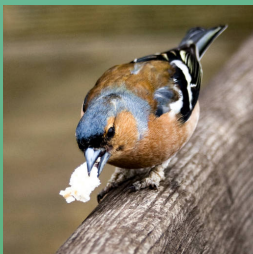
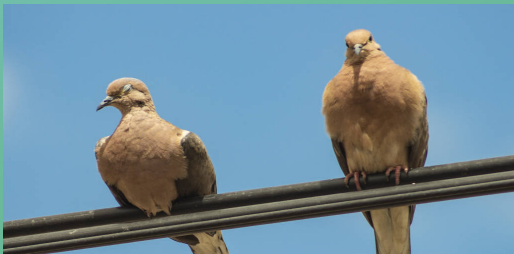
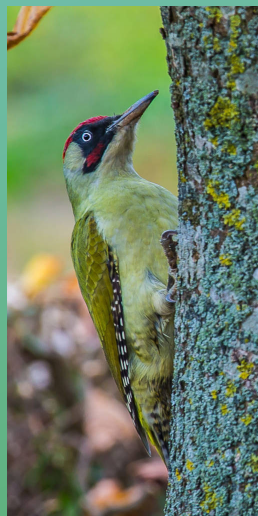




**INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT
MIDDLE EUROPEAN BIRDS**





Northern Lapwing

Vanellus Vanellus

The flight of the lapwing is very distinct. Its flaps are gentle and relaxed, with particular wide wings, which are round as paddles. As their upper side is black while they are back and white underneath, they seem to blink during flight, so they can be recognized from quiet long distances.



Eurasian Hoopoe

Upupa Epops

To defend their nest against predators and deter parasites, the incubating and brooding female Hoopoe and her nestlings, produces a foul-smelling liquid, which reminds of rotting meat. These secretions may even also have antibacterial properties.



Common Raven

Corvus Corax

While they did not have the best reputation throughout history, thus being hunted to near extinction in middle Europe, up until the 1940s, they are actually quiet exceptional birds. For example, they choose their mate with great care, which takes two to three years, and then generally stay with them for the rest of their lives.

However, what ravens are best known for is their high intelligence, with brains that are among the largest of any bird species. They make use of tools and successfully adapted to living in human settlements. For instance, they throw nuts, which are hard to crack, on streets and wait until a car drives over them. Also, they are smart enough to evade even the fast cars on highways.

Their social intelligence is stunning. They can often be seen playing with each other, but what is truly remarkable is that they are capable of deception. When hiding a food cache, they do so in secret. Should they notice, that they have been watched by a sneaky competitor, they move the food somewhere else. Sometimes they even create fake caches to confuse thieves. These are strong indications, that they are capable of putting themselves into other's position.



Common Starling

Sturnus Vulgaris

Since it has been brought to other continents by humans, the starling has become one of the most common birds. For example, in their winter grounds, they sleep together in groups of more than one million individuals.

Before flying to their roost, they usually gather at other places, like exposed buildings, high trees or power lines. From there, they fly in large flocks to the actual sleeping spot. They form a cloud of several thousand birds and fly down, forming a hose, that from a distance can remind of a tornado.

Their feathers have light tips, which give them the distinct speckled look. While the feathers are new in late-summer, their tips worn down until the breeding season in the next spring. Then the metallic shine dominates their plumage.



Western Jackdaw

Coloeus Monedula

The jackdaw is a very social corvid. If there is enough space available, they often closely breed in colonies of dozens of pairs, which they defend together. They also move in large groups when searching for food, which allows them to prevail against larger crows.

When not breeding, between several hundreds and a thousand jackdaws gather at their roost to sleep. There are even accounts of groups of more than 10,000 individuals.



Did You Know?

Due to their high metabolism, birds have the highest constant body temperature of all animals alive today, at around 42 °C (107 °F).



Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos Major*

Woodpeckers are famous for their drumming and no other species drums faster than the Great spotted woodpecker. The 10 to 16 strikes per second in one or two second bursts, can be heard over long distances and are used to mark their territory. Though the forces of each strike can peak at 1200g, the bird's specialized anatomy prevents injuries.



Eurasian Jay *Garrulus Glandarius*

Before winter, the jay builds significant stocks of food. Over the whole year, it deposits excess food. In August, it begins to gather acorns and other nuts and continues to do so until winter or even the next spring. During October, the bird spends almost the entire day gathering and hiding food. Once finished, a single jay has stockpiled up to 5000 acorns.

Jays are able to find accurately remember and find their caches even when it is covered under a thick layer of snow. If their caches last long enough, they sometimes feed them to their offspring in the next year.



European Robin *Erithacus Rubecula*

Robins can be seen approaching wild boars or other large animals, that open the ground, where they look for food, that may have been uncovered by them. They also follow gardeners for the same reason.

They even actively seek out larger animals, as there are often insects near them, keeping a distance of only one meter. It is theorized, that they learn this behavior from older robins.



House Sparrow *Passer Domesticus*

Sparrows are quite social birds that feed in flocks or at least small groups, even during breeding. In grain fields, groups of 20 birds are the most efficient ones for feeding, being a trade-off between the time required for watching for predators and the conflicts between fellow sparrows.

If a sparrow discovers a food source, it calls for others and waits until enough have assembled before it begins to feed.

In cities, they can be watched looking for dead insects on the radiator grills of cars or on the front of trains, shortly after they have been moved to the depot.





Red-Backed Shrike

Lanius Collurio

As the shrike primarily hunts insects, bad weather can prevent it from finding enough food. To survive several rainy or cold days, it builds a stockpile of big insects and small vertebrates, which are impaled on thorns or barbed wire. This helps it to tear off smaller bites and is an innate behavior, though they require some experience to improve this skill.

When catching insects like wasps or hornets, shrikes are aware of the stinger. Once they killed the prey, they rub it on a hard surface to remove the stinger, before they proceed eating or storing it.



Common Blackbird

Turdus Merula

Although the blackbird was originally a bird of the forests, since the 19th century it settles in parks, gardens and even towns.

Blackbirds are valued for their creative and melodic songs, that sound pleasant to human ears. Often, a male knows more than 30 motifs and even more variations for the appendix at the end of a call. They have two to five favorite motifs, that are so distinct, that a human can identify an individual bird via the songs it prefers.

The songs are only partially innate. Young blackbirds learn the majority from their fathers or other males. But they are also capable to imitate songs of other species or even artificial sounds like the siren of an ambulance.

While the males mostly sing from March to start of July to mark their territory, they can also be heard in winter quietly singing to themselves.



Did You Know?

Birds have no diaphragm and use several air sacs to pump air through their rigid lungs instead.

They are also important elements in regulating the body temperature and can provide an extensive volume of air for singing.



Common Chaffinch

Fringilla Coelebs

The nests are built carefully by the female chaffinches using roots, a layer of lichen and spider silk for the outside. The inside is padded with hair and feathers. Using moss and lichen provides very good camouflage in the bushes and tree crotches, especially in the later months of breeding, when there is more foliage.



Little Owl

Athene Noctua

In contrast to other owls, that primarily hunt at night, the flight of the little owl is not soundless and can even be heard by nearby humans. They normally hunt on the ground around two hours after dusk and before dawn. By running in large steps, occasionally jumping, they are fast enough to even catch field mice.



Common Kingfisher

Alcedo Atthis

The kingfisher hunts by sitting above or near water and once it spotted a suitable fish, it dives head first down at an angle, accelerating with a few short flaps.

As the refraction between air and water makes it very difficult to catch the prey, the kingfisher has evolved special eyes. When hitting the water, they stay open, but are protected by nictitating membranes. The eye itself is truly remarkable. The lens is shaped like an egg, which allows switching to a more accurate vision under water, when used together with a second fovea on the retina. The eye also contains small oil droplets that enhance color vision and reduce glare.