

Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

Bird · Resident · here all year



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For a bird everyone hopes to see, the kingfisher is surprisingly easy to miss. It perches quietly on branches and posts overhanging slow, clear water, watching for small fish, and its brilliant blue-and-orange plumage can look almost black in poor light or deep shade. Most sightings are a fleeting flash of colour and a sharp, piping call as it shoots low over the water, following the line of the river rather than crossing open ground.

BEHAVIOUR

It hunts by watching. From a perch above the water it waits, then dives head-first to seize a small fish or aquatic insect in its dagger-like bill, stunning it against the perch before swallowing it whole. Pairs excavate a nest tunnel in a vertical riverbank, and both parents feed the chicks; outside the breeding season kingfishers are fiercely territorial along their own stretch of river.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Kingfishers (Alcedinidae)
SIZE	16–17 cm · robin-sized
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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