

Number 19 SUMMER 2019



# BIRD DETECTIVES

The magazine for Junior Members of BirdWatch Ireland



SPRING  
ALIVE!

THE BIRD  
TRICKSTER,  
RINGED PLOVER

HOW TO BE  
A GOOD  
BIRDWATCHER

PLAY COLOUR  
BINGO

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# Welcome!

## Welcome to our summer edition of Bird Detectives!

It has been a very strange year so far for all of us. The schools have been closed and you have had to spend a lot of time at home because of Covid-19.

However, there are some positives, and because people all across the country have been spending more time at home, they have also been noticing wildlife in their gardens and close to their homes that they have never had time to appreciate before. That is the beauty of watching wildlife, you can do it anytime and anywhere and there is always something exciting unfolding!



Ira Martin

Keep listening for a Cuckoo this summer

So, there has never been a better time to become familiar with the birds in your garden and close to your home, and this issue is all about using the time at home to learn more about the birds and wildlife on your doorstep!

In this issue are some useful tips on 'how to be a good birdwatcher'. You can practice your birdwatching skills and try to identify the different birds that live in your garden or close to your home, try and figure out where they are nesting, and watch them raise their young.

Summer holidays and trips abroad may be postponed, but nobody told this to our summer migrants! These birds make the trip from Africa each spring, as they do every year, so keep a look out for these... and you can put your Bird Detective skills to good use by logging sightings of my friends that migrate here for the summer.

When you see or hear migrants, such as Swallow, Sand Martin, Swift and Cuckoo, go onto the Spring Alive website [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net) to enter this information. You can then track the movements of these birds as they travel from Africa, across Europe and to Ireland.



Michael O'Clery

Sand Martins are one of the first migrants to arrive each spring

As well as these usual suspects, I would like to introduce the newest member of the Spring Alive family, which is the **Ringed Plover**. Learn all about this clever trickster of the bird world on pages 5 to 9. If you are lucky enough to see them, please don't forget to enter them on the Spring Alive website for me!

Finally, all of us at BirdWatch Ireland would like to thank our friends at Verizon Media for sponsoring the publication of this issue of *Bird Detectives*. Their support is very much appreciated.

Shelduck Holmes

Editorial Address: Bird Detectives, Unit 20 , Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, A63 RW83.

Edited by John Lusby and Niall Hatch, with special thanks to our contributors this issue: Niamh Fitzgerald, Barbara Sullivan and Ruth Hanniffy of the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

Design by Michael O'Clery.

Cover pic: Ringed Plover by John Fox.



# Interview:

## Henry Dalzell

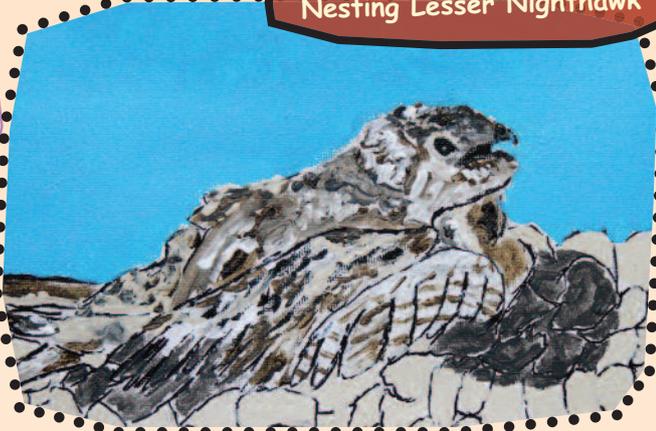
All photos by Liam Dalzell

Niamh Fitzgerald interviews Henry Dalzell

Henry Dalzell, aged 11, is a keen birdwatcher and bird artist.

I haven't done much painting on canvas, but I do like the way the work looks when it is done. I begin with sketching on the canvas in pencil. This part isn't easy, because if you mess up you can't erase the marks. It takes a lot of work to add all the paint, but when you finish it feels very solid and real.

Nesting Lesser Nighthawk



I also enjoy sketching with coloured pencils, and using watercolours.

I think the main thing to remember in drawing and painting is not to immediately worry about it looking like the subject. Nothing you do is wrong, it is just a way of expressing yourself, and everybody is different.

I enjoy making art, especially about wildlife, because I can create something to be proud of. Also, it takes my mind off

Snowy Egret



other things and it helps me to relax.

Birds are my favourite animals because they have feathers and I am fascinated by feathers. Birds are all around us, but they do this wonderful thing – flying – that makes them so different from us. Though, of course, not all birds fly. Feathers are what

Henry on the beach



Galapagos Hawk



makes a bird a bird. There is so much variety in the structures of feathers and in the jobs they do for the bird. Plus there are so many different colours and shapes of feathers.

Of all birds, I like raptors the most. They are so fast and strong – they get their speed from their shape, and I love the shape of their wings. But most of all, I like their eyes – they are so bright and piercing.

