

Sparrowhawk

Accipiter nisus

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A compact woodland hawk with short rounded wings, a long square-ended tail and long yellow legs. Males are small — barely bigger than a blackbird — slate-grey above with orange-barred underparts; females are markedly larger and browner. Sparrowhawks hunt gardens, woodland and hedgerow across Dumfries, and a bird-feeding station is, from their point of view, a reliable food source.

BEHAVIOUR

The hunting style is ambush, not pursuit from height: it flies fast and low, using hedges, walls and buildings as cover, and comes round the obstacle straight into a flock. Most attacks fail. The size difference between the sexes lets a pair exploit different prey — males take tits and finches, females can take a woodpigeon. In spring they soar and display over the nesting wood on fine mornings.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Hawks, kites and eagles (Accipitridae)
SIZE	28–38 cm · females much larger than males
UK STATUS	Amber-listed

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