

Notes for Teachers

More Garden Birds

Learn 12 More Birds



Páirceanna Náisiúnta
National Parks

We learnt 12 garden birds in a previous lesson.
But, of course, there are many more birds to learn.
So let's learn 12 more.
We'll be expert ornithologists after this!



What Age Group?

The Powerpoint presentation can be used for any age group. Older children can investigate each species in more detail. But even infants will appreciate the different birds.

We have different optional activities to follow the slideshow - colouring in sheets, crosswords, identification posters and more.



Siskin - Siscín



Spinus spinus

Slide 2

Identification

- Yellow rump.
- Yellow and black on the wings.
- Males have a black cap and bib.
- Females are greyer.

Siskins live mainly in woodland, especially in evergreen woods. Their fine pointed beak is perfect for picking seeds from cones.

In winter, siskins move into gardens.

Diet

Seeds, especially from pine and alder trees.
Peanuts and niger seed at birdfeeders.

Woodland Habitats

Many of our garden birds prefer to live in woodlands. As Ireland's woodlands disappeared, these birds learned to survive in hedgerows. A good hedgerow is like a long thin woodland. Gardens are also good for woodland birds, especially if they have trees and shrubs.



Deciduous woodland is the best woodland habitat in Ireland, especially if the trees are native species.



Mixed woodlands have both deciduous and evergreen trees. They are also great for wildlife.



Commercial evergreen plantations are least good for wildlife, although some birds, like siskins, love them.

Long-tailed Tit - Meantán Earrfhada

Aegithalus caudatus

Slide 3

Identification

- The tail is very long - much longer than the tiny body.
- This has earned them the nickname of 'flying teaspoon'.
- The feathers are pink, black and white.

This is another woodland species that likes to visit gardens.

Long-tailed Tits move in family groups. They twitter constantly as they move through the trees. This helps them stay together as a group.

Diet

Insects and seeds.
Also fat and peanuts at bird feeders.



Wren - Dreolín



Troglodytes troglodytes

Slide 4

Identification

- A very small brown bird.
- Short upright tail.

The wren is not Ireland's smallest bird, although many people think it is. Our smallest bird is the Goldcrest.

Wrens sing very loudly, often from deep cover. They may be easier to hear than to see, as they can be secretive.

In parts of rural Ireland the wren used to be hunted by 'wren boys' on St. Stephen's Day.

Diet

Insects.

Record Breakers

Ireland's birds come in many different sizes and shapes, all fit for a different lifestyle. Sometimes the record is up for debate. Is the biggest bird the one with the greatest wing span? Or the tallest? Or the heaviest? Some people think the Mute Swan is our biggest bird because it is so heavy.



Ireland's smallest bird is the Goldcrest. It weighs just 6 or 7 grams.



Ireland's largest bird is the White-tailed Sea Eagle. It has a wingspan of 2.4 m.



Ireland's fastest bird is the Peregrine falcon. It can reach speeds of 390 km per hour when diving on prey.

Pied Wagtail - Glasóg Shráide

Motacilla alba

Slide 5

Identification

- Black and white with a long tail.

Wagtails are busy little birds. As they run up and down hunting insects, their tail constantly bobs up and down.

Near water, you may also see a yellow and grey wagtail called the Grey Wagtail. It also has a bobbing tail.

Diet

Insects.



Sparrowhawk - Spioróg



Accipiter nisus

Slide 6

Identification

- Both male and female have a pale breast with brown barring.
- Females are larger and are brown.
- Males are smaller with a grey back.

Sparrowhawks hunt small birds in woodlands, farmland and gardens. They are ambush predators - they suddenly swoop over a hedge to snatch a small bird.

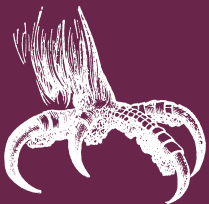
Birds of prey have sharp talons to catch their prey. They also have a hooked beak to rip into their prey once they have caught it.

Diet

Small birds.

Birds of Prey

Birds of prey, also called raptors, are essential to healthy ecosystems. Different species hunt and nest in different habitats. They also hunt different prey species. They may hunt rabbits, or mice, or birds, or fish.



Sharp talons are used to catch prey.



A hooked beak is used to rip up the prey once it is caught.



Excellent eyesight helps them spot their prey even at a distance.

Starling - Druid

Identification

- At first glance, it may look like a black bird. In fact, they are covered in spots and have a rainbow sheen.

In winter, starlings form enormous flocks. Before they roost for the night, these flocks fly in amazing aerial displays known as murmurations.

Diet

Worms, insects, fruit, seeds.

Sturnus vulgaris

Slide 7



Woodpigeon - Colm Coille

Columba palumbus

Slide 8

Identification

- A large grey bird.
- Small white patch on the neck.

Typically woodpigeons live in farmland, but they have moved into gardens and towns.

Woodpigeons are considered a pest species because they eat seeds and young crops. Farmers are legally allowed to shoot woodpigeons for this reason.

Diet

Seeds, grain, buds and leaves.



Pigeons and Doves

Pigeons are usually larger and heavier than doves, although scientifically there is no real distinction.

