

The Breeding And Wintering Birds Of Britain And Ireland

When it comes to birdwatching, few places in the world can match the diversity and abundance found in Britain and Ireland. These two beautiful countries are home to a wide variety of bird species, from colorful residents to rare visitors. In this article, we will explore the breeding and wintering birds that grace the skies of these enchanting lands, providing an insight into their captivating habits and the best places to spot them.

1. The Majestic Red Kite

Let's begin with one of the most magnificent birds of prey in Britain and Ireland – the Red Kite. With its distinctive rusty-red plumage and forked tail, this bird is a true symbol of beauty and power. These raptors can be found soaring gracefully above the rolling hills and woodlands, scanning the ground for their next meal.

The best time to spot Red Kites is during the breeding season, which typically starts in March. They build large nests made of sticks high up in trees, providing a perfect vantage point for their impressive aerial displays. One of the best places to observe these elegant birds is the Black Mountains in Wales, where they have made a remarkable comeback over the past few decades.



Bird Atlas 2007-11: The Breeding and Wintering Birds of Britain and Ireland by Anna Frebel(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 534420 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled



2. The Charming Barn Owl

No list of British and Irish birds would be complete without mentioning the enchanting Barn Owl. With its heart-shaped face and ethereal flight, this nocturnal hunter is a sight to behold. While they can be spotted all year round, winter is an excellent time to witness their ghostly presence in the countryside.

Barn Owls thrive in open grasslands, farmlands, and wetlands, where they hunt for small rodents such as mice and voles. The marshes of Norfolk and the vast expanses of the Cotswolds are renowned hotspots for Barn Owl sightings during the colder months, offering a chance to admire their graceful movements against a winter backdrop.

3. The Colorful Kingfishers

If you are a fan of vibrant colors, you can't miss the Kingfishers of Britain and Ireland. These stunning birds, with their brilliant blue and orange plumage, are a true spectacle to behold. Known for their high-speed diving and precise fishing skills, Kingfishers are a favorite among bird enthusiasts.

Although they can be seen year-round, winter is an ideal time to spot Kingfishers as they tend to gather near unfrozen water bodies and rivers. The Norfolk Broads, with its extensive network of waterways and reed beds, offers excellent opportunities to witness the dazzling beauty of these magnificent birds up close.

4. The Adorable Puffins of The Shetland Islands

Our journey to explore the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland wouldn't be complete without a visit to the Shetland Islands. These remote and rugged Scottish isles are home to one of the most adorable seabirds in the world – the Puffin.

Puffins are known for their colorful beaks, striking orange feet, and comical yet endearing appearance. They spend the winter months out at sea, but during the breeding season, they return to their cliffside burrows for nesting. The cliffs at Sumburgh Head in Shetland are teeming with these charming creatures during the summer, providing ample opportunities to photograph their playful antics.

5. The Rare and Elusive Golden Eagle

Among the many remarkable birds of prey found in Britain and Ireland, the Golden Eagle stands out as a true symbol of power and grace. With its massive wingspan and majestic demeanor, this bird is a sight to behold for any nature lover.

Golden Eagles mainly breed in the Scottish Highlands, where they soar above the dramatic mountain landscapes and moorlands. With only a few pairs remaining in Ireland, they can be quite elusive in this part of the region. To catch a glimpse of these incredible creatures, head to the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland, where they are known to inhabit.

Britain and Ireland are a birdwatcher's paradise, offering a fantastic array of breeding and wintering birds to admire. From the majestic Red Kite and charming Barn Owl to the colorful Kingfishers and adorable Puffins, these lands are home to some of the most captivating avian species in the world. So grab your binoculars, pack your patience, and embark on a mesmerizing journey through the fascinating world of British and Irish birds.



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The Bird Atlas 2007–2011 is the definitive statement on breeding and winter bird distributions in Britain and Ireland.

Building on previous atlases (1968–1972 Breeding Atlas, 1981–1984 Winter Atlas, 1988–1991 Breeding Atlas), it shows how the fortunes of the birds of Britain and Ireland have changed over the last 40 years. The Bird Atlas 2007–2011 presents over 1,300 detailed maps for nearly 300 species, showing where each breeds and winters, where they are most and least abundant and where status is changing. The species accounts and chapters bring together the latest scientific findings to explain these patterns and highlight the major issues facing our changing bird faunas.

The content of this eBook has been optimised for colour tablets and may be unsuitable for mobile phones and eInk readers. We recommend that you download a sample to your device before purchasing. Due to the large file size of the complete eBook (523 MB) it should be downloaded over WiFi to avoid mobile data charges.



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