





Contents

003	Introduction
004	Europe
028	North America
056	South America
078	Antarctica
084	Oceania
114	Asia
140	Africa
160	Glossary & Acknowledgements









Introduction

My most memorable bird spotting moments