



SCOTTISH WILDLIFE WATCH IS THE JUNIOR BRANCH OF THE SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST

SUMMER 2008

# Wild Watch

SCOTLAND

[www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)

PRICE £1.50

Welcome to the summer newsletter and poster for Scottish Wildlife Watch members!

## GONE FISHING?

What's that flash of blue with whirring wings flying fast and low over the water? It's the kingfisher. You cannot mistake the shy kingfisher with its brilliant blue back and striking chestnut front for any other bird. Once seen, kingfishers are never forgotten. Watch this stunning little bird on its favourite perch and then marvel at its speed and skill when diving for its favourite meal...fish. Kingfishers are the masters of fishing, they are able to spot the tiny fish through the water and dive with speed and accuracy. And what's more, they appear to do it all with their eyes shut!

Echo the bat

POSTER INSIDE

Don't hang about, tell your friends!

WATCH SUBSCRIPTION IS ONLY £18 PER MEMBER.

Get in touch at Scottish Wildlife Watch, Cramond House, Cramond Glebe Road, Edinburgh EH4 6NS.

Tel: 0131 312 7765, email: [echo@swt.org.uk](mailto:echo@swt.org.uk)



Photo © AD Johnson

Visit our website at [www.swt.org.uk](http://www.swt.org.uk)

# \* Creature feature

## Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) \*

For those people lucky enough to see a kingfisher it normally appears as a flash of brilliant blue and then disappears just as quickly. When most people see a kingfisher for the first time they are surprised by how small it is. This brightly coloured bird is only about the size of a robin!

The kingfisher's bright colours are designed to put off predators by indicating that they taste horrible.

Amazingly, the shiny blue and green colours of the kingfisher's feathers do not really exist. It's all a trick of the light! The brown feathers absorb light in a special way so all you see are blues and greens. You can see the same effect on the bright reflected colours on your CDs at home.

Kingfishers normally live near rivers or streams although some are found on lakes and canals. Clean rivers are very important for the kingfisher

population because the birds are extremely sensitive to river pollution. When rivers are polluted sticklebacks die out and these fish are the kingfisher's favourite food. This means kingfishers may either starve or move to another river to find cleaner water and more food.

Right now, the United Kingdom has between 4,000 and 6,000 pairs of kingfishers, which is really good! These high numbers are a result of our clean waterways; however, because kingfishers are so vulnerable to pollution, we must work hard to keep our rivers clean and protect our kingfisher population.



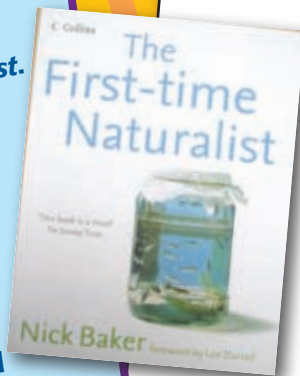
# Watch Summer competition!

Decorate your own kingfisher!

The lucky winner will receive Nick Baker's *The First-Time Naturalist*.

You can use anything from leaves and twigs to feathers or seeds. It doesn't even have to be the same colours as a kingfisher. The more imaginative the better. For my kingfisher I used tissue paper, ribbon, sparkly pipe cleaners and sequins, and a twig I found in the garden!

Send me photos of your creations to Watch, Montrose Basin Visitor Centre, Rossie Braes, Montrose, Angus, DD10 8QY or email them to [echo@swt.org.uk](mailto:echo@swt.org.uk)



## Spring competition winner!

The winner of the last competition is Ashley Figgis from Castle Douglas. Well done! There were 28 badgers in the picture!



