

# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BIRD SPOTTING CLOSE TO HOME

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**It's easy to forget there is a rich and varied habitat in your garden; so don't neglect the possibilities of your outside space however big or small.** While many people are interested in birds, relatively few are able to identify more than a few distinctive species. Learn to identify birds close to home with this handy spotters' guide including top tips to help you on your discoveries.



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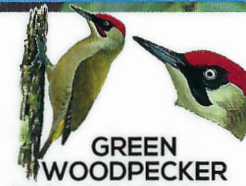
## COAL TIT

White cheeks, nape-patch and double wing-bar. Sexes similar. Juvenile has nape, cheeks and underparts washed dull yellow.

## GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER



A little bigger than a Starling, boldly marked black and white, with red vent and undertail coverts. Male has red patch on hindcrown, female lacks red on head.



## GREEN WOODPECKER

Jackdaw-sized, with red crown, greenish-yellow lower back and rump conspicuous in flight. Male has red centre to black moustache. Juvenile duller than adult, with streaky markings over entire plumage.



## BLACKCAP

Upperparts greyish, cap black in males and warm brown in females, placed at a jaunty angle on head and not covering eye. Bill and legs grey.



## SWIFT

Body streamlined, wings long, narrow and sickle-shaped, tail forked (although looks pointed when not spread), plumage blackish-brown with a paler throat. Normally seen in fast, flickering, wheeling flight but can cling to vertical surfaces. Spring and summer visitor.



## HOUSE MARTIN

Upperparts glossy blue-black with a startling white rump and white underparts and underwings. Sexes similar. Spring and summer visitor.



## NUTHATCH

Squat and short-tailed with long, dagger-like bill. Sexes similar, but male has darker and more contrasting brick-red flanks and vent.



## SISKIN

Small and greenish with white, finely streaked belly and flanks and conical pointed bill. Wings black with bold yellow markings.



## WREN

Tiny, the short tail is almost always cocked upwards. Overall rich brown, finely barred blackish, with distinct pale eyebrow. Sexes and ages alike. Moves around jerkily in dense cover, flying rapidly from one patch to another.



## CHAFFINCH

Sparrow-sized, with two broad white wing-bars and white out tail feathers. Rump greenish. Summer male (top) has face and underparts pinkish-buff and crown and nape blue-grey.

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## DUNNOCK

Robin-sized with a fine bill. Plumage rather dark, generally sparrow-like but sides of head, throat and breast blue-grey.



## JACKDAW

Greyish-black with a pale grey cowl covering sides of neck and nape. Sexes and ages very similar. Flight fast, flappy and agile, note short bill and short, broad neck.



## HOUSE SPARROW

Upperparts dull brown streaked blackish, underparts dirty pale grey. Male has black mask between eye and bill, large ragged black bib and chestnut sides to grey crown.



## GOLDCREST

Tiny. Sides of crown black, framing yellow central stripe. Dark beady eye, surrounded by a broad but diffuse whitish eye-ring, gives a rather startled expression.



## GOLDFINCH

Medium-sized finch with conical, pointed, off-white bill. Sexes similar. Juvenile lacks red face, having a finely streaked greyish-white head and soft streaks on breast and flanks.



## COLLARED DOVE

Pale, medium-small dove with a relatively long tail. Upperparts fawn with blackish flight feathers and broad white tip to tail, head and underparts pale fawn-grey with narrow black and white half-collar on back of neck. Bill black, legs dull red. Juvenile duller and lacks half-collar.



## JAY

Often seen in flight, slipping from tree to tree or flying longer distances from wood to wood; often carrying a bill-full of acorns in autumn. Wings broad and rounded, flight floppy. Black tail and white on rump and wings conspicuous, blue on wings less so. Body colour pinkish.



## ROOK

Adults have greyish face produced by pale skin around base of bill and a distinctive profile with vertical forehead and high peaked crown.



## BLACKBIRD

Large thrush with long, full tail. Male black with narrow yellow eye-ring and orange-yellow bill (dark in young males). Female sooty brown with paler throat and brownish breast that is vaguely streaked darker; bill varies from dark brown to yellow. Juvenile warm brown, speckled paler, with dark bill.

## TIP: KEEP A NOTEBOOK



However good your memory is, a notebook is a more reliable way to record facts about the birds that you see. As well as details of the birds that you recognise, take notes when you see an unfamiliar bird. Writing things down helps us to look more carefully at the bird - e.g. what colour are the legs, where exactly is that white stripe on the head? Even better, do a sketch!



## BLUE TIT

Cap ultramarine blue, wings and tail blue, underparts yellow. Sexes very similar. Juveniles rather drabber, with yellowish face and greenish cap.



## GREAT TIT

Cap black, cheeks white, upperparts greenish with a single whitish wing-bar, underparts yellow with bold black central stripe extending down from black bib.



## GREENFINCH

Chunky, sparrow-sized finch with heavy, deep-based, dull pinkish bill and yellow flashes in wings and sides of tail.



## LONG-TAILED TIT

A tiny 'ball of fluff' with a very long, narrow tail (c. 60% of total length). Sexes similar. Juvenile shorter-tailed and overall much duller and sootier.



## TIP: IMPORTANCE OF WATER



Consider adding a bird bath to your garden to encourage a bird-friendly habitat. Birds need water for drinking and bathing. Water is particularly important during the winter when natural supplies may be frozen, and in dry, hot weather during the summer when water can be hard to find.



### FERAL PIGEON/ROCK DOVE

Feral Pigeons are descended from Rock Doves and come in all sorts of colours. Head and upperparts grey, with two short blackish wing-bars and a glossy green and violet patch on side of neck; eye dark, bill pink with yellow tip.