I want to be an ornithologist when I grow up. I want to do field-work and observe birds and write about them in books which I illustrate. I would like to convince people that we need to take more care of our environment.

The Nesting Lesser Nighthawk is acrylic on canvas. The Snowy Egret and Galapagos Hawk are pencil and watercolour on paper.

# Windowsill mini-garden

By Barbara Sullivan



## How to:

**1.** Prepare your materials: Find a suitable workspace, and if it is indoors, make sure you cover your table with newspaper or a tablecloth that's easy to clean. Have all your materials ready.

Hi everyone. What a strange spring it has been!

I hope everyone is well, and that watching the birds in your garden has helped keep you connected with nature around you when you weren't able to go anywhere. Maybe you even kept track of changes in your nature journals you made from instructions in the winter issue?

This issue I would like to introduce you to making a little garden for inside your house. Like the activity I introduced you to last time, this can be done any time of year, but early summer is best.

## What is a mini-garden?

It's a little tray or dish filled with potting compost that you can design in any way that you like to make it look and feel like a miniature garden. You can be as creative as you like, and you can decide whether you would like to grow a lawn, some vegetables, or even flowers.

Our little garden has a mix of wildflowers we collected last year and some herbs. The little fence is woven from willow we cut from our garden. You can use whatever you like to make your own design.

## You will need:

- A shallow, wide, water-tight dish, such as a garden pot saucer, an old, deep baking tray, or a selection box container (this is what we used).
- Potting compost (peat free, if possible), gardening gloves.
- Some seeds, for example cress, different types of salad leaves, or you could collect some wildflower seeds if you can find some that have already gone to seed. Perhaps your parents have some leftover grass or flower seeds you could use.

## Optional extras, to decorate your little garden

- Gravel or some stones or shells you collected.
- Toothpicks, lollypop sticks, paper and sticky-tape for making signs.
- A Lego person or other little inhabitant of your choice.

Barbara Sullivan delivers forest school and nature connection programmes for children, families and adults through her company "Reconnect with Nature". Barbara is also a member of the Heritage in Schools specialist panel and is available for school visits. Contact Barbara on [reconnectwithnatureirl@gmail.com](mailto:reconnectwithnatureirl@gmail.com) or visit [www.reconnectwithnatureirl.com](http://www.reconnectwithnatureirl.com) for more details.

## Watch your mini garden grow

**2.** Decorate the outside of your dish: if you choose to decorate the outside of your dish, do so before filling it. You could paint it with acrylic paints if you have them, or you could use stickers, or whatever you like best.

**3.** Fill with compost: once your decoration is dry, you're ready to get going with the garden itself. Fill the container with compost, spreading it out evenly and leaving a little bit of space under the rim. You should always wear gloves when handling compost. If you can't, make sure to wash your hands when you are finished handling it.

**4.** Create your garden layout: do you want to include paths? Do you want to plant in lines, or circles, or sections? Now is the time to decide what way you want your garden to look. You can mark out the design using little stones, or sticks, or whatever you have available.

**5.** Now it's time to sow! Sprinkle your seeds in the different sections you have planned and cover them lightly with a little more compost (check seed packets for details on how deep to sow, and if you don't have a packet, don't worry, just make sure they are covered).

**6.** Gently sprinkle some water over your new garden until the compost is moist. A water spray bottle is ideal, but if you don't have one, don't worry.

**7.** Make some labels: using some lollypop sticks, or toothpicks, or little sticks, make some signage for your garden. You can write the labels on paper and cover them in sticky tape on both sides so they don't get wet when you water your garden.

**8.** Add some more decoration, if you wish.

**9.** Place on a window sill and water regularly. Now watch your garden grow!

## Some more ideas:

- You could keep a record of how many days it took the different species to germinate and how fast they grow.
- If you planted salads, you could harvest some leaves to add to your sandwich when they are big enough. They will regrow.
- If you planted grass, and it gets very high, give it a haircut!
- If you planted peas or other climbers, you can make a little frame for it to climb up.
- Why not include a little pond in your design? You could use a bottle cap or jar lid, for example.

Have fun!



Everything nicely planted!



Within just a few weeks you will have a mini jungle growing!



# FOCUS ON

## RINGED PLOVER

By John Lusby



John Fox

The clever trickster of the bird world!

### FACT FILE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Irish name</b><br>Ringed Plover               | <b>Irish breeding population</b><br>c.500–1,000 pairs                                 |
| <b>Latin name</b><br><i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> | <b>Food</b><br>Insects, crustaceans and worms   |
| <b>Irish Name</b><br>Feadóg chladaigh            | <b>Nest</b><br>A shallow scrape on undisturbed stony beaches, occasionally inland     |
| <b>Wingspan</b><br>35–41 cm                      | <b>Threats</b><br>Ground predators such as Brown Rats & Mink, gulls, marine pollution |
| <b>No. of eggs</b><br>Usually 4, sometimes 3     |   |
| <b>Incubation of eggs</b><br>21–27 days          |   |
| <b>Fledgling period</b><br>About 24 days         |   |

Ringed Plover to this list... but first let's learn about this clever wader!

