



Latin Name *Alcedo atthis*

What do they look like?

You can not mistake this bird from any other. It is nothing less than brilliantly coloured. They are blue green above and orange chestnut below. They have a white throat and a white patch on the side of their head; a short square, stubby tail, red legs and a black stabbing beak. Their colouring is part of their defence adaptation as it advertises to predators not to eat them as they taste horrible.



Photograph © Paul Burrows
Vital Statistics

Eggs: April to August 6-7
Incubation: 19-21 days
Maximum lifespan: 15 years
Length: 16-17cm
Wingspan: 24-26cm
Weight: 34-36g
UK breeding: 3,600-6,000pairs

Where do they live and nest in Healey Dell?

They feed on fish and therefore can be spotted by any of the streams and rivers which feed the Dell, but are more likely to be seen where there are overhanging branches above shallow water where they like to sit whilst searching for food. They nest in holes in the banks of the rivers.

What do they eat?

They mainly eat Sticklebacks, Minnows and Gudgeon, although they will eat dragonfly nymph and water beetles, which they catch by plunging headlong into the water, catching the prey in their bill. The fish are swallowed whole, head first, and sometimes they stun them first by beating their heads on a branch.

What do they sound like?

Click the red button or copy this link into a web browser http://www.arkive.org/species/ARK/birds/Alcedo_atthis/more_moving_images.html to enter the ARKIVE website to see a moving picture of the Kingfisher.



What are their eggs and nests like?

Kingfishers lay their eggs on the bare earth in a rounded chamber. This lies at the end of a tunnel that both parents excavate. In April or May the female lays 6-7 whitish eggs, both parents incubate the eggs. The chicks are born naked, and are not the cleanest of birds, so that as time goes on regurgitated fish bones become the lining to the nest chamber.

Conservation

The kingfisher is on the AMBER list mainly because of conservation problems in other parts of Europe. However, in the past their plumage was used to decorate ladies' hats, and the whole bird was often stuffed and put in a glass case as decoration for a Victorian sideboard. Their main problems in the wild today, are hard winters when the water freezes over and they can not feed.

Field Guides to Healey Dell
5. Kingfisher



Sources

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/>

<http://www.garden-birds.co.uk/>

<http://www.bto.org/birdtrends2000/>

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