

AVES MARA



See
Water
Differently



ABOUT

Aves (collective noun for birds) **Mara** (Irish for sea) was inspired by the '[See Water Differently](#)' project 2024, and Explore Your Shore/ Clean Coasts Observer training later in 2025.

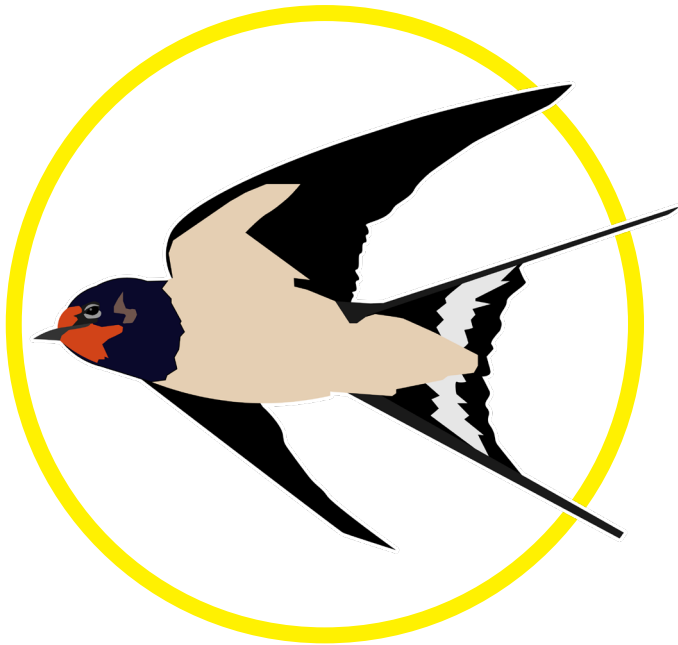
The images can be used as part of a 'Match the species with the name' Game or as a general reader.

Éin cois na farraige Birds by the sea

This project seeks to record and identify the many species of birds* that visit Salthill, encourage people to become Explore Your Shore Champions, and ultimately bring people together to enjoy & protect our biodiversity.

*Birds by Garry Kendellen.





Barn Swallow | *Hirundo rustica* | Fáinleog

Iconic Migrant: Travels from Europe to southern Africa for the winter, a round trip of up to 12,000 miles.

Aerial Acrobat: Feeds exclusively on insects caught in mid-air.

Mud Architect: Builds its iconic cup-shaped nest from mud and saliva, traditionally on beams inside barns and sheds.

A Sign of Summer: In Ireland and much of Europe, their return in spring is a cherished sign of the changing season.



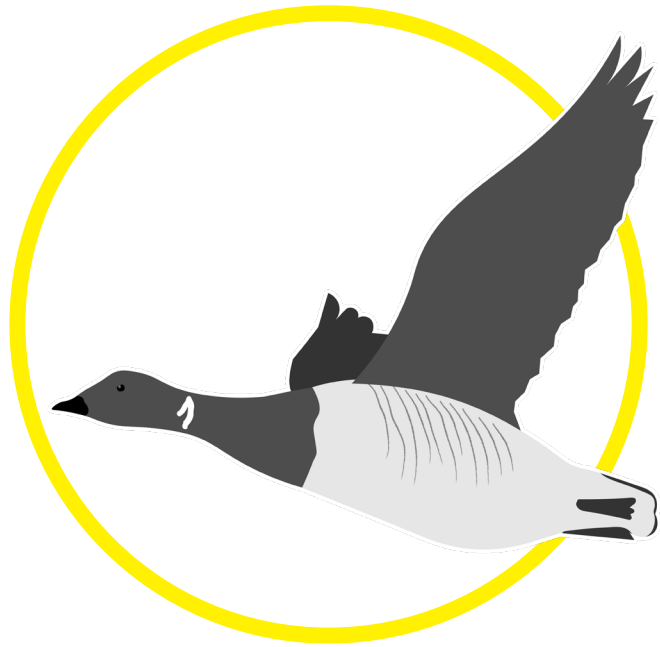
Blue Tit | *Cyanistes caeruleus* | Meantán gorm

Acrobatic Feeder: Famously agile, often hanging upside-down to feed from bird feeders, nuts, and fat balls.

Bright Family: One of the most colourful European birds, with its azure blue cap, wings, and tail, and yellow breast.

Cavity Nester: Nests in tree holes, nest boxes, and sometimes unusual places like letterboxes.

Large Broods: Can lay very large clutches of up to 16 eggs.