### Description

The Ringed Plover is a small and rather plump wading bird that lives along our coasts. The males and females look alike: they are sand-coloured on their upperparts and white underneath, with a short bill, which is bright orange with a black tip in the spring and summer, and short orange legs. They have distinctive black bands across their necks and foreheads, as well as their eyes, which makes it look like they are wearing a black mask... and gives them the appearance of a bandit!

Clearly forgot to return the mask at the last ballroom party!



Rohan (BirdLife)

Given this distinctive and colourful appearance you would think that Ringed Plovers are very obvious and easy to find, but they are masters at blending into their surroundings. They are perfectly camouflaged on the rocky and shingle shorelines where they live and can be very difficult to spot!

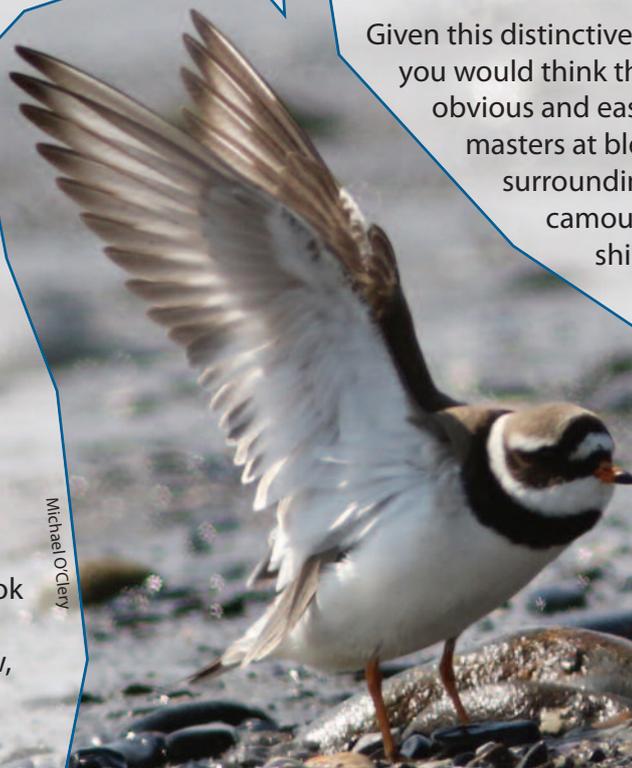
### Ringed Plover migration

Throughout their range, Ringed Plovers are mostly migratory and spend the autumn and winter in southern countries and then travel north in the spring and

We would like to introduce the newest member of the Spring Alive family, the Ringed Plover!

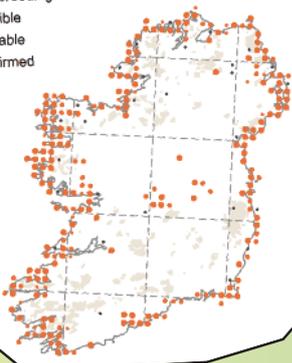
Each year the Bird Detectives look out for summer migrants as they arrive to Ireland in the spring and log their sightings on the Spring Alive website: [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net). Until now, we have asked you to look out and listen for four Irish species: the Swift, the Swallow, the Cuckoo and the Sand Martin. Now we are adding

Michael O'Clery



### Breeding Distribution 2008-11

- Non-breeding
- Possible
- Probable
- Confirmed

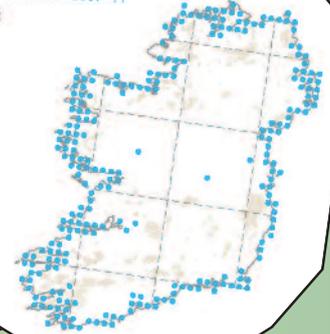


## Breeding and wintering distribution

Ringed Plovers are found at coastal sites all around Ireland (with just a few at inland sites) and throughout the year. However, while our nesting birds remain in Ireland all year, they are joined in autumn and winter by more Ringed Plovers from as far away as Iceland, Greenland and even Canada!

### Winter Distribution 2007-11

- Present



summer to breed. In Ireland however, 'our' Ringed Plovers stay here all-year round. These 'Irish' Ringed Plovers are joined by birds from Iceland, Scandinavia and Scotland, which spend the winter here.

As well as these winter visitors, Ringed Plover that nest as far away as Canada and Greenland also stop off in Ireland on their journey to and from West Africa, where they spend the winter.

So, the Irish coastline is like a busy airport lounge for Ringed Plovers, with birds arriving and departing from all different countries at different times of the year.

