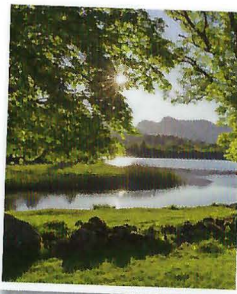


BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BIRD SPOTTING COUNTRY WALKS

Whatever scenery you take in on your country walk, birds are sure to feature! Forests are home to a mixture of insect-and seed-eating birds both close to the ground and high in the treetops while open grassland, hedgerows, meadows, and less cultivated fields all offer productive habitats for a variety of birds. Water increases the diversity of habitats and food in a landscape, and so increases the number and variety of birds.



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First Fold: Fold the sheet in half along this dotted line

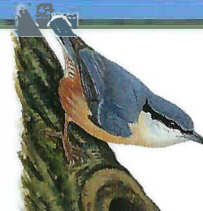
BUZZARD

A medium-sized raptor, usually seen soaring high in the sky. At rest appears hunched and 'neckless'. In flight wings broad and blunt, with well-fingered tips, head not projecting beyond wings, tail short and broad. Plumage very variable.



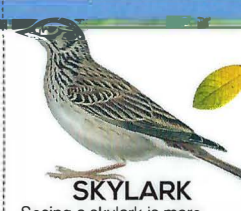
NUTHATCH

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



SKYLARK

Seeing a skylark is more challenging than hearing one. The male rises from near his nest on the ground and flies high. Pointed crests help tell them apart from other smallish brown birds.



REED BUNTING

Medium-sized bunting with small dark bill. In summer male has black hood with white moustache, collar, and underparts. Female and immature are brown streaked blackish above, off-white or buffish below with smudgy streaks.



MERLIN

Male blue-grey on crown and upperparts, wings and tail similarly blue-grey with black tip to tail. Face and underparts dirty white with whiter eyebrow and dark moustache. Female has dark brown upperparts, wings and tail boldly barred, underparts off white, heavily blotched blackish.



CORMORANT

Large, with elongated body and neck, long tail and long, straight, hook-tipped bill. Mostly blackish, but cheeks always pale, throat white and bill greyish with bare yellow skin at base.



JAY

This gorgeously colourful woodland bird is a member of the crow family, and is reluctant to show off its beautiful pink, blue and black-and-white plumage.



LESSER WHITETHROAT

Plain grey-brown above with grey head and tail and white outer tail feathers. Ear-coverts usually darker than remainder of head, forming a dark mask. Spring and summer visitor.



REED WARBLER

Slender warbler with rather long, pointed bill. Very plain, although rump usually paler and more rusty-brown. Under-tail coverts long and full, and tip of tail graduated. Sexes similar. Spring and summer visitor.



HERON

Tall grey bird with a crested head and long, dagger-like bill. When it takes flight, it looks prehistoric with its huge broad wings, gangling legs, and folded-in neck.

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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.



SWALLOW

Delightful chuckling song, and is striking in appearance with its dark metallic-blue upperside, creamy belly, red throat and very long, forked tail. Spring and summer visitor.

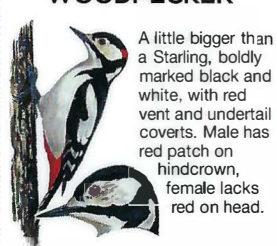


YELLOWHAMMER

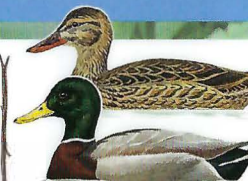
Sparrow-sized, relatively long-tailed bunting with greyish bill and rusty rump. Summer male has yellow head and underparts, smudgy rufous breast-band and finely streaked flanks. In winter, yellow areas largely hidden by duller feather tips. Female similar to winter male but even less yellow, immature duller still, with no obvious yellow in plumage.



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.



MALLARD

Mallard males have shiny green heads, white neck-collars and chestnut-brown chests, while the females are mottled brown and produce the familiar loud quacking call.



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.



BLUE TIT

This colourful, acrobatic little bird is best identified by its blue cap, white cheeks and eyebrows, and bright yellow belly.



GOLDCREST

Britain's smallest bird, the goldcrest prefers coniferous woodland. Olive green with a yellow, black-edged crown, the goldcrest is tiny with a needle-like bill.



LESSER REDPOLL

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

TIP: TIME IT RIGHT



If you're planning a birdwatching walk, get out early and late, especially in hot summer weather when birds are much more active early and late in the day. The light is usually much better too, allowing you to see colours more accurately and avoiding heat-haze.

BARN OWL

This beautiful owl is easily recognised, with its mostly white plumage and its effortless, wafting, low-level flight on long wings.



MEADOW PIPIT

Light brown upperparts and pale underparts marked with lines of black spots that form uneven streaks. Hind claw very long; evident when bird is perched on a wire or twig. May form small flocks in autumn.



SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

Characteristically perches rather upright, flicks its wings, and sallies out to catch insects before returning to the same or a new perch. Spring and summer visitor.

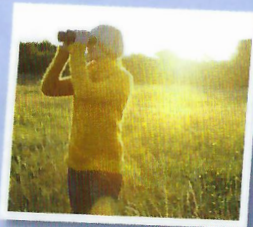


CHIFFCHAFF

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.

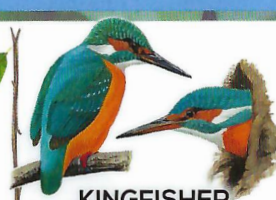
TIP: USE THE LIGHT

Plan your route, or your approach to an interesting bird, to have the sun behind you or to the side. It is astonishing how much difference this can make, and poor views of a near-silhouette as you squint into the sun can be transformed into clear views with every colour visible.



RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

Upperparts finely barred and streaked; face ochre and underparts grey with a dark horseshoe-shaped patch on breast and rusty bars on flanks. Bill and legs greyish.



KINGFISHER

The thrill of a kingfisher sighting is your reward for walking slowly and quietly along a river-side. This dazzling jewel of a bird has iridescent blue upperparts and an orange belly.



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.



RED GROUSE

Rusty brown all over, finely barred and vermiculated, with whitish feet and black tail. In flight shows white underwing. Males on average darker, with a tiny white streak at base of bill and, in spring, bright red wattle over eye.



LINNET

Medium-sized finch with stubby grey bill, rather plain face with diffused paler broken eye-ring and cheek spot, white patch on closed wing and white in tail sides.



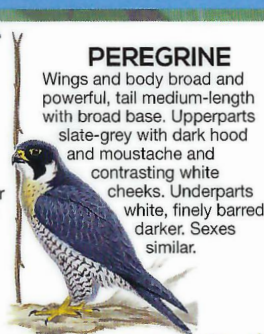
ROOK

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



TREE SPARROW

Crown chestnut, cheeks and collar on hindneck white, neat black bib and black spot on cheeks. Sexes similar. Juvenile similar to adult but head pattern duller. Often quiet and unassuming and thus easily overlooked.



PEREGRINE

Wings and body broad and powerful, tail medium-length with broad base. Upperparts slate-grey with dark hood and moustache and contrasting white cheeks. Underparts white, finely barred darker. Sexes similar.



GREAT CRESTED GREBE

Elegant slim outline and crested, frilled head. One of our most attractive and distinctive swimming birds. It lives on larger lakes with pairs performing a courtship 'dance' in spring. Sexes similar, however plumage differs summer/winter.



GREY PARTRIDGE

Adult has upperparts finely barred and streaked; face ochre and underparts grey with a dark horseshoe-shaped patch on breast and rusty bars on flanks. Bill and legs greyish.



KESTREL

Medium-sized falcon with long wings and tail; note contrastingly dark outer half of wings. Male has blue-grey head, dark moustache, chestnut upperparts and blue-grey tail with a dark band. Female similar but crown and tail browner, upperparts duller brown, barred rather than spotted.



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.

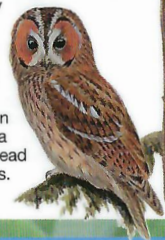


WILLOW WARBLER

Upperparts olive-green, underparts pale, often with subtle yellow tones. Pale eyebrow though not prominent, often more obvious than pale eye-ring. Sexes similar. Spring and summer visitor.

TAWNY OWL

The largest and most abundant of British owls, the Tawny Owl is nonetheless difficult to see, as it is strictly nocturnal and lives in wooded habitats. It is intricately mottled brown all over, with a large round head and dark eyes.



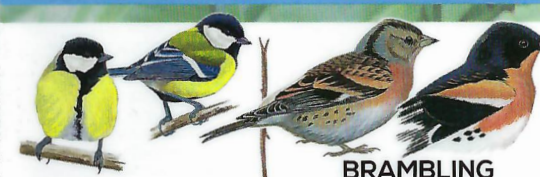
COAL TIT

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



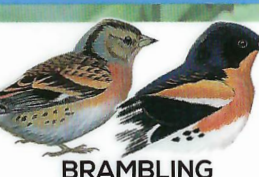
RED KITE

Tail rusty-red on upperside, 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.



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.



BRAMBLING

Similar to Chaffinch in size and shape, but has white rump and no white in tail. Male has black head and upperparts. Female and immature have mottled brown upperparts with plain greyish nape, framed by darker stripes, and greyish sides to head. Winter visitor.



GARDEN WARBLER

Overall plain, but has dark beady eye in a 'gentle' open face, mouse-grey patch on sides of neck, greyish legs and stubby blue-grey bill. Sexes similar. Spring and summer visitor.



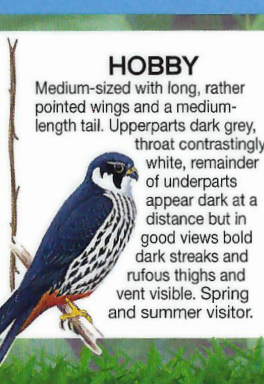
SNIPE

Dumpy, medium-sized wader with short legs and extremely long, straight bill. Plumage brown, cryptically marked, with boldly striped head and white stripes down upperparts.



BLACKCAP

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



HOBBY

Medium-sized with long, rather pointed wings and a medium-length tail. Upperparts dark grey, throat contrastingly white, remainder of underparts appear dark at a distance but in good views bold dark streaks and rufous thighs and vent visible. Spring and summer visitor.



PHEASANT

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



SEDGE WARBLER

Upperparts warm brown, diffusely streaked (can appear plain at a distance), with fairly bold off-white eyebrow contrasting with darker crown. Underparts white. Spring and summer visitor.



TUFTED DUCK

Males are black-and-white while females are dark chocolate brown – both sport a droopy crest at the backs of their heads. Tufted ducks are expert divers – in clear water you can see them swimming underwater with powerful kicks of their large webbed feet.



CUCKOO

Male has grey upperparts, head and breast, underparts barred black on white. Bill, eye and feet yellow. Sexes similar but females have browner barred breast, scarce 'hepatic' females reddish-brown above, strongly barred darker. Spring and summer visitor.



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