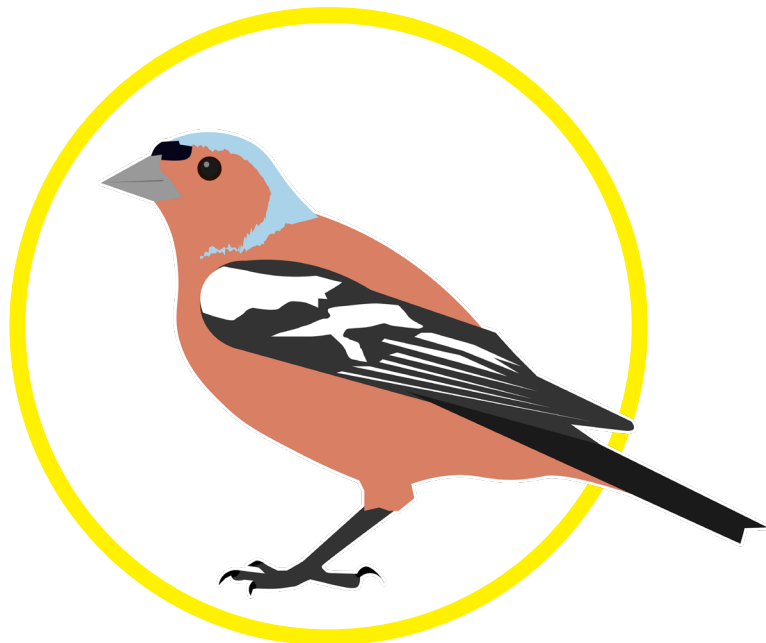


Brent Goose (Light-bellied) | *Branta bernicla hrota* | Cadhan Atlantic Voyager: The light-bellied subspecies winters almost exclusively in Ireland (mainly on the east coast) and breeds in the high Arctic (Canada/Greenland).

Seaweed Starter: Arrives in Ireland in October and first feeds on coastal eelgrass before moving to grasslands.

Family Ties: Migrates and winters in tight family units.

Conservation Success: Its population has recovered dramatically from a low point in the 1930s.



Chaffinch | *Fringilla coelebs* | Rí Rua
One of the Commonest: One of Europe's most abundant and widespread songbirds.

Sexual Dimorphism: Males are brightly coloured with pink breasts and blue-grey caps; females are much duller, olive-brown.

Powerful Seed-Eater: Has a strong beak for crushing seeds, often seen on the ground under feeders.

The "Bachelor" Finch: Its scientific name *coelebs* means "bachelor", as Swedish males often winter separately from females.



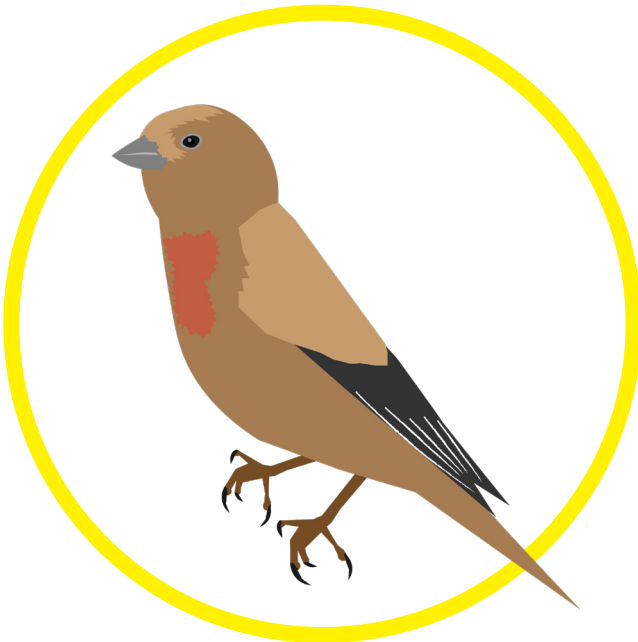
Common Blackbird | *Turdus merula* | Lon Dubh

Early Riser: Known for its beautiful, flute-like song, often delivered at dawn and dusk from a high perch.

Garden Regular: A familiar sight pulling worms from lawns across towns and countryside.

Male vs. Female: The male is jet black with a bright orange-yellow bill and eye-ring; the female is dark brown.

Not a Crow: Despite the name, it's a member of the thrush family.



Common Linnet | *Carduelis cannabina* | Gleoiseach

Seed Specialist: Feeds primarily on small seeds from weeds and crops.

Summer Splash: Breeding males have a striking crimson forehead and breast, which fade in winter.

Flocking Bird: Forms large flocks outside the breeding season, often with other finches.

Musical Inspiration: Its cheerful, twittering song and flocks were a common sight in farmland, inspiring the old song "By the Light of the Silvery Linnet."



