

Stonechat

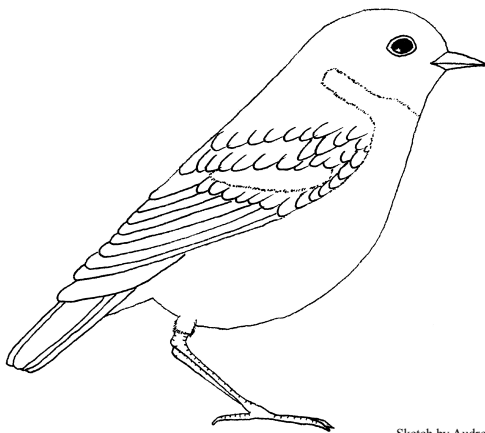
Scientific Name: *Saxicola torquata*
Irish Name: Caislín cloch

Stonechats are small garden birds, about the same size as the Robin, and are related to thrushes and flycatchers. They can be found in rough grassland where they build their nests of grass and moss. They can often be seen flicking their wings when perched on low shrubs, brambles and gorse. Both males and females make a clicking call that sounds like two stones being tapped together, giving rise to their name. Stonechats breed in Ireland and are commonest in coastal and lowland areas.



Photographs courtesy of Robbie Murphy

A male Stonechat to colour



Sketch by Audrey Murphy

Perching Birds

Over half the birds in the world are perching birds, otherwise known as passerine birds. Some of our most recognisable garden birds, including stonechats, robins, wrens and blue tits, are passerine birds. Perching birds are able to grip on to branches, twigs and wire with specially adapted feet. Each foot has three toes that point forward and one that faces backwards and this allows them to hold on tightly. The formation of the feet also helps them stand up straight.



FACT FILE:

Colour: Male has black head and throat. White patch on neck, wings, belly and under tail. Back is streaked brown and black. Red-orange breast but duller in winter. Female is mostly brown and also has red-orange breast.

Length: 11.5-13 cm

Diet: Worms, insects and their larvae, seeds and spiders.

Habitat: Areas of rough grassland, where there is gorse and heather.



The male (left) is more striking in colour than the female (right).