

Stonechat

Saxicola rubicola

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A small, upright, round-headed chat of gorse, heath and rough coastal ground. Males have a black head, a white half-collar, orange-red breast and a dark streaky back; females are a softer brown version. Stonechats are birds of open country rather than gardens, and around Dumfries they are best looked for on the rough grazing, whin banks and coastal edge of the Solway rather than in town.

BEHAVIOUR

The call gives it its name — a hard, repeated 'tsak tsak', exactly like small stones being tapped together, usually delivered from a prominent perch with much tail-flicking and wing-flicking. Stonechats hunt by dropping from a perch onto insects in the vegetation below. Being resident, they are vulnerable to hard winters, and local numbers can fall sharply after a severe cold spell and take several mild years to recover.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Chats and flycatchers (Muscicapidae)
SIZE	12 cm · smaller than a sparrow
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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