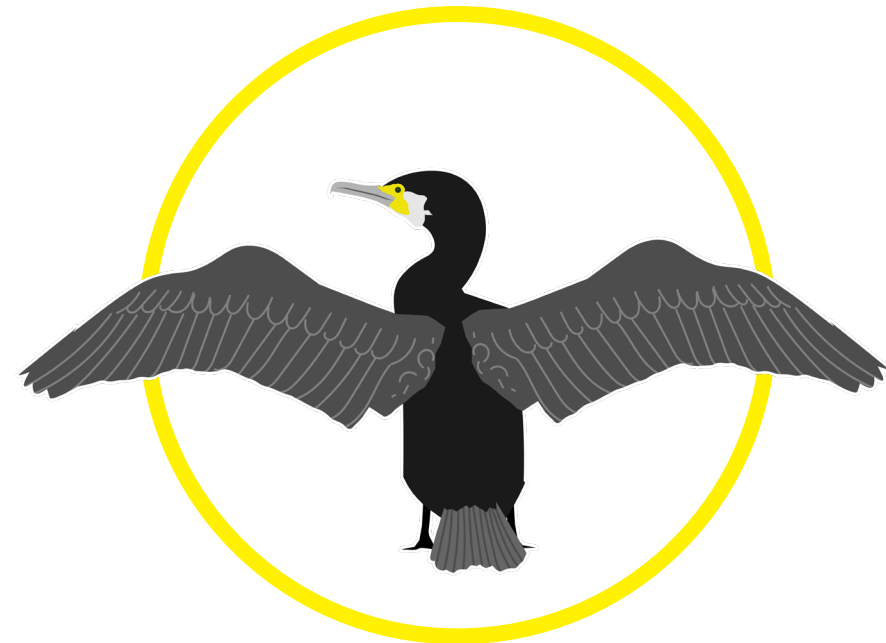
Common Starling | *Sturnus vulgaris* | Druid

Mimicry Master: An incredible vocal mimic, incorporating other birds' calls, phone rings, and car alarms into its song.

Aerial Spectacle: Forms huge, swirling flocks called murmurations at dusk in winter, a breathtaking natural phenomenon to deter predators.

Iridescent Plumage: Appears black from a distance but shines with purple and green iridescence speckled with white spots.

Introduced Species: Successfully introduced to North America, Australia, and New Zealand.



Cormorant | *Phalacrocorax carbo* | Broigheall

Expert Diver: Pursues fish underwater, using its feet for propulsion. It can dive to significant depths.

Wings Out to Dry: Often seen standing with wings outstretched because its feathers are less waterproof than other waterbirds, helping them dry and regulate body temperature.

Ancient Fisherman: Has been used in China and Japan for centuries to catch fish for humans, with a ring around its neck to prevent it from swallowing large catches.



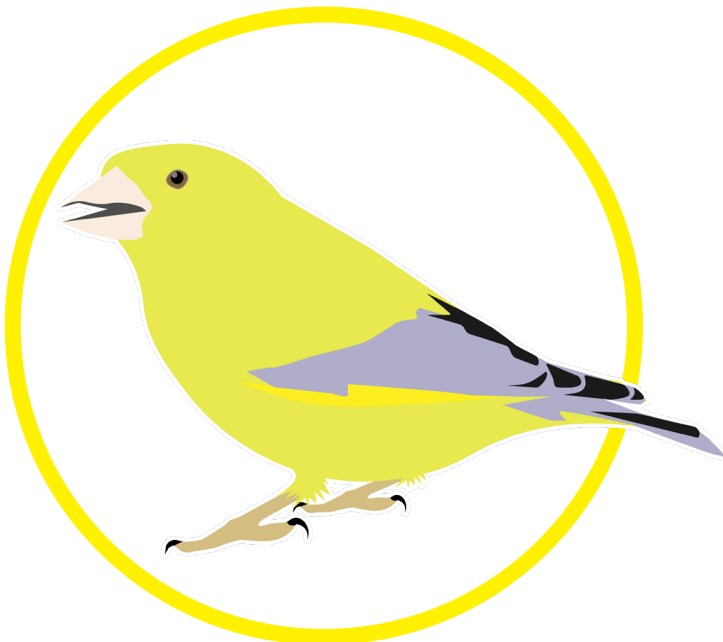
Eurasian Jackdaw | *Corvus monedula* | Cág

Smallest Crow: The smallest member of the crow family in the region.

Social and Intelligent: Highly social, forming lifelong pair bonds and large, noisy flocks. Known for its intelligence and curiosity.

Pale Eyes: Distinctive pale blue-grey eyes set it apart from other crows.

Chimney Nester: Historically nested in hollow trees but now commonly uses chimneys, leading to the old name “chimney-sweep bird.”



European Greenfinch | *Carduelis chloris* | Glasán Darach

Heavyweight Finch: A stocky finch with a powerful, conical beak for crushing seeds.

Distinctive Flight: Has a deep, undulating flight and often calls with a loud, drawn-out “wheeeze.”

Garden Visitor: A common, if sometimes quarrelsome, visitor to bird feeders.

Yellow Flash: Males are olive-green with bright yellow flashes on their wings and tail, especially visible in flight.



European Robin | *Erithacus rubecula* | Spideog

Fierce Defender: Despite its friendly image, it is highly territorial and aggressive towards other robins.

Year-Round Song: Sings almost all year round to defend its territory.

Follows the Gardener: Famarily follows gardeners to feed on insects and worms disturbed by digging.



