

Common Redstart

Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Bird · Summer migrant · Apr-Sep



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A slim, elegant summer visitor. The male in spring is a genuinely beautiful bird: blue-grey above, black face and throat, orange-red breast and a burning rusty tail. Females are plainer buff-brown but share the same tail. Redstarts breed in open oak and birch woodland, wood pasture and old walls with cavities, and Galloway holds good numbers — they are far commoner west and north of Dumfries than in lowland England.

BEHAVIOUR

The constant quivering of the tail is the identification clincher, visible even at distance. Redstarts hunt from a low perch, dropping to the ground for insects or flycatching briefly, and nest in tree holes, wall crevices and boxes. Males sing a short, sweet, slightly melancholy phrase that trails off into a scratchy jumble, usually from a high branch in the first hours of light.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Chats and flycatchers (Muscicapidae)
SIZE	14 cm · sparrow-sized
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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