



Waxwings are known to be very clever birds.

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## Looking Good!

Waxwings are very sharp looking birds. They are similar in size to the starling but on closer inspection, their colours are very different. They are light brown in colour, with dark markings around their eyes and on their chin. Their wing tips are mainly black, with white and yellow markings. On some birds, distinct red feathers can be seen. These look like blobs of wax and give rise to the bird's name—waxwing.



The red feathers on a waxwing.

The waxwing also has a very distinct tuft of feathers on the top of their head, known as a crest. The crest is generally used for display purposes.

# The Waxwing

**Scientific Name:** *Bombycilla garrulus* **Irish Name:** Síodeiteach



## Berries

Berries from the Rowan tree (or Mountain Ash) are the Waxwing's main food. They also eat cotoneaster and hawthorn berries. A good crop of berries can mean a larger population the following year. Some times they eat fermented berries, resulting in the birds becoming a little tipsy!



Not all birds we see in Ireland breed here. Some are only passing through or spending time here as their breeding grounds (the place they call home) may have become inhospitable. This could be because temperatures are too hot in summer or too cold in winter and food supplies run out.

Waxwings are birds that visit Ireland in the winter months. Their breeding range stretches from Finland to Siberia and into the Pacific coast. Though many migrate to Scandinavia in the winter, a few birds do make it to Ireland each year, normally in the north and east of the country. On occasion a large numbers will arrive when they unexpectedly run out of food in Scandinavia.

Waxwings are less wary of humans than other birds. This is probably because they do not see many humans in their breeding grounds so are less suspicious of them.

Over half the birds in the world are perching birds, otherwise known as passerine birds. Waxwings belong to this group. They are able to grip on to branches, twigs and wire with specially adapted feet.

## FACT FILE

**Colour:** Light brown in colour with black, white, red and yellow markings.

**Length:** 18 cm

**Diet:** Mostly the berries from Rowan trees.

**Habitat:** Evergreen and mixed forests in breeding grounds.

**No. of eggs per clutch:** 3-7

**Group Name:** A group of waxwings is known as a museum.