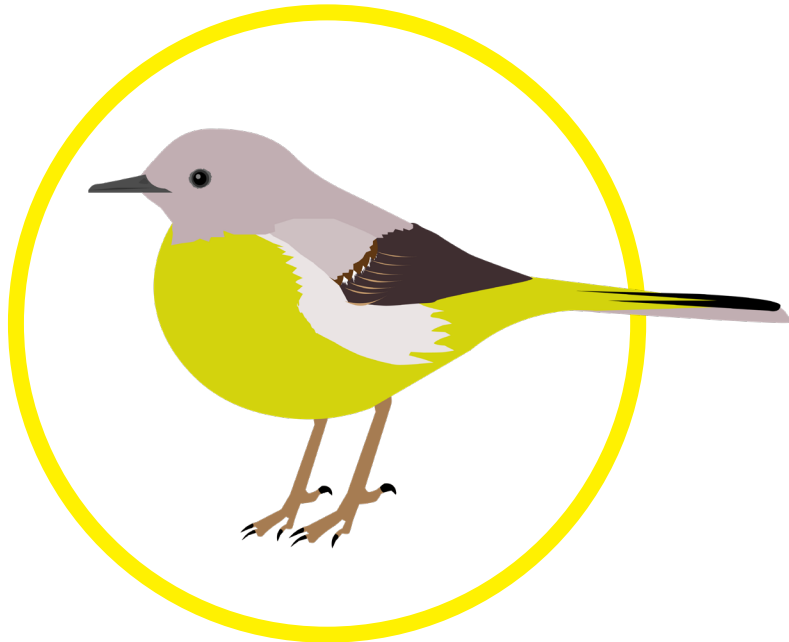
Grey Heron | *Ardea cinerea* | Corr Réisc

Patient Hunter: Stands motionless in shallow water, waiting to spear fish, frogs, or small mammals with its dagger-like bill.

Large Nest Colonies: Nests in tall trees in groups called heronries, which are used for generations.

Impressive Wingspan: Has a wingspan of up to 1.8 metres (6 feet).

Urban Adaptor: Now a common sight along urban riverbanks and park ponds.



Grey Wagtail | *Motacilla cinerea* | Glasóg Liath

Fast-Flowing Water Specialist: Despite its name, it is the most colourful wagtail, with a bright yellow underbelly. It favours fast-flowing rivers and streams.

Constant Tail Bobbing: Has a characteristic habit of constantly bobbing its long tail.

Aerial Insect Hunter: Catches insects in flight or picks them from rocks along the water's edge.

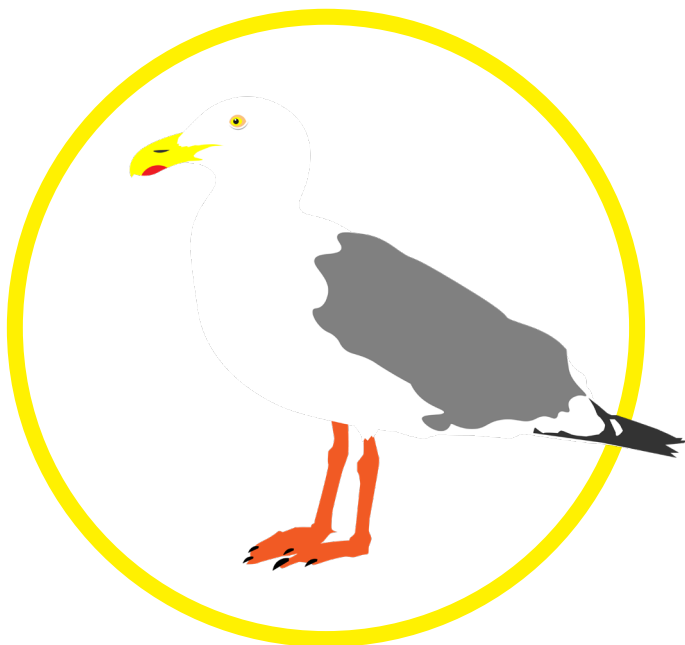


Godwit Bar-tailed | *Limosa lapponica* | Guilbneach Stríocearrach

Record-Breaking Migrant: Holds the record for the longest non-stop flight of any bird. One subspecies flies from Alaska to New Zealand, over 11,000 km (7,000 miles), without stopping.

Upturned Bill: Has a long, slightly upturned bill perfect for probing deep into mud for worms and shellfish.

Dramatic Plumage Change: Breeding adults have a rich, reddish-brown chest; in winter, they are much plainer grey-brown.



