




FIVE TO FIND *in April*

April is one of the great months of the birdwatching calendar. Many of our summer visitors start to arrive in numbers and the dawn chorus swells in volume and diversity. It is also a key month for catching up with passage birds such as chats, terns and waders. Here are five birds to look for this month.

RARITY RATINGS

Common, widely distributed 
Localised – always a treat 
Very scarce or rare 

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HOUSE MARTIN



1



Alan Williams/Alamy

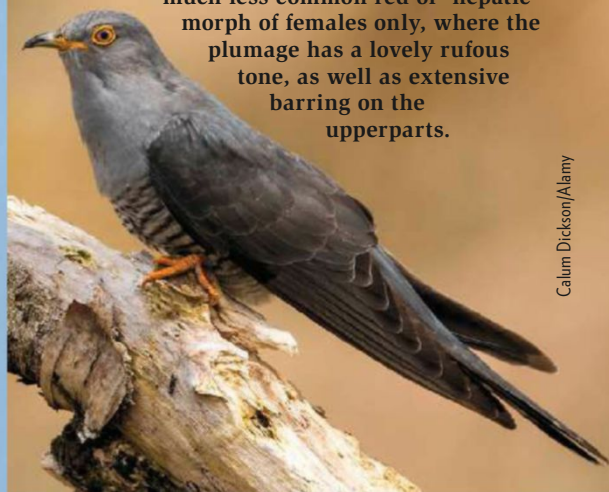
Usually the latest of our three swallow species to arrive, the House Martin is not a difficult bird to pick out or identify. Their most distinctive characteristic is the white rump, which is diagnostic. This contrasts with the very dark blue (often looking black) wings, back, head and tail. The underparts are mostly pure white. House Martins, like other swallows, catch insects in mid-air (often very high), but are also famed for their muddy nests under the eaves of lucky houses. So, they can be seen on the ground gathering wet mud from suitable places, as well as at the nest colony.

CUCKOO



2

They say that if you hear a Cuckoo in the first week of April you are very lucky and that if you haven't heard one by the end of April, you aren't trying hard enough! The most beloved and well-known of all bird songs is usually the first indication that Cuckoos are back from Africa; but it is a sound less frequently heard these days. Only males 'cuckoo', usually from a high perch on a tree, bush, telegraph wire or post. Females have a lovely, slightly weird 'bubbling' call. Females and males look quite similar, but there is also a much less common red or 'hepatic' morph of females only, where the plumage has a lovely rufous tone, as well as extensive barring on the upperparts.



Calum Dickson/Alamy

WHITE WAGTAIL



4

April is one of the best months for looking for White Wagtails, the continental subspecies of our familiar Pied Wagtail. Unlike our black-and-white or dark-grey-and-white birds, White Wagtails have neat pale grey backs, contrasting with the black crown (and nape of the male). These continental birds also tend to have cleaner looking flanks. Look for them where you may expect to find plentiful Pied Wagtails, such as gravel pit edges etc.

imageBROKER/Alamy



RING OUZEL



5

The wild, mountain equivalent of the Blackbird, the Ring Ouzel is a migrant species, which arrives back in the UK in April. It is one of those birds which are treasured patch finds by inland birders; often turning up in favoured fields or hilltops on passage year on year. Ring Ouzels like short-cropped fields which are large enough to keep them well away from human disturbance. They also like some trees, bushes or a hedge to flee into at the first sign of disturbance. They are similar to Blackbirds, but with a distinctive breast gorget (white or pale buff), 'scaly' plumage and silvery wings (especially males). They are very shy, so don't go blundering in, when you check out suitable habitat!