

Green Woodpecker

Picus viridis

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A big, heavy woodpecker, olive-green above with a golden-yellow rump that shows in its deeply undulating flight, a crimson crown and a black face mask. Males have a red centre to the moustache stripe, females all black. Green woodpeckers are birds of parkland, old pasture, orchards and woodland edge rather than dense forest, and are noticeably scarcer in Dumfries and Galloway than in England.

BEHAVIOUR

Unlike its pied relative it spends much of its time on the ground, hopping awkwardly across short turf and anthills to feed on ants, which it extracts with an extraordinarily long, sticky tongue that wraps around inside its skull when retracted. It rarely drums. Instead the territorial signal is the loud laughing call — the 'yaffle' — that gives the bird its old country name.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Woodpeckers (Picidae)
SIZE	30–36 cm · our largest woodpecker
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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