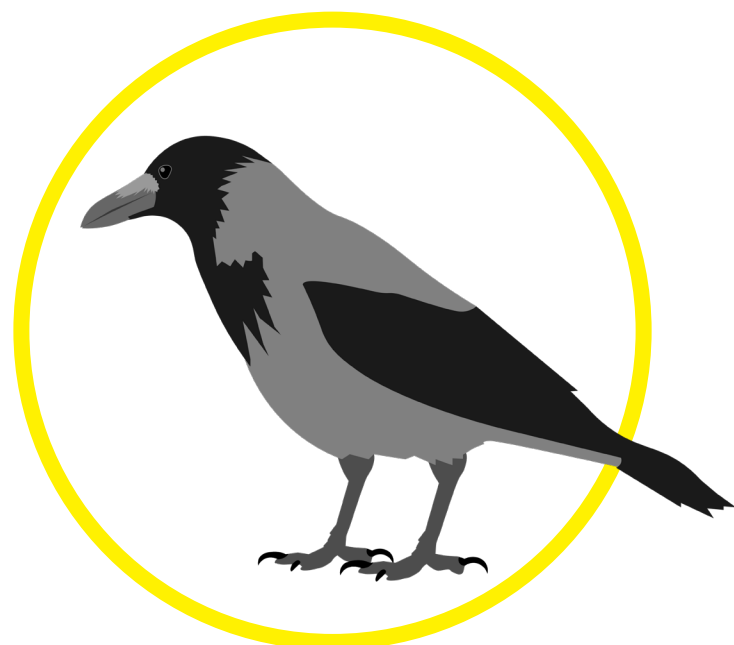
Herring Gull | *Larus argentatus* | Faoileán Scadán

A Scavenger: An intelligent and adaptable omnivore, famously scavenging in towns and cities, not just at the coast.

Long-Lived: Can live for over 30 years.

Loud Voice: Its loud, raucous “laughing” call is a classic sound of the seaside.

Protected: Despite being common and sometimes considered a pest, it is a Red-listed bird of conservation concern in many places due to declining coastal populations.

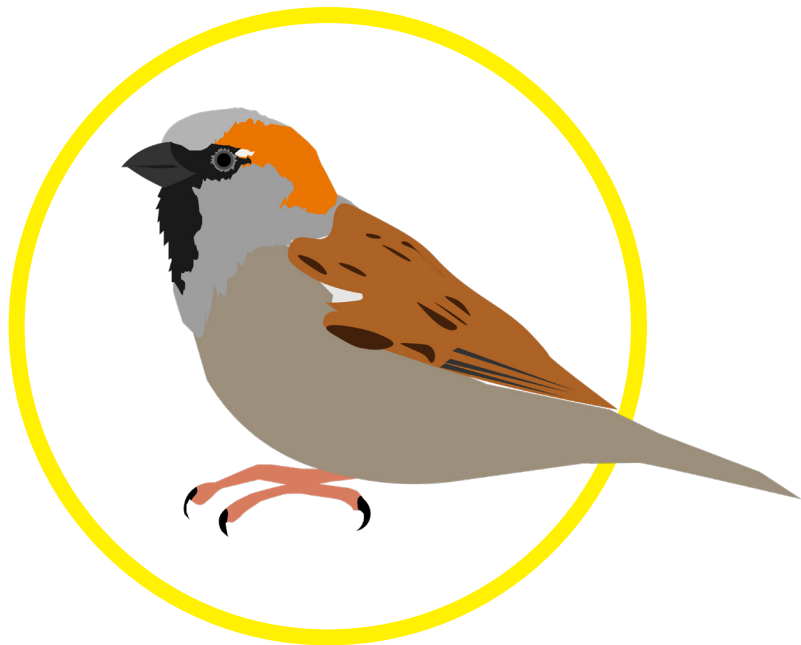


Hooded Crow | *Corvus cornix* | Caróg Liath

Distinctive Look: In Ireland and Scotland, it appears as a two-tone bird with a grey body and black head, wings, and tail.

Clever Opportunist: Extremely intelligent and adaptable, eating anything from carrion and eggs to insects and food scraps.

Once One Species: Considered the same species as the Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*) but with different ranges (they hybridise where they meet in central Europe).

