

Pied Wagtail

Motacilla alba yarrellii

Bird · Resident · here all year



Photo by Jac. Janssen from BAARLO LB, NL, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

A slim black-and-white bird with a very long tail that it wags almost continuously. Adults in summer are boldly pied with a black back and bib; winter birds are greyer with a white throat. Pied wagtails are thoroughly at home with people in Dumfries — car parks, flat roofs, riverside paths, farmyards — and the British race is darker-backed than the white wagtails that pass through on migration.

BEHAVIOUR

The feeding style is unmistakable: a fast run across open ground, an abrupt stop, a snatch at an insect, then off again, tail pumping throughout. On winter evenings pied wagtails gather into communal roosts, sometimes of several hundred birds, in warm sheltered places — trees in town centres, glasshouses and industrial buildings — because a lit, heated town holds warmth that open countryside does not.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Wagtails and pipits (Motacillidae)
SIZE	18 cm · slim, with a very long tail
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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