### Feeding

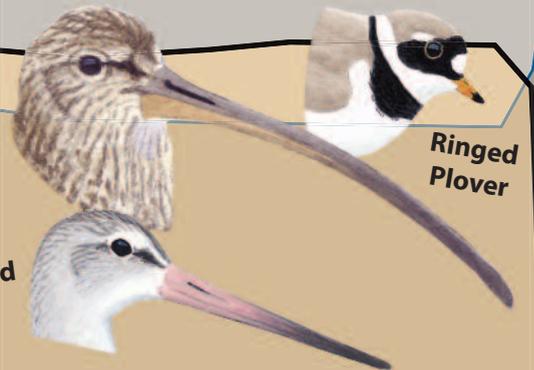
Ringed Plovers hunt by sight, and they have very large eyes to help them locate their prey. They feed mostly on polychaete worms, crustaceans and other invertebrates among the stones and seaweed. They scan for their prey, and once they spot movement, they make a quick dash to catch it, before stopping and scanning for their next meal. This foraging behaviour has been referred to as the 'run-stop-peck' hunting method, which describes exactly how Ringed Plovers hunt for their food.

Another method Ringed Plovers use to find and catch their food is called 'foot-trembling'. This is much less common and you have to be really lucky to see them hunt this way. They lure underground prey to the surface by trembling or tapping their feet rapidly on the ground to mimic raindrops... which is pretty clever!

Curlew

Black-tailed Godwit

Ringed Plover



### What does a beak say about a bird?

Wading birds like Black-tailed Godwits and Curlews have long bills which they use for probing deep into the ground to find their food. Ringed Plovers have much shorter bills and they catch their insect prey above ground. So even though Ringed Plovers are waders, just like Curlews and Black-tailed Godwits, they have very different ways of finding their food, and we can tell this because of the size and shape of their bills!



## Nesting

Ringed Plovers mainly nest along the coast, on the ground on exposed sand or shingle beaches. Particularly in the west, they also nest inland and sometimes use quarries or areas of 'waste' ground in former industrial estates or abandoned areas of building sites. These artificial waste ground areas actually resemble their natural nesting sites on shingle beaches and allow them to blend into their surroundings in the stony gravel, just like on exposed beaches.

## Survival of the smartest, not the strongest!

The places that Ringed Plovers decide to nest may seem like a very bad choice. They nest on the ground in the open and you would think that they don't stand a chance against the many much bigger predators that would happily snack on their eggs, such as foxes, rats, hedgehogs and many birds, including gulls and Hooded Crows.

The Ringed Plover uses its brains against the brawn though, and they have some really clever tricks to help them survive and protect their nests.

If a potential predator approaches the nest, the adult Ringed Plover will pretend that they have a broken wing, and walk pathetically away from the nest. This attracts the predator, which thinks it has stumbled upon an easy meal, and when the plover sees that the predator has been lead far

enough away from the nest, they once again regain the power of flight and take off to safety!

They also engage in 'false brooding', where they sit on an imaginary nest site, changing position sometimes as if real eggs were under them, which confuses and distracts any would-be predator away from the real nest.



A chick, only two days old

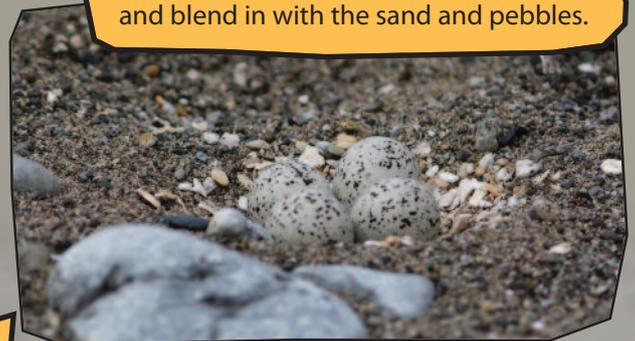
They grow fast! This chick is about a week old

## Born to run

The chicks hatch after 21 to 27 days and are covered in down, but they are able to walk and run almost straight away and leave the nest the same day they are born! They forage for food on their own but the adults keep a careful watch, and keep them warm at night or in bad weather.



Ringed Plover eggs have dark blotches and blend in with the sand and pebbles.



## How camouflage works

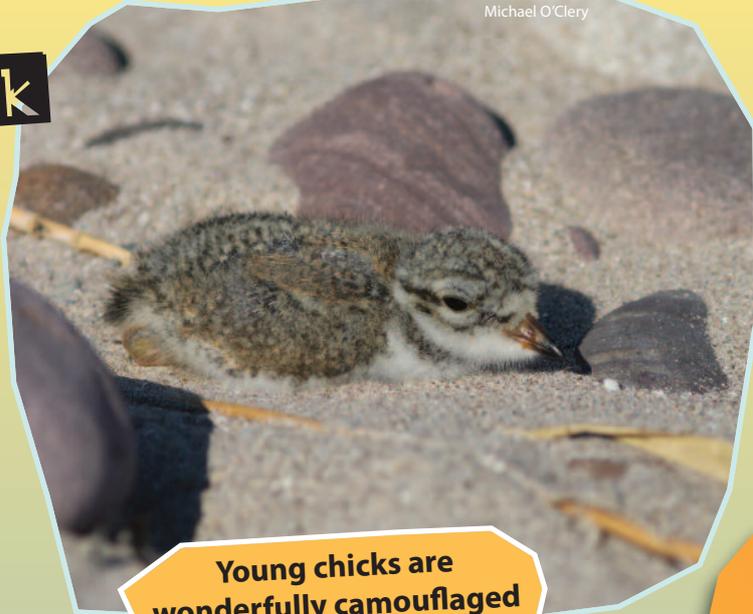
### Can you see the Ringed Plover on its nest here?

