



# Glenveagh Education Centre



## Guide to Identifying Birds



# Ireland's Birds

With a variety of habitats across our country, it is easy to see why Ireland is home to **over 450** species of bird. Ranging from those that we see in our gardens, seabirds that nest on coastal cliffs, hunting raptors in uplands and hill areas and birds that hold a special place in Irish folklore. We see many of these birds in our day to day lives, but do we know how to identify them?



Identifying birds can be difficult but in this booklet you will find some resources that may make this easier for you. These vary from identifying their call, the colours and shape of their feathers, the types of habitats that they live in as well as how they fly.



This booklet contains only a few of the birds that can be found in Ireland but hopefully it will enable you to grasp the tools of how to identify some common and not-so-common bird types.





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# Introduction to Identification

Here are some tips to help narrow down how to identify birds.

## 1. Where is it?

The following habitats will narrow down the types of bird you can identify:

Farmland, Grassland, Lakes, Heath, Woodland, Mountains, Rivers & Streams, Seashore, Bog, Urban areas, Marshland

## 2. How big or small is it?

Bird sizes are important to identification for example: Robins are a typically small bird yet a Buzzard is a large bird.

## 3. What season is it?

Some birds are resident in Ireland i.e. they live here all year round, but some species are summer or winter visitors. For example, Swallows visit in Spring until the end of Summer and Brent Geese visit in the Winter season.

## 4. What does it sound like?

Cracking the call of a bird takes quite a bit of practice but there are some very helpful resources that help identify which bird it is. For example, a Stonechat sounds like two stone hitting together. There are some excellent apps that help identify birdsong such as BirdNet.

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# Garden Birds

Here are some common garden birds you might find outside and an interesting fact about them!



## Robin/Spideog

One of Ireland's most common birds, with a red chest and a black pointed beak. Likes to eat insects and some fruits and can often be seen at bird tables. They live in Ireland all year round and are commonly associated with Christmas.



## Great Tit/ Meantán Mór

A member of the Tit family, they are recognised by their black head and white cheeks with a bright yellow breast. Like to eat insects, seeds and nuts and are found all year in Ireland. Their call sometimes can sound like 'teacher teacher'.



## Chiffchaff/ Tiuf-teaf

A summer visitor to Ireland, these birds live on insects and are small in size. They are slightly green with a paler breast and dark legs. Their song is 'tsilp-tslip-tslip-tslip' repeated up to 6 times.



## Chaffinch/ Rí Rua

Has a distinctive reddish-brown chest in the male while the female is green and yellow.



## Blackbird

A member of the Tit family, they are ree found all year in Ireland. Their call sometimes can sound like 'teacher teacher'.



## Wren

A summer visitor to Ireland, these birds live on insects and are small in size. They are slightly green with a paler breast and dark legs. Their song is 'tsilp-tslip-tslip-tslip' repeated up to 6 times.



# Birds of Prey

We have some very fascinating birds of prey. Here are some you find in Ireland:



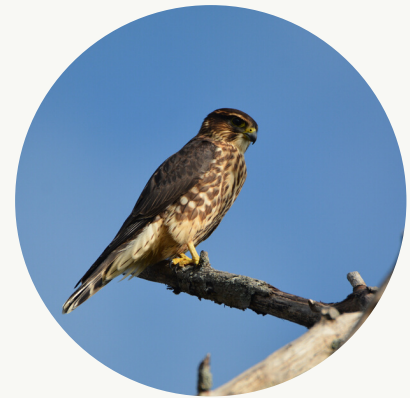
## Golden Eagle/ Iolar firéan

Re-introduced to Ireland in Glenveagh National Park in the early 2000s, this is the largest bird of prey in Ireland. They live here year round and have a golden head with dark brown and white wings. They can have a wingspan of 6m long and live in upland areas.



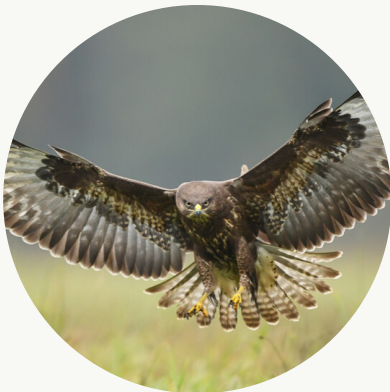
## Peregrine Falcon/ Fabhcún gorm

The fastest known diving bird in the world, this predator can swoop for its prey at speeds of up to 240km/hr. They are a medium sized bird and can be found on cliff edges across coastlines, upland hills and even city buildings.



## Merlin/ Meirliún

This raptor visits in the summertime to upland hill areas but can be found in the lowlands in the Winter. They have a short hooked bill that helps them tear at their prey. Males are blue-grey in colour while females are brown-grey.



## Buzzard/Clamhán

Perhaps one of our more commonly spotted birds of prey, the Buzzard has a loud call used during flight. They are widespread across Ireland and are a resident species. They can be seen soaring the skies and nest in hillsides and trees.



## Kestrel/ Pocaire gaoithe

This smaller bird of prey likes to hover when hunting for its prey such as small mammals e.g. field mice. They nest in trees, buildings and cliffs across a variety of habitats. They are widespread throughout the country and live here year-round.



## Sparrowhawk/Spioróg

Another smaller raptor this bird has broad wings and a long tail. Males are blue-grey while females are brown-grey. They have an unusual rapid high pitched chattering call mainly heard during the breeding season.



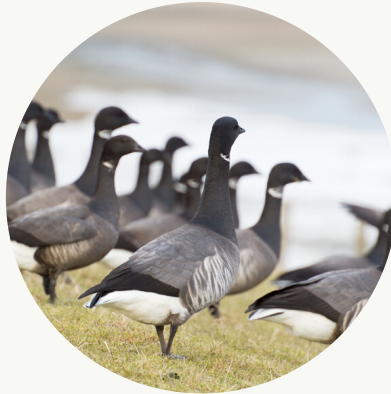
# Seabirds



## Herring Gull

### /Faoileán scadáin

Found all across our coasts these are a common site when visiting the seaside. They are easily recognised by their grey wings, white chest and yellow hooked bill with a very loud call. They scavenge around fishing boats for excess bait as well as hunt for fish and small crabs.



## Brent Goose/ Cadhan

A visitor to Irish shores in the winter from Canada, this goose has a black head, white ring around its neck and makes a "rhut rhut" sound. They feed mostly on eel-grass near estuaries as well as grassy fields near the seashore. They can be found in Ireland from October - April.



## Common Sandpiper/ Gobadán coiteann

This small wader visits Ireland in the summer and can be found stepping in and out of areas of shallow water. They have a long high pitched whistle "weet.....weet". They eat flies and aquatic insects and can be found along estuaries and brackish waters.



## Cormorant/Broigheall

A large seabird that is found all year in Ireland. They swim in the water and actively dive for its food (fish). They have large webbed feet to help with swimming and can also be seen on coastal rock outcrops and near the bottoms of cliff edges.



## Gannet/Gainead

A resident seabird, it is one of the largest seabirds in Ireland with the ability to dive up to 40m for its food. Live in colonies on sea cliffs which can be seen from distances due to their white colour. They breed in three sites across Ireland, Bull Rock, Little Skellig and Great Saltee Islands.



## Oystercatcher/Roilleach

Another wading seabird, it is often confused for a puffin because of its small black and white shape but it has a distinctive long beak which allows it to burrow into the sand to find its prey. They nest around beaches, dunes and rocky areas in the coast and are found year-round.