

WOODPECKERS OF THE UK by Dave and Gill Shearing

The Woodpecker family is one of the most fascinating groups of birds found in the UK. These charismatic birds are renowned for their distinctive drumming sounds, vibrant plumage, and unique behaviour. The UK is home to three resident woodpecker species — the Great Spotted Woodpecker, the Green Woodpecker, and the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker — along with the enigmatic Wryneck, which is a migratory visitor.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)

The Great Spotted Woodpecker is the most common and widespread Woodpecker in the UK. Easily identifiable by its black and white plumage and bright red undertail, this bird is a frequent visitor to woodlands, parks, and gardens. Males can be distinguished from females by a red patch on the nape of their neck.



Great Spotted Woodpeckers have a powerful, chisel-like bill, which they use to drum on tree trunks in search of insects or to establish territory. This drumming sound can be heard resonating through woodland and it can alert you to the bird's presence.

These Woodpeckers have adapted well to urban environments and can often be seen at bird feeders, especially in winter. Their diet consists of insects, seeds and also, perhaps surprisingly, bird's eggs and chicks.

Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)



The Green Woodpecker is the largest of the UK's Woodpecker species and is easily recognised by its vibrant green plumage, red crown, and black facial markings.

Unlike other woodpeckers, the Green Woodpecker spends most of its time on the ground, feeding on ants, its primary food source.

Their loud, laughing call, known as a "yaffle," is a familiar sound in woodlands and grasslands across the UK and is said to herald the arrival of rain.