The bold black and white colours of Ringed Plovers seem bright and obvious, but when the adult sits on its nest amongst stones and pebbles, the black and white patterns break up the shape of the bird, making it really difficult for predators to spot.



# Shelduck Holmes

Michael O'Clery



Young chicks are wonderfully camouflaged

A handsome adult



Michael O'Clery

## RINGED PLOVERS

Where's the nest?  
Can you see the four eggs?

Michael O'Clery



Michael O'Clery

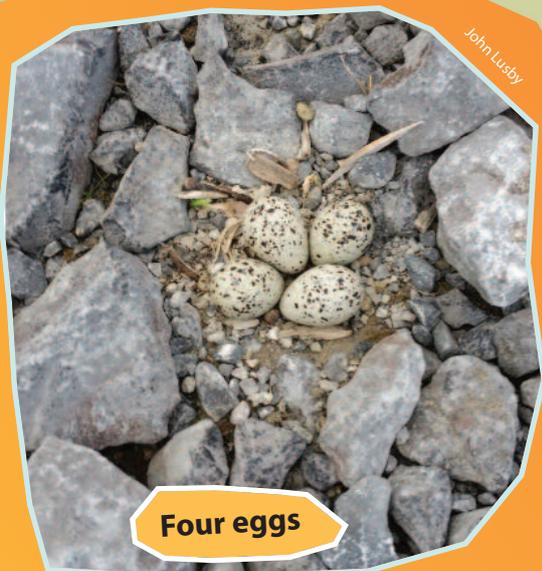


HEIDELBERG



Powerful wings can carry these small birds across the Atlantic

Clive Timmons



John Lusby

Four eggs



Young birds in autumn and winter look duller

John Fox



Young Ringed Plover chicks are born to run!



Michael O'Clery

Adults can get in a flap if you approach their nest!



spring alive



BirdWatch Ireland  
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RGCEMENT

# COLOUR BINGO!

by Niamh Fitzgerald



Have some Bingo fun in your own back garden!

Photos by Niamh Fitzgerald, unless otherwise indicated

Our adventures these days are somewhat restricted, but this doesn't mean we can't explore the natural world right on our doorstep.

For me, being outdoors brings an unrivalled sense of calm, especially during times of stress. So, I wanted to find some alternative ways to connect with nature while staying at home.

BirdWatch Ireland has so many wonderful resources for fun and games in the outdoors on its website (visit [www.birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/fun-learning/](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/fun-learning/)), so I figured, why not try out a few in my own back garden?

As it is a nice simple activity, **Colour Bingo** seemed like a good place to start. This game is very straightforward: simply find one living thing in your garden to match each colour on the bingo sheet below.



## My findings...

This activity proved to be a lot of fun. It gave me the opportunity to explore parts of the garden that otherwise I may not have ventured to, and to take a closer look at even the most familiar things. As a bonus, taking record shots of the findings allowed me to become more familiar with both my phone and digital camera (though the bird photos accompanying this article were taken by others). Not to mention, I got to stretch some plant identification muscles that hadn't been used in a while!

Here are my top picks from the garden.

What species would you choose from your own garden?

### Brown

Spring has sprung, and so you will undoubtedly hear

the Wren singing in the garden. Despite their small size (our second-smallest bird, next to the Goldcrest) they really belt out their melodious tune. This species is quite visible in my garden at the moment, seen darting around hurriedly, picking up insects.



Michael Finn

Wren

### Green

Nature is much more varied than we realise. Though green is everywhere in the garden, this moss could easily be overlooked

as a living thing, so I thought it would be a nice choice. These flowerless plants have an incredible ability to grow on many different surfaces. So,



Moss

even if your house is in an urban area, keep an eye out for moss growing on walls, in plant pots or on trees, as well as on the ground.



Dandelion

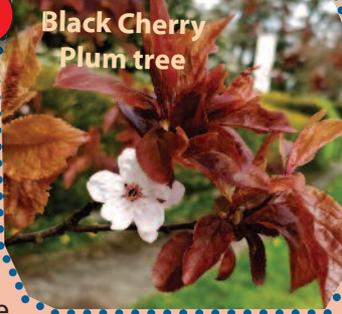
### Yellow

At this time of year Dandelions are popping up everywhere, creating a great splash of colour. Though often considered to be a

weed, I personally admire this plant, not just for its beauty but also its gumption – just look at the way it is growing between the path and the road as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

### Red

My estate, like many others, is planted with trees such as this Black Cherry Plum. The pale pink flowers nestled in amongst dark red leaves are such a gorgeous sight. This ornamental tree does not originate in Ireland, but does bear a resemblance to (and is in the same family as) our native Blackthorn tree.



