

The Blackbird



Male Blackbird

Scientific name: Turdus merula

Irish Name: Lon Dubh

Males: The Male Blackbird has a glossy black plumage and an orange-yellow bill.

Female: The Female Blackbird isn't black at all. She has a dark brown plumage with a faintly spotted breast. Its bill is yellow-brown.

Juveniles: Juvenile Blackbirds are a reddish-brown colour with spotting that is similar to that of the adult female but more spotted and redder.

Song: The Blackbird sings from a perch and its song is rich and varied. Their calls are loud and varied. The Blackbirds warning call is accompanied with flicking wings and tail and sounds a little like "chook", and the alarm call is a loud rattle.

During the winter Blackbirds often sing to themselves while hiding in bushes. This is called a sub-song. After July (when the breeding season is over) the male Blackbird stops singing and does not begin again until the following February.

Length: Approximately 25cm

Diet: The Blackbird eats insects and earthworms taken from the ground. Many times you will notice a Blackbird run across a garden, pause briefly before taking some food and then returning to its hiding place. In the autumn they will often eat fallen apples and berries.



Female Blackbird

Breeding: Breeding begins in March. The Blackbird lays between 3 and 5 eggs. The eggs incubate for approximately 10-19 days. The smooth, glossy eggs are light greenish-blue with reddish-brown spots, and approximately 29 mm by 22 mm. The female incubates the eggs by herself. After the young hatch, they are fed by both parents.

Nesting: The nest is built by the female from grass and twigs, and bound together with mud and finer grasses. The nest is usually in a hedge or bush, though they will occasionally use shelves in huts and other outbuildings.

Interesting Fact: If this Blackbird makes a nest on your roof, it is said to be a sign of good luck. In fact most people believe that if this bird nests anywhere near the house it a positive sign. Seeing the sight of two together is unusual and a sign of good luck as the blackbird is very territorial.

On Valentines Day many people thought you could tell the occupation of your future husband by the first bird you saw. If the first bird a girl saw was a Blackbird she would marry a clergy man.

Long ago Blackbirds and other song birds were a delicacy, a fact we are reminded of in the rhyme:

Sing a song of sixpence a pocket full of rye,
Four-and-twenty Blackbirds baked in a pie,
When the pie was opened the birds begin to sing,
Oh wasn't that a dainty dish to set before the King.