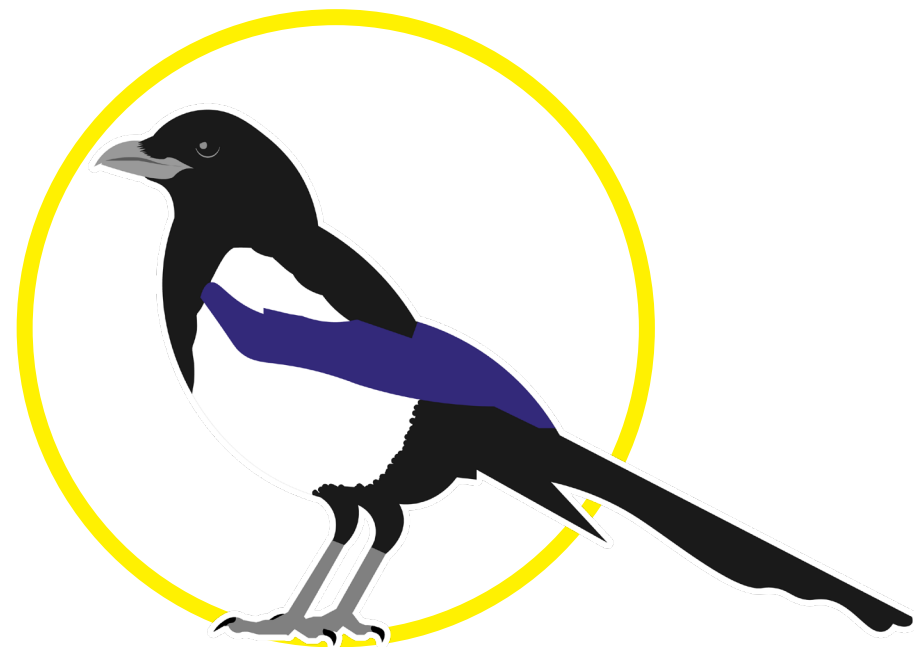


House Sparrow | *Passer domesticus* | Gealbhan Binne

Human Companion: One of the world's most widespread birds due to its close association with human habitation.

Chatty Colonies: Highly social, living in noisy colonies and nesting in crevices in buildings.

Declining Numbers: Has suffered severe population declines in many urban areas, making its cheerful chirp less common than before.



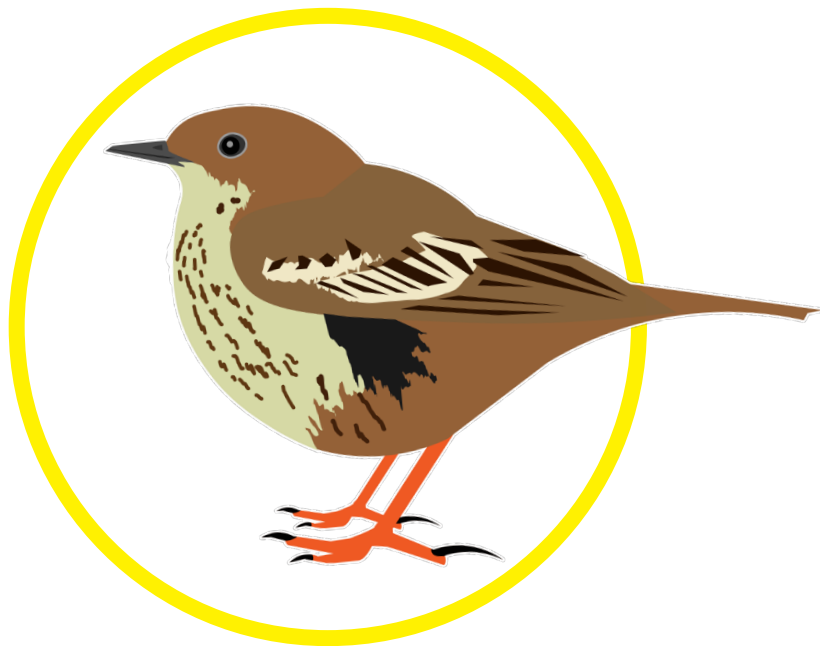
Magpie | *Pica pica* | Snag Breac

Brainy Bird: Considered one of the most intelligent animals; it can recognise itself in a mirror, a test of self-awareness.

Omnivorous Collector: Eats a wide range of food and is famous for being attracted to shiny objects (though this is somewhat debated).

Monogamous and Territorial: Pairs mate for life and defend their territory year-round.

Distinctive Look: Unmistakable with its black and white plumage and incredibly long, iridescent green tail.

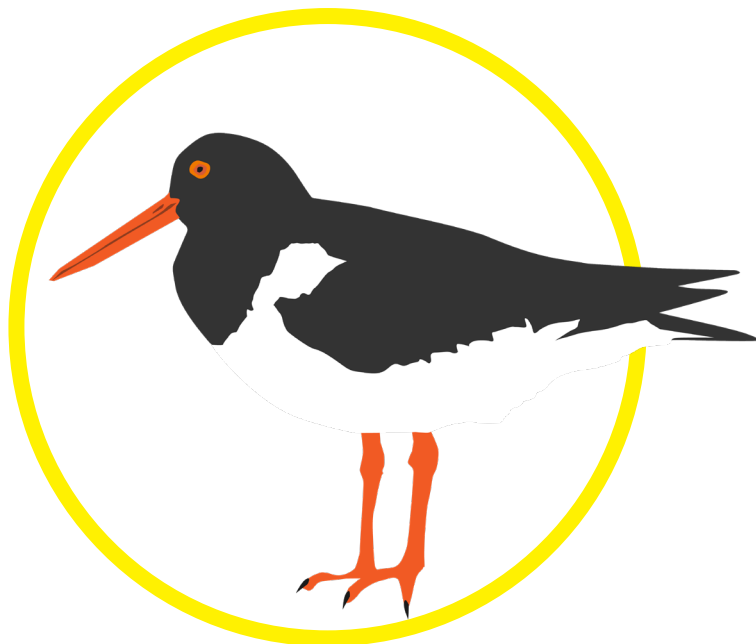


Meadow Pipit | *Anthus pratensis* | Riabhóg Mhóna

The “Fairy Horse”: Its Irish name links it to folklore, and its high, parachuting song flight is a classic sound of open moorland and meadows.