## Watch Crossword

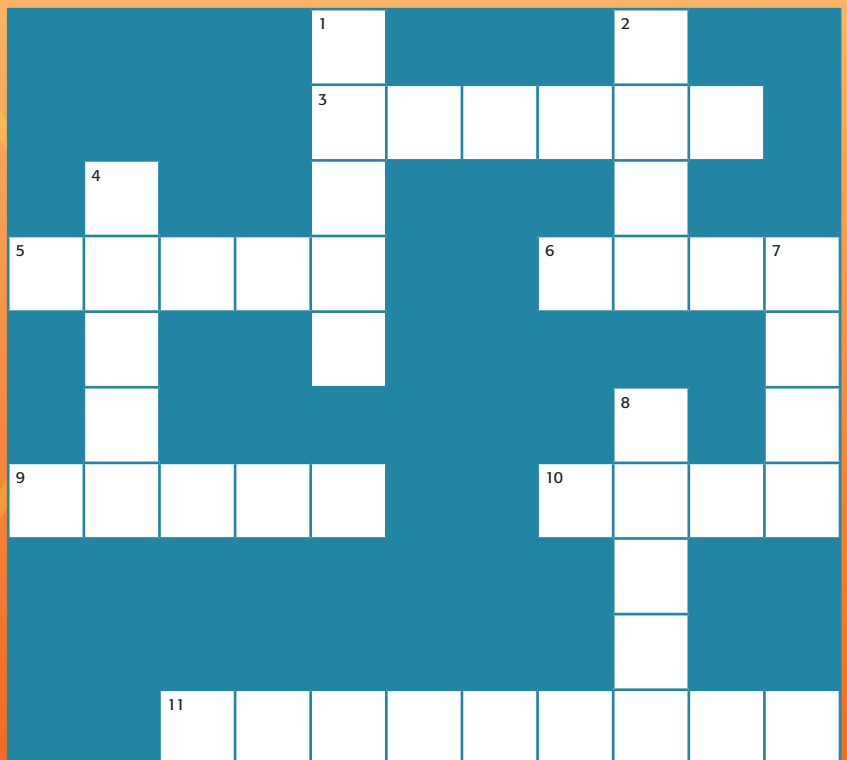
See if you can get all the correct answers in this fun crossword. It is all about kingfishers and all the answers can be found in this magazine.

### Across

3. Alcedo .....
5. The UK has between 4,000 and 6,000 ..... of kingfishers
6. Kingfishers dive with their eyes ....
9. What colour are a kingfisher's feathers?
10. .... Fishing?
11. Kingfishers are very sensitive to river .....

### Down

1. The ancient Greeks thought that kingfishers brought them bad luck. True / False?
2. What is the kingfisher's favourite food?
4. Kingfishers can normally be found living beside .....
7. The bright colours of a kingfisher are meant to warn predators that they taste horrible. True / False?
8. The kingfisher is about the size of a pigeon / robin / blackbird



# Facts

- Strangely enough, there are many myths about the kingfisher and weather!
- The ancients Greeks thought the kingfisher brought good luck, kept evil spirits away and calmed the seas.
- Another legend says that Noah sent a kingfisher out to look for land after he sent the dove. But the kingfisher flew too close to the sun and burnt its breast feathers, which is how kingfishers came to have chestnut feathers on their fronts.
- Dead kingfishers were often carried aboard ships because it was believed that the kingfisher would stop lightning striking the ship.



## Find out more...

### Read...

*Kingfishers* by Charlie Hamilton James, Colin Baxter Photography Ltd, £8.00, ISBN 1-900455-25-0

### Visit...

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre, Rossie Braes, Montrose, DD10 9TJ. Tel: 01674 676336, email: montrosebasin@swt.org.uk

### Go to...

CBBC website  
[www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/wild/amazinganimals](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/wild/amazinganimals)  
Click "K" for kingfisher and learn some more amazing facts.

BBC website  
[www.bbc.co.uk/earth/nature/uk/records/classified/nav~video](http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/nature/uk/records/classified/nav~video)  
This website is well worth a look. See kingfishers in action!

## Watch Out!

There is a brand new Watch group starting up at SWT Loch of the Lowes Visitor Centre! If you live in or near Dunkeld and you would like to get involved please contact the Watch Support Officer on 01674 676336 or email [wildlifewatch@swt.org.uk](mailto:wildlifewatch@swt.org.uk) for more details.

## What is Scottish Wildlife Watch?

Scottish Wildlife Watch is the junior membership of the Scottish Wildlife Trust. It's the biggest environmental action club in Scotland. Scottish Wildlife Watch members receive loads of goodies throughout the year including:

**WildWatch Scotland** – three fantastic Scottish magazines.

**Ready For Action** – the fun-filled pocket-sized guide to becoming a wildlife watcher.

**Watchword** – three lively UK-wide wildlife magazines.

**Wildlife Extra** – three amazing colour posters, packed with ideas for action.

Members can also take part in:

**Exciting national and local projects** – make a difference to conservation.

**The Gold Award & Watch Starlets** – work your way to the top with these awards for young environmentalists.

**Watch Group activities** – hands-on action and involvement with local environmental clubs.