently than the great spotted and lesser spotted, swoops down from the top of one tree to the base of another as well as moves backwards down the trunk with its head uppermost. What is a group of starlings called? Starlings massing at a winter roost site at dusk. © Andy Rouse/GettyThe term 'A murmuration of starlings is probably derived from the sound of the very large groups that starlings form at dusk with a murmuration reckoned to comprise an ongoing background murmur such as that caused by the beating of 10,000 pairs of wings at once. Their other collective noun is a 'chattering'. What is a group of bullfinches' is the collective noun for a bird that actually lacks a powerful flocking instinct unlike many finch cousins and must derive from their extraordinarily thick necks; after all the name 'bullfinch' comes from its bull-like appearance and compact, neck-less body. Its short, deep bill, when it's feeding, emits its renowned singing with a low-pitched short whistle or fluted 'phu' note: a distinct, continuous 'pipping' sound.What is a group of ravens called?Raven in Bavaria, Germany. © Raimund Linke/GettyThe term 'An unkindness of ravens' most likely comes from a false 19th century theory that ravens weren't remotely caring parents, prematurely expelling their young from their nests to look after themselves. Their association with bad luck, Halloween and death stems from their jet-black colour, their ever-watchful eyes and their scavenging around dead things. Their other collective nouns include 'rave', 'treachery', 'conspiracy' and the more generic 'flock'. What is a group of turtles called? A loggerhead turtle at Elafonissos Island, Greece, Europe. © Giacomo Augugliaro/GettyThe term 'A bale of turtles' derives most likely from the shape they take when huddled together in their shells; a bale being a large wrapped or bound bundle typically of paper, hay or cotton. One well-recognised feature of turtles is their desire to group and team up to stay safe. Their other collective nouns include dole, turn, dule and nest. Linguists amongst you may know that the top part of a turtle's shell is a carapace but not perhaps that the bottom is a plastron. What is a group of pheasants called? Male (cock) and female (hen) common pheasants. © [Mrocek/GettyThe term 'A nye of pheasants called? Male (cock) and female (hen) common pheasants. from the French 'nid' for nest. There are many variants in the spelling including nide, nie and ny. Their other collective nouns include head, nest and nide. For more specific categorisations a brood is a family of pheasants, a brace a pair of shot birds and a bouquet a general gathering. What is a group of porpoises called? A Yangtze finless porpoise swimming in the Yangtze River in Yichang in central China's Hubei province. © Feature China/Barcroft Images/GettyThe term for a social gathering of two or more whaleships at sea when, after hailing each other, they exchange visits by the boats' crews. Their other collective nouns, which apply to several other animals, are pod (which apply to seals and hippopotami), herd (to cows) and school (to fish). What is a group of stoats as marauders, or to an image of them as a bullying gang, as to their being simply in a family group in which there can be as many as twelve in a litter. A stoat is distinguishable by its black tail-tip from a weasel which also shares the same collective noun 'pack'. Their other collective noun 'pack'. Their other collective noun 'pack'. eagles and use them to hunt smaller animals such as foxes and marmots in the Altai Mountains, Mongolia. © Timothy Allen/GettyThe term 'A cast of hawks' derives from sporting terminology in reference to birds cast from the fist in both falconry or hawking. Strictly speaking the term relates only to a pair of hawks being 'cast'; if there were three it would be a leash. Their other collective nouns include aerie, knot, mews, moulting, screw, stream and schizophrenia. For other specific categorisations there is boil (used for two or more spiralling in flight) and kettle (used when flying in large numbers). What is a group of storks feeding on fish in Lake Ziway, Ethiopia. © Martin Harvey/GettyThe term 'A mustering of storks' derives from muster meaning a general gathering or assembly; while mustering is applied particularly in the Antipodes as well as also being one of the collective nouns used for peacocks. The other collective nouns for storks include the shorter muster as well as flight and phalanx (used when migrating). What is a group of moles called? European mole emerging from a molehill © Arterra/Contributor/GettyThe term 'A labour of moles called? European mole emerging from a molehill of the common good. Indeed they have always been thought of as industrious, with both Virgil and Dryden talking of "the blind laborious mole" even if the evidence of it above ground has proven an unwelcome sight to farmers causing moles to have long been regarded as vermin. Their other collective nouns include fortress, movement and company. What is a group of squirrels called? Eurasian red squirrel or ringtail possum. Dreys are usually built from twigs, dry leaves, and grass and tend to be assembled in the forks of a tall tree. The word squirrel is derived from its bushy tail which was once thought to serve as an umbrella and comes from the Greek 'skia' meaning shade and 'oura' meaning tail. Their other collective nouns include squad, colony and scurry. What is a group of rhinos called? Rare Northern white rhinos in Laikipia, Kenya. © Manoj Shah/GettyThe term 'A crash of rhinoceroses' refers to the fact that while a rhino can run up to 30 miles per hour it can only see 30 feet ahead. So when they run together in confidence and move forward at full speed they're not exactly sure what is in front of them and hence could cause a crash. As big herbivores they impact their habitat greatly spreading around seeds and disrupting the vegetation, which helps other animals in their environments. Their other collective nouns include herd and stubbornness. Main image: A family of burrowing owls in Florida, USA. © Carlos Carreno/Getty

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