Cuckoo Host: A common “foster parent” for Cuckoo chicks, which trick the pipit into raising them.

Ground Nester: Builds a well-hidden nest on the ground in grass or heather.

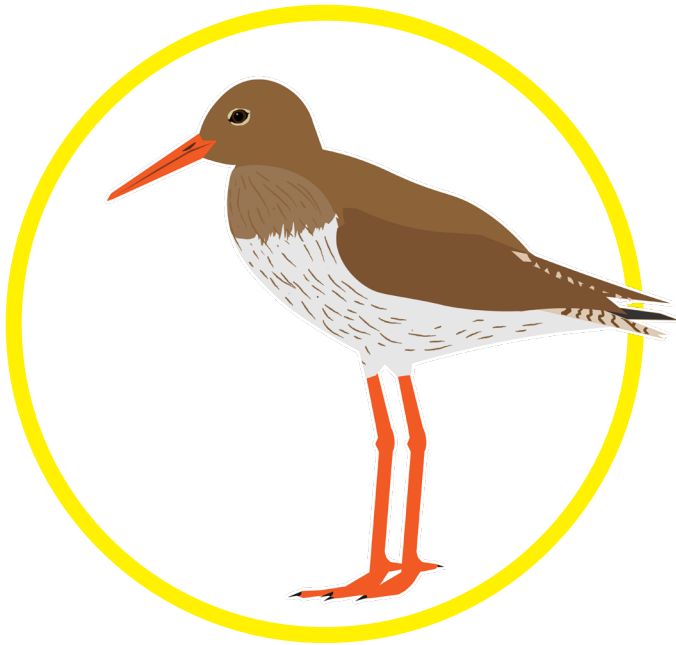


Oystercatcher | *Haematopus ostralegus* | Roilleach

Noisy Shorebird: Very vocal with a loud, piping “kleep-a” call. Large, noisy flocks gather in winter.

Specialised Bill: Uses its long, orange-red bill like a chisel to prise open molluscs or probe for worms.

Black and White: Striking pied (black and white) plumage with bright pink legs.



Redshank | *Tringa totanus* | Cosdeargán

The “Warden of the Marshes”: Named for its loud, alarmed calls that alert other birds to danger.

Bright Legs: As the name suggests, it has vivid orange-red legs.

Probing Bill: Uses its medium-length bill to probe vigorously in mud for invertebrates.

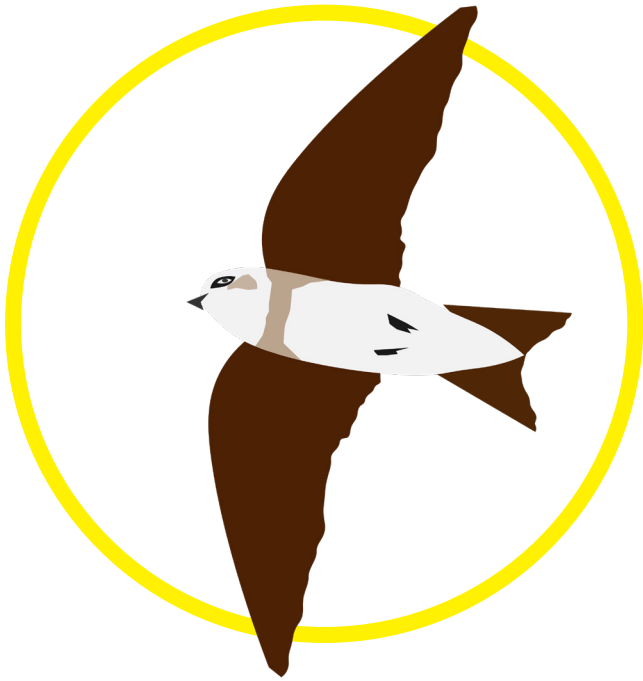


Rook | *Corvus frugilegus* | Rúcach

Colonial Farmer: Nests in large, noisy colonies in treetops known as rookeries. Often forages in fields for soil invertebrates.

Bare Face: Adults have a distinctive pale, featherless, and slightly peaked face at the base of the bill.

Sociable Crow: More sociable than the Carrion Crow, often seen in large flocks.