Black Cherry Plum tree

### Blue

Though this bird is a definite candidate for yellow as well, I am always struck by the beautiful blue shades of a Blue Tit, so it seemed like the appropriate choice here. This common garden visitor is



Michael Finn

Blue Tit

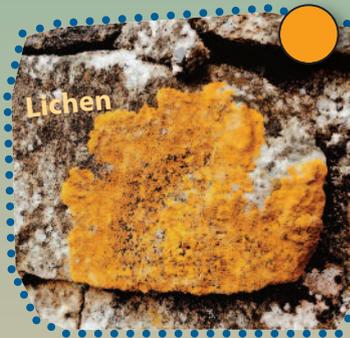
easy to come across and is a joy to watch.

### Grey

Overturn almost any rock or plant pot in the garden and you are likely to find a Woodlouse. Despite being easy to find, Woodlice are not so easy to photograph, as they are generally well camouflaged and can move quite quickly.



Woodlouse



Lichen

### Orange

This one was a bit of a bargain, as it is actually two organisms in one. Lichen are the result of a symbiotic relationship between algae and fungi. The slow-growing organisms are easy to walk by without a second thought, but definitely warrant a second look.

### White

It may be hard to tell the scale, but the tiny flowers of this Wavy Bitter-cress are just 3-4mm across. This native plant, which I found by our washing line, often grows in waste ground and is another one that could easily be overlooked (I, for one, almost missed it).



Wavy Bitter-cress

### Pink

Though Chaffinch plumage could probably be categorised as orange, depending on what way you look at it, I decided to put this bird in this category. Their iconic call is 'pink-pink' after all!



Chaffinch

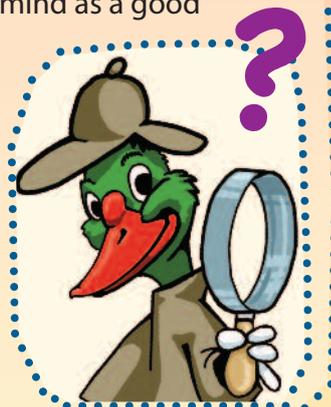
Ronnie Martin

## St-r--e--t---c-----h

To get a little more out of the game, try with a different range of colours or even pick a single colour and explore how many variations you can find (green comes to mind as a good candidate for this).

### Simplify

Choose a smaller palette or pick colours that might work better for you (for example, people who are colour-blind might like to use a different set of colours).



# An Cat Crainn The Pine Marten

by Ruth Hanniffy, Vincent Wildlife Trust

## The weasel family

Ireland doesn't have any Weasels, but it does have other members of the weasel (or mustelid) family. Our native mustelids, which are those that have been in Ireland for thousands of years, are the Pine Marten, Otter, Badger and Irish Stoat.

## How can I tell if I've seen a Pine Marten?

A Pine Marten is about the size of small cat, with a long bushy tail and soft, dark brown fur. Their face is heart-shaped with cream-coloured fur around the ears and from their chin to their chest. This chest area is called a bib and its pattern is unique to each marten, like a human fingerprint. This is very useful because if we can capture a marten's bib on camera, we can identify individual animals!

Like all mustelids, Pine Martens have short legs and a long body. Their feet have long claws for climbing and their tail helps them balance when moving or jumping between trees.

## Tree cat

The Irish name for Pine Marten is 'Cat Crainn,' which translates as 'tree cat'. This name suits the Pine Marten well - it is very agile and an excellent climber. They are arboreal (live in trees) and prefer to stay off the ground to stay safe from foxes and disturbance from humans.

## A very long history

Pine Martens have been in Ireland for about 6,000 years. Place names like Glennagat (valley of the cats) in Co. Tipperary may have been named after

martens. Ancient stories of Queen Meadhbh and Fionn MacCumhaill also mention Pine Martens.

Originally they were found in every county in Ireland, but almost went extinct, with only a few populations surviving in the west and south-east. Martens were hunted for their fur or poisoned, and they lost their woodland homes when much of Ireland's native forests were cut down.

In 1975 the Pine Marten was protected by law. This has helped the species slowly to recover, and it is once again found in every county, although it is still missing from areas in Ulster and parts of Cork and Limerick.

## Not just a Pine 'tree' Marten

Even though they are called 'Pine' Martens, they live in all types of forests, including coniferous and deciduous. Pine Martens like to den in tree cavities (holes) of old trees, though these are very rare in Ireland, as well as rock crevices, burrows, nests, old squirrel dreys and log piles. Some Pine Martens create dens in attics of houses but they do not make good house guests so we look for ways to keep them in their natural habitat - the forest. We have secured a Pine Marten den box high up in the trees, and the martens have made their home in them.



