

# The Kingfisher

**Scientific Name:** *Alcedo atthis*  
**Irish Names:** Cruidín

In Ireland there is no other bird like the Kingfisher. It is a small yet striking bird, with electric blue upperparts and orange-red underparts. Males and females are the same colour, though females have a reddish colour to the lower part of the bill during the breeding season. It likes to feed on small fish and aquatic insects so it lives near lowland and slow-flowing streams and rivers, along canals and beside lakes. The Kingfisher can be hard to see as it sits motionless in the shade waiting for its prey to pass by. Then it will move quickly - either plunging into the water or hovering on the surface, grabbing the food with its strong, dagger-like bill. The Kingfisher must eat at least 60% of its own body weight every day. If it catches a fish it will kill it first by beating it on its perch. It also eats fish head first so that the fins do not open and get stuck in its throat.

Kingfishers' nests are called burrows, which they tunnel out in river banks. The average clutch has 3-6 eggs and both the male and females help to incubate the eggs. In very cold weather, when water freezes, Kingfishers may not be able to feed and will either die or migrate to areas of unfrozen water.

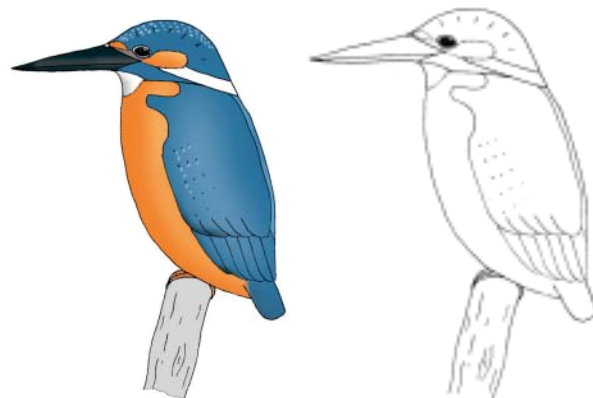
There are many different species of kingfisher around the world but the only species to be found in Ireland and most of Europe is the Eurasian Kingfisher, where it is also known as the Common Kingfisher.



Image courtesy of Andreas Trepte, www.photo-natur.de

The Kingfisher is a small, striking bird, with a high-pitched call.

## A Kingfisher to Colour



Sketches courtesy of Audrey Murphy/Sherkin Island Marine Station



### FACT FILE:

**Colour:** Blue-green head and wings.  
Orange belly, with white patch on each side of the neck and under long bill. Red feet.

**Length:** 17-19.5 cm

**Diet:** Fish and large aquatic insects.

**Habitat:** On a branch over a river or stream.