Pigeons and doves have been domesticated and bred into many different shapes and colours.



In cities you often see feral pigeons. These are domesticated birds that have gone wild again. Many people consider them dirty and think of them as pests.

Many people keep racing pigeons that fly home from long distances at fast speeds.

Carrier pigeons used to be used to carry messages.



Great Spotted Woodpecker - Mórchnagaire Breac

Slide 9

Dendrocopus major

Identification

- Black and white.
- May have red patches on the head and under the tail depending on age and sex.

Woodpeckers disappeared from Ireland when our forests were cut down (over 200 years ago). Recently they reappeared, most likely from Wales. Breeding was confirmed in Co. Wicklow in 2009, and since then they have spread widely. They are now found in almost every county.

Diet

Invertebrates. They hammer wood with their beak to find insects buried in the wood. Also peanuts at bird feeders.



Crows

Crows are very clever birds.

Ireland has 8 crow species. Jackdaws, magpies, rooks, hooded crows and ravens are the commonest. Chough and carrion crows are the rarest.

Jays are the most colourful. Most crows are mostly black, but jays are pink and brown.



Ravens are our largest crows. They nest on cliffs and mountains.

Hooded crows are easy to recognise. They are grey and black.



The chough is only found on rocky coasts around north, west and south Ireland.

Jackdaw - Cág

Corvus monedula

Slide 10



Identification

- One of our smaller crows.
- Black with grey on the back of the neck.

Like most crows, jackdaws are omnivores - they eat almost everything.

Jackdaws make a nest of sticks. They like to nest in chimneys. They also nest in old ruined buildings.

Diet

Omnivore.

Magpie - Snag Breac

Pica pica

Slide 11

Identification

- A black and white bird.

Magpies are one of the easiest birds to identify. They are common everywhere, are very noisy and often hang around in groups.

Many people dislike magpies because they will kill and eat the eggs and chicks of other birds. However, it is important to remember that this is their place in the ecosystem, and they are not being mean.

Diet: Omnivore.



House Martin - Gabhlán Binne

Delichon urbicum

Slide 12

Identification

- It has a distinctive white rump.

House martins spend the winter in Africa. They come back to Ireland in spring, to breed.

The nests are made of mud and stuck on the outside of a house, usually under the eaves.

Diet

Flying insects.



Swallow - Fáinleog

Hirundo rustica

Slide 13



Identification

- Red face.
- A pair of long tail streamers.

Like house martins, swallows arrive from Africa to breed here in the summer.

Unlike house martins, swallows make their mud nest inside a shed or a barn, never stuck on the outside of the house.

Diet

Flying insects.

Migration



Many birds migrate south to avoid cold weather. Geese come south from the Arctic to spend the winter with us.

Swallows, swifts and martins feed on flying insects. When the summer ends, most of our Irish insects have died off for the season. So the swallows are forced to fly south, looking for food.

Our swallows fly all the way to South Africa, a journey of over 9,500 kms.

The swallows' journey takes 6 weeks.

They fly about 320 kms each day.



Some birds do not survive migration. They may die of hunger or exhaustion. Or they may be killed by predators or by human hunters.

Glossary - Gluais

Domesticated

A domesticated animal is one that has been tamed.
For example, a dog is a domesticated wolf.



Ecosystem

An ecosystem is a habitat and all the species that interact with each other and with the habitat.



Pest

A pest species is one that is considered by some people to be a problem.
For example, a chicken farmer might consider a fox to be a pest.
But someone that feeds their local foxes and enjoys watching them does not think of a fox as a pest.



Predator & Prey

A predator is a hunter of other animals and birds.
A fox is a predator. Rabbits are the fox's prey.



Invertebrate

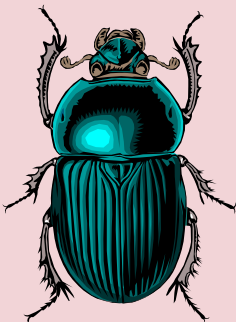
An invertebrate is a creature without a backbone.

The term encompasses true insects (with six legs), snails, millipedes, centipedes, spiders, crabs and lobsters, and many, many more creatures. Most are small and are food for a wide variety of other creatures.

You may prefer to use the term 'bug', although be aware that there is a scientific group within the insects that are officially called bugs.

So all insects and bugs are invertebrates, but not all invertebrates are insects or bugs!

Many teachers call them all 'mini beasts' or 'creepy crawlies'.



Protect Nature

We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to learn, love and protect Nature.



Learn

Learning to recognize our native plants and animals



Love

Growing to love Nature.
We love what we know.



Protect

Protecting our Nature.
We protect what we love.

Follow On Activities

Each of our lessons have a toolkit of other activities, designed for various ages.

These include colouring-in sheets for the younger children, crosswords, quizzes and other activities for the older ones.

Why not take your children out into nature? We have notes to help you lead a nature walk.

What Next?

Have a look at our website for more nature lessons.

We would love to hear from you

We hope your class enjoyed this lesson, and that you found the resources easy to use.

If you have any suggestions on this lesson, or ideas for future lessons, please email us.