Ruth Hanniffy

Pine Marten  
den box

## Eating with the seasons

Pine Martens will eat whatever is found locally and they change their diet with the seasons. They eat fruit and berries (especially in autumn),



Pine Martens are shy and hard to see

mushrooms, invertebrates like insects, frogs, Wood Mice, Bank Voles, birds, eggs and carrion (dead animals).

### Pine Martens in our countryside

It is important that anyone keeping chickens or other birds in a pen or shed makes sure it is very secure so that a Pine Marten cannot get in, because they are clever and curious. A pen with rotten wood is easy for a marten to chew! A Pine Marten can fit through a hole of 4.5cm – that's about the same width as a big spoon!

### A year in the life

Pine Martens are nocturnal animals, though they may be active during the day in spring and summer. They are also solitary animals, which means they live alone instead of in family groups like badgers or foxes. If you see more than one, this is likely to be a mother with her young. A Pine Marten has a territory, or area, that it defends against other martens.

In March the female looks for a safe den and in April she gives birth to 2-3 young, called kits. The

If you do see a Pine Marten please send in your sighting to the National Biodiversity Data Centre [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie) so that we can map its distribution.

For more information on Pine Martens visit [www.pinemarten.ie](http://www.pinemarten.ie)



kits are born blind and hairless and remain in the den for six weeks. Like all mammals, she feeds them with milk. When they are young she will venture outside more often during the day, a high risk activity for her, to bring back food to her young.

Young Pine Martens will stay with their mother for 6 – 16 months while she teaches them survival skills. They are also very playful! Pine Martens generally live for 5-8 years in the wild.

### Where to see Pine Martens

Pine Martens mark their territories and communicate with other martens using scent in their urine and in their droppings, called scats. We can look for scats especially along forest tracks and on fallen logs and tree stumps. Scats can tell us whether a marten has eaten berries or a small mammal like a Wood Mouse.

Pine Martens may come to a garden in search of food or shelter but, like all wild animals, you should not attempt to catch it. Like all young creatures, young martens have a lot to learn and often end up in the wrong place!

In the next issue we will learn about how Pine Martens may be helping our native Red Squirrels!



Ruth Hanniffy



Pine Marten droppings



# HOW TO BE A GOOD BIRDPWATCHER



HEIDELBERGCEMENT

Our outdoor adventures these days are somewhat restricted, but this doesn't mean you can't explore the natural world right on your doorstep.

So, if you want to be a good birdwatcher, follow our **TOP FIVE TIPS**

## 1 Wear practical clothes.

Wear camouflaged colours and stay warm, dry and protected from the sun.

## 2 Pack your birdwatching bag.

Bring a bird guide, notepad, drink, snack and binoculars (if you have them).

## 3 Don't scare birds.

Walk slowly, speak quietly and keep your distance - especially from nests.

## 4 Leave everything as you find it.

Close gates, keep to the path, take litter home with you and stay off private land.

## 5 Have fun and spread the word!

Talk to other birdwatchers and encourage your friends to join you.

### Now its time to put these tips into practice!

Sometimes the most exciting place to go birdwatching is actually the places you are most familiar with... you see these places everyday but now let's look again as a Bird Detective!



During the summer there are birds nesting everywhere around your home - no matter where you live! Here are some tips to help you find out which birds are nesting and where.

### Look out for...

- Birds carrying nesting material to build a nest.
- Birds carrying food to feed hungry chicks.
- Families of birds with young which have just left the nest.



- And remember, be a good birdwatcher, watch the birds from a safe distance and do not disturb them or their nests.

### Be prepared

Before you leave the house, don't forget to pack a bird field guide, a notepad to record your sightings, a drink, a snack and some binoculars (if you have them).

- Familiarise yourself with the special words that bird guides use to describe birds: it will make it much easier to identify them.
- Wear dark, camouflaged colours so that birds don't see you coming. And no matter what the weather is like outside, make sure you bring clothes that will keep you warm, dry and protected from the sun - you may find yourself observing birds for longer than you expected.

When you go birdwatching keep an eye out for these

# SPRING MIGRATION SUPERSTARS

## Barn Swallow

Long wings and deeply forked tail make it an agile pilot.

Catches flying insects mid-air.

Migrates from the northern to the southern hemispheres and back each year.

Makes mud nests in barns, stables, and human settlements.

Never takes off its satin dinner gown!

## Common Swift

Its boomerang shape makes it one of the world's 'swiftest' flyers!

Hunts flies on the wing.

Migrates from Europe, Central Asia and Northern Africa to Southern Africa and back, each year.

Uses saliva as a cement to build nests in cliffs and buildings.

Can spend months in the air, eating, drinking and even sleeping in flight! This boomerang takes a while to return.

### Be considerate

- No matter how much fun you are having when you're out birdwatching, always remember that the safety and well-being of birds comes first. Scaring birds stresses them out and stops them from feeding, breeding and resting.
- Walk slowly, speak quietly and keep your distance - especially from nests.
- It's important to respect the laws of the land too. Close gates behind you, keep to the paths, take your litter home with you, and keep off private land.
- Show the world how friendly and polite birdwatchers are!