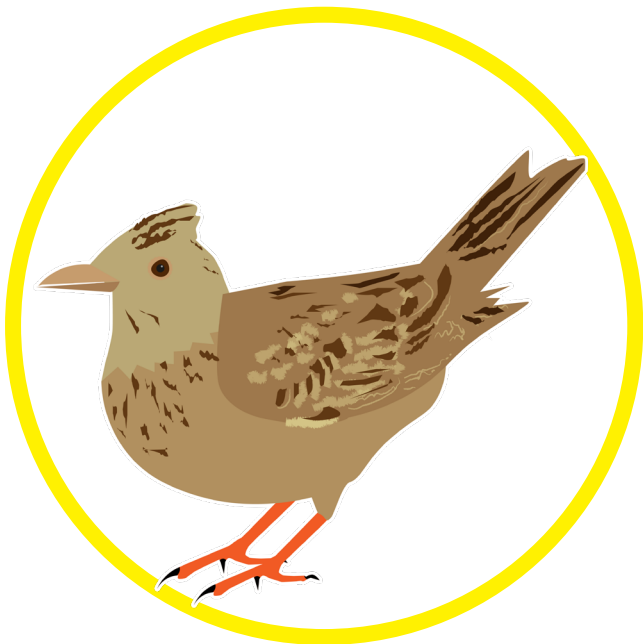


Sand Martin | *Riparia riparia* | Gabhlán Gainimh

Bank Excavator: The smallest European swallow, it digs long tunnels in sandy riverbanks or cliffs to nest in colonies.

Early Migrant: One of the first summer migrants to return, often appearing in March.

Brown Band: Identified by its brown upperparts and a clear brown breast band across its white chest.



Sky Lark | *Alauda arvensis* | Fuiseog

Songflight Specialist: Sings a long, complex, and continuous song while flying incredibly high until it becomes a dot in the sky, then descends silently.

Ground Bird: Lives and nests on the ground in open farmland and grassland.

Cultural Icon: Celebrated in poetry and music (e.g., “To a Skylark” by Shelley) as a symbol of hope and the countryside.



Stonechat | *Saxicola torquata* | Caislín Cloch

Perchy Sentinel: Often seen perched prominently on top of bushes or fences, flicking its wings and tail.

Chatty Call: Its call sounds like two stones being knocked together: "tik-tik."

Bright Male: The male has a striking black head, white collar, and orange-red breast.

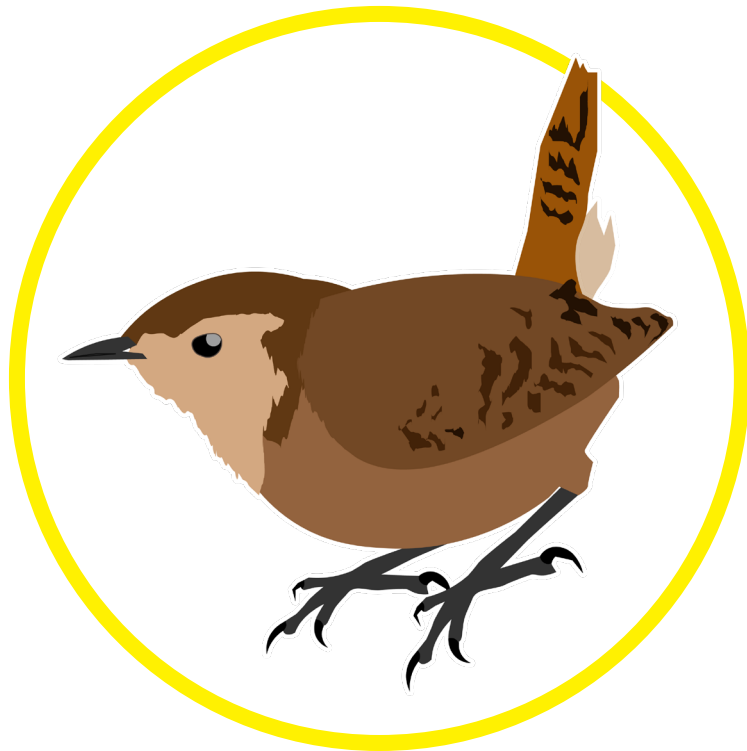


Turnstone | *Arenaria interpres* | Piardálaí Trá

Shoreline Flipper: Gets its name from its behaviour of flipping over stones, seaweed, and shells with its short, strong bill to find food underneath.

Tough Migrant: Breeds in the Arctic and winters as far south as South Africa and Australia.

Pied Plumage: In winter, it has a beautiful tortoiseshell pattern of brown, black, and white; breeding birds have richer chestnut colours.



Wren | *Troglodytes troglodytes* | Dreolín

Tiny Powerhouse: One of Europe's smallest birds, but possesses one of the loudest songs for its size—a powerful, rattling trill.

Cock's Nest: The male builds several "cock's nests" from which the female chooses one to line and use.

Cavity Lover: Its scientific name means "cave-dweller," as it often nests in dark, concealed crevices.

Ireland's Most Common: Despite recent declines, it is often considered the most common breeding bird in Ireland.



Why Become an Explore Your Shore Champion?

The National Biodiversity Data Centre works to make biodiversity data and information more freely available in order to better understand and assist the protection of Ireland's biodiversity.

The main role of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, as set out in its constitution is, to acquire, collate, manage, validate and make available, data in respect of Ireland's biodiversity in order to document wildlife resources and monitor and record changes over time, in so doing, support national initiatives to maintain and enhance biodiversity, including recording of species and habitat information relating to the terrestrial, freshwater, marine, rivers and wetland environments.

By recording the biodiversity we find, we can help protect our wonderful biodiversity, scan the code below to record your discoveries.

