

# Bird Life

TIME FOR DINNER! An adult Pied Wagtail (left) passing over insects to a juvenile (right).



Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy

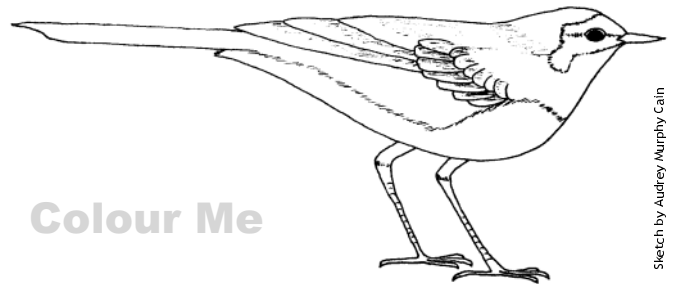
## Pied Wagtail

Scientific Name: *Motacilla alba yarrellii*  
Irish Name: Glasóg shráide

This small bird can be found all around Ireland. With its black and white colouring, it is quite easy to pick out. The male and female are slightly different in colour - the female has a grey back whereas the male's is nearly black. The pied wagtail, as part of its name suggests, has a long, slim tail that it wags up and down in a distinctive way. It is a bird that is constantly moving. It is commonly seen searching for insects along the roadside and when it calls out, it makes a loud, sharp 'chissick' noise.

Like Stonechats, Pipits, Wrens and Robins, Pied Wagtails are perching birds (also known as passerines). Over half of the world's bird species are passerine birds. They all have specially-adapted feet, each with three toes, used for gripping onto branches, twigs and wire.

The female pied wagtails builds their nests in holes in walls, ditches, buildings and even in ivy. They line these nests with wool, hair and feathers and lay 5 to 6 in each clutch. Generally, Pied wagtails do not migrate but some do go to southern France and Iberia for the winter.



Sketch by Audrey Murphy Cain

### Colour Me

#### Other Wagtails

There are two types of wagtail in Ireland, the Pied Wagtail and the Grey Wagtail. The Grey Wagtail has a blue-grey back and a yellow underside. Pied Wagtails are actually a subspecies of the White Wagtail, which is found throughout Europe, Asia and north Africa. Pied Wagtails have darker backs and are particular to Ireland and Britain.

#### FACT FILE

**Colour:** Black and white body.

**Length:** 16.5-19 cm

**Diet:** Flies and moths.

**Habitat:** Near water on farms, towns and cities all around Ireland.

**No. of eggs:** 5-6