### ROBIN

Orange-red covers both face and breast. Sexes similar. Juveniles lack red; throat and breast have ochre spots and darker scales and the upperparts are also spotted ochre.



### RING-NECKED PARAKEET

Green overall with darker flight feathers, grey feet, pale yellow eye encircled by a fine reddish eyering, and red bill. Adult males have longer tail than females. Most common in southern Britain.



### BLACK-HEADED GULL

Small and graceful. Adult has pale grey upperparts with broad white leading edge to outer wing (the best field mark), bordered by dark trailing edge and extensive dark colouring on tip of underwing. In breeding plumage head dark brown, bill and legs red.



### PHEASANT

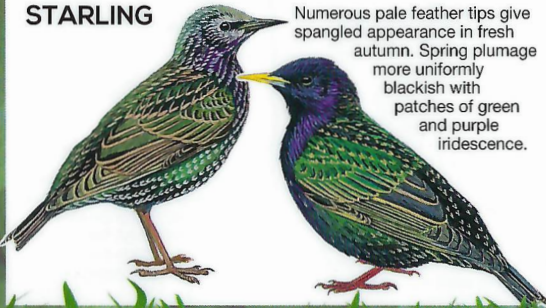
Male has glossy green head with extensive red skin. Otherwise variable, many have a white collar and greyish rump, some are rather dark over whole head and breast. Females uniformly brown with dark spots.



### PIED WAGTAIL

In all plumages long black tail with white outer tail feathers and two whitish wing-bars are distinctive.

### STARLING



Numerous pale feather tips give spangled appearance in fresh autumn. Spring plumage more uniformly blackish with patches of green and purple iridescence.



### MAGPIE

Bold black-and-white patterned, with rainbow gloss on the long, graduated tail. Looks short-winged and a little ungainly in flight. Juvenile duller, with a shorter tail. Often seen in small groups, foraging on the ground and in trees.



### SWALLOW

Uniform steely blue upperparts, dark red forehead and throat bordered by blue-black breast-band, pale underwings and deeply forked tail with long outer tail feathers. Spring and summer visitor.

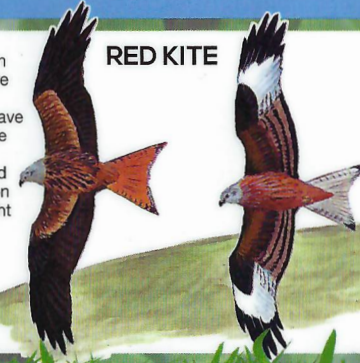
## TIP: PROVIDING SHELTER

Growing climbers against walls, bushes, trees and hedgerows can provide brilliant shelter, as well as roosting and breeding sites for birds. Consider adding a bird box to your garden - natural roosting and nesting sites can be increasingly hard for animals to find and our gardens give us the chance to give them an ongoing safe alternative.



Tail rusty-red on upside, more greyish-fawn below, wings have contrasting pale bar across upperwings and whitish patch on underside. Flight graceful and acrobatic, wings often bent at wrist.

### RED KITE



### CARRION CROW

A powerfully built crow with a strong bill and legs. Walks on ground with steady gait. Often seen alone but may form small groups; however, much less sociable than Jackdaws or Rooks. Flies with steady, deep, 'rowing' wingbeats.



### HOODED CROW

Hooded Crow has a grey body with black hood, wings and tail. In a belt from the Clyde to Caithness in Scotland the Hooded Crow and Carrion Crow ranges meet and they hybridise commonly.



### WOODPIGEON

Noted for short legs and waddling walk, bigger than Feral Pigeons, with distinctive white markings on its neck-sides and wing edges, as well as a yellowish bill and white eyes, and a beautiful rosy-pink chest.



### MISTLE THRUSH

Large, long-tailed thrush with pale brown upperparts, and whitish underparts marked with large, bobby round black spots. Shows prominent whitish fringes to wing feathers, white tail corners, and white underwings.



### FIELDFARE

Large, rather long-tailed thrush. Head grey, separated from grey back and rump by rich brown saddle, tail black, underparts white, heavily streaked darker, and breast ochre. Winter visitor.



### HERRING GULL

Pale grey upperparts with neat white trailing edge to wing and black wing-tips marked with white 'mirrors'. Bill yellow with a red spot near tip, legs pink.



### REDWING

Upperparts dark brown, underparts off-white with numerous short soft streaks. Key features are bold whitish eyebrow and rusty-red flanks and underwing. Winter visitor.



### SPARROWHAWK

Male jackdaw-sized, female rather larger. Wings short, broad and blunt-tipped, tail long. Flight combines rapid, pigeon-like wingbeats with short glides; also soars.

### BULLFINCH

Large dumpy finch with stubby black bill, grey back and broad white wing-bars and white rump contrasting with black wings and tail. Male (left) has rose-pink cheeks and underparts, female (right) drab grey below, juvenile even duller and lacks black cap.



### CHIFFCHAFF

Upperparts olive-green, underparts pale but rather drab. A pale eye-ring, though not prominent, is often more obvious than the pale eyebrow. Can be resident, but usually spring and summer visitor.



### SONG THRUSH

Medium-sized thrush, spots on underparts very subtly V-shaped. Sexes similar. Juvenile spotted buff on upperparts.



### LESSER REDPOLL

Streaky overall, with blackish wings (the black ground colour partly hidden by buff and whitish feather fringes) and pale wingbars.

### TAWNY OWL

Plumage an intricate mix of black, white, brown and grey, forming superb camouflage and making it hard to see at a daytime roost. Large dark eyes are set in a rather plain facial disc. Sexes similar. Active at night, but unless disturbed Tawny Owls do not fly in the daytime.



Content and illustrations taken from the **RSPB Pocket Guide to British Birds**

