Birds of Dumfries

A checklist of the birds recorded in and around Dumfries · 70 species

☐		**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*	The Solway's signature bird — the entire Svalbard population winters here and almost nowhere else.
☐		**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	The small gull whose hood is actually dark chocolate-brown, and only there for half the year.
☐		**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*	The rich, unhurried song from a rooftop at dusk — the sound of a Dumfries spring evening.
☐		**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*	A rich, tumbling song from deep in the scrub, and a cap that is black on males and warm brown on females.
☐		**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*	Blue cap, yellow breast, no fear of anything — the acrobat of every feeder in town.
☐		**Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	A soft, mournful piping from inside a hedge, then a flash of white rump as it slips away.
☐		**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*	Introduced from North America three centuries ago, and now thoroughly at home on the town pond.
☐		**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*	All black, all business, and usually on its own — the crow that is not a rook.
☐		**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*	An accelerating rattle that ends in a flourish — and a different accent depending where you are.
☐		**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*	Named after its own song — a flat, insistent 'chiff-chaff' from high in a bare March tree.
☐		**Coal Tit** *Periparus ater*	The smallest of our tits — grabs a seed and vanishes, hiding it somewhere for later.
☐		**Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*	Unknown in Britain before the 1950s — it walked here from the Balkans in a single human lifetime.
☐		**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*	The plaintive mewing overhead — now the commonest bird of prey in Britain, and back from near-extinction here.
☐		**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*	Everyone knows the call; far fewer have seen the bird, and fewer still after early July.
☐		**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*	Holds its head perfectly still while the rest of it works hard to hang in the wind.
☐		**Common Pheasant** *Phasianus colchicus*	Explodes out of the verge with a clattering shriek at exactly the moment you least expect it.

☐		**Common Raven** *Corvus corax*	A deep, resonant 'cronk' from overhead, and a bird far bigger than any crow has a right to be.
☐		**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	Never quite still — the rust-red tail shivers constantly, even when the rest of the bird does not.
☐		**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*	A 'sea swallow' — long tail streamers, a hovering pause, and then a clean vertical plunge.
☐		**Common Whitethroat** *Curruca communis*	Bursts out of a bramble, sings a scratchy phrase into the air, and drops straight back in.
☐		**Common Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus*	The heavy clatter of wings from a hedge, and a five-note coo that always seems to stop one note early.
☐		**Coot** *Fulica atra*	Sooty black with a white bill and forehead shield — and spectacularly bad-tempered with its neighbours.
☐		**Curlew** *Numenius arquata*	The bubbling song over spring moorland, and the long downcurved bill — Britain's biggest wader, and in serious trouble.
☐		**Dunlin** *Calidris alpina*	Flocks that turn as one over the mudflats, flashing dark then silver-white in the same second.
☐		**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*	The quiet grey-brown bird shuffling under the feeder — overlooked, and with a startlingly complicated love life.
☐		**Feral Pigeon** *Columba livia domestica*	A cliff-nesting seabird that decided our buildings were cliffs — and never looked back.
☐		**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*	Big, grey-headed northern thrushes that arrive in chattering flocks to strip the hedgerows bare.
☐		**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*	Britain's smallest bird, weighing about the same as a ten-pence piece.
☐		**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*	A red face, gold wing bars and a tinkling call — a charm of goldfinches is worth the name.
☐		**Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major*	That short, hard burst of drumming in March is not feeding — it is a bird announcing itself.
☐		**Great Tit** *Parus major*	The black stripe down a yellow chest, and a two-note 'tea-cher' that carries right across the garden.
☐		**Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis*	The laugh — a loud, ringing 'yaffle' — carries across a field long before you find the bird.
☐		**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*	Stocky, olive-green and heavy-billed — and much scarcer at the feeder than it used to be.
☐		**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*	Stands in the shallows without moving for twenty minutes, then strikes faster than you can follow.

☐		**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*	The ancestor of the farmyard goose — and the one that actually sounds like a goose.
☐		**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*	The mud cup under the eaves — built one beakful at a time, and often reused for years.
☐		**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*	The noisy, squabbling bird of hedges and eaves that we only noticed once it started disappearing.
☐		**Jackdaw** *Corvus monedula*	The small grey-hooded crow with pale eyes that nests in your chimney and knows exactly what you are doing.
☐		**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*	Our most colourful crow, and the reason a good many oak trees are where they are.
☐		**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*	Slate-grey back and yellow legs — the herring gull's darker cousin, and once a bird that always left for winter.
☐		**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*	A flying teaspoon — and never alone: where there is one, there are a dozen close behind.
☐		**Magpie** *Pica pica*	Black and white at a glance — but catch the light and the tail is bottle-green and violet.
☐		**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis*	The small brown bird that flushes from the grass in front of you, calling thinly as it goes.
☐		**Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*	Orange bill with a black knob at the base — the swan that is here all year, and not silent at all.
☐		**Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea*	The only British bird that routinely walks head-first down a tree trunk.
☐		**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*	Black, white and loud, with a carrot-orange bill built for opening shellfish.
☐		**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*	The fastest animal on earth — and increasingly likely to be nesting on a building rather than a crag.
☐		**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*	A crisp black-and-white summer visitor to the oakwoods — and a reliable taker of nest boxes.
☐		**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla alba yarrellii*	Runs across the supermarket car park in short bursts, tail pumping the whole time.
☐		**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*	Skeins yelping across a September sky — for many people the first real sign that autumn has arrived.
☐		**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*	Deeply forked tail, constantly twisting — a bird brought back to Galloway deliberately, and now breeding here.
☐		**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*	Listen on an October night — the thin 'seep' overhead is redwings arriving in the dark.

☐		**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoeniclus*	Black hood, white collar and a song so unhurried it sounds like the bird has forgotten how it ends.
☐		**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*	The gardener's shadow — bold, orange-breasted and singing on the darkest days of the year.
☐		**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*	Never alone: rooks live, feed and nest in company, in the clattering treetop colonies called rookeries.
☐		**Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*	An owl that hunts in daylight, quartering low over the marsh on long, stiff wings.
☐		**Skylark** *Alauda arvensis*	Song pouring down out of an empty sky from a bird too high to see.
☐		**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos*	Sings every phrase two or three times over, as if making sure you heard it.
☐		**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*	Comes through the garden low and fast, round the corner of the house, and is gone before you register it.
☐		**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata*	Sits bolt upright on a fence post, flies out, snaps up a fly, and returns to exactly the same perch.
☐		**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*	Black at a distance, iridescent purple and green close up — and capable of imitating a car alarm.
☐		**Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*	Perches on the very top of a gorse bush and scolds you with a sound like two pebbles knocked together.
☐		**Teal** *Anas crecca*	Our smallest duck, and the one that springs vertically off the water when flushed.
☐		**Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*	Like a house sparrow drawn more carefully — chestnut cap, and a black comma on a white cheek.
☐		**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*	Black and white, golden-eyed, with a drooping ponytail — and forever disappearing underwater mid-sentence.
☐		**Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus*	Straight neck, yellow wedge on the bill, and a bugling call from birds that flew here from Iceland.
☐		**Wigeon** *Mareca penelope*	The drake's clear rising whistle across a winter marsh is one of the great Solway sounds.
☐		**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*	A soft, descending cascade of notes that fades away at the end — the sound of April birchwoods.
☐		**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*	Britain's commonest bird, and one of its smallest — a brown scrap with a startlingly loud voice.
☐		**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*	'A little bit of bread and no cheese' — sung from a hedge top through the heat of a July afternoon.

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