## Common Cuckoo

Slender body and long tail give it a quick, hawk-like flight.

Mimics the appearance of a sparrowhawk to scare small birds away from their nests.

Migrates from northern Asia & Europe to southern Asia and Africa every year.

Brood parasite: lays its egg in other birds' nests

Hates responsibilities!

## Sand Martin

Always flies in a rush as if it's missed a... well, flight!

Hunts flying insects mid-air.

Migrates from the northern to the southern hemisphere and back each year.

Nests in apartment complexes in sand banks.

Permanently dressed for business meetings!

**Fill out your checklist!**

What are the five things every good birdwatcher should carry with them?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....



For more online, visit [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net)

## Competition Page

### Competition 1

To celebrate bird migration, our word search in this issue is all about Spring Alive! Here is a list of 15 words that are all connected with Spring Alive in some way. Can you find them all hidden below?

- Spring Alive
- Swallow
- Swift
- Cuckoo
- White Stork
- Bee-eater
- Sand Martin
- Ringed Plover
- Migration
- Europe
- Africa
- BirdLife
- International
- Heidelberg
- Cement

### Competition 2

Hint: If you visit [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net), you will certainly find it helpful when answering these questions!

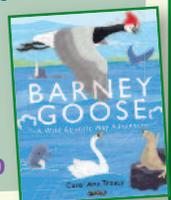
- Q1** Sand Martins like to eat fish – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q2** Swifts are larger than Swallows – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q3** Ringed Plovers like to feed on beaches – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q4** Swallows have red throats – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q5** Swifts like to perch on electricity wires – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q6** White Storks nest in Ireland – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q7** The Bee-eater doesn't really eat bees – TRUE or FALSE?

### Spring Alive Word Search

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| J | B | F | U | Z | Y | T | A | G | R | H | R | S | E | J |
| L | M | C | R | R | M | Q | Z | E | A | E | H | A | F | L |
| E | M | Q | W | E | A | M | B | Q | V | E | Z | N | I | A |
| A | U | P | Z | Z | T | Z | U | O | F | Y | C | D | L | N |
| S | P | R | I | N | G | A | L | I | V | E | H | M | D | O |
| A | W | I | O | O | C | P | E | W | M | E | D | A | R | I |
| F | R | H | A | P | D | F | O | E | I | L | X | R | I | T |
| R | B | A | I | E | E | L | N | D | E | L | W | T | B | A |
| I | L | H | G | T | L | T | E | Q | Q | B | F | I | Y | N |
| C | Z | N | A | A | E | L | T | F | I | W | S | N | I | R |
| A | I | G | W | N | B | S | C | U | C | K | O | O | E | E |
| R | M | S | Z | E | R | R | T | K | F | G | P | D | X | T |
| A | B | Q | R | C | P | W | T | O | I | J | N | J | B | N |
| R | I | G | T | N | O | I | T | A | R | G | I | M | O | I |
| N | A | E | Z | F | H | X | U | I | T | K | E | C | D | H |

- Q8** Cuckoos build the biggest nest of any Irish bird – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q9** Sand Martins nest in tunnels – TRUE or FALSE?
- Q10** You can only send your bird sightings to Spring Alive if you live in Ireland – TRUE or FALSE?

**Prize** Barney Goose: A Wild Atlantic Way Adventure  
by Carol Ann Treacy, value €13.00



### To enter

- Fill out your age, name and address on a blank sheet of paper.
- Find all the words in the Word Search and answer the 'true or false' questions (you can photocopy this page if you prefer).
- Post it to: Bird Detectives Competitions, BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, A63 RW83.  
Closing date is 30th September 2020.

Winner of the Winter 2019 True or False competition: Áine Murphy, age 11, from Limerick.

The winner of the Winter 2019 wordsearch: Shane Cook, age 8, from Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.

#### Answers to the 'True or False' competition in the Winter 2019 issue of Bird Detectives

Q1. Herb Robert is a type of plant – **TRUE**: Q2. Bats are blind – **FALSE**: Although many bats can navigate in total darkness by using their ears for echolocation, their eyesight is perfectly good: Q3. The Swift is the fastest bird in the world – **FALSE**: Swifts are very fast, but the Peregrine Falcon is even faster! Q4. A Blackbird's eggs are blue – **TRUE**: Q5. Male and female Robins look exactly the same – **TRUE**: Q6. A young Puffin is called a puffling – **TRUE**: Q7. The Teal is Ireland's smallest duck – **TRUE**: Q8. Birds are the only animals which have beaks – **FALSE**: Several other creatures have beaks, including turtles, squid, octopuses, certain fish and, of course, the Duck-billed Platypus. Q9. A group of crows is called a "murder" – **TRUE**: Q10. There are no wild reptiles in Ireland – **FALSE**: Ireland is home to the Viviparous Lizard (A.K.A. Common Lizard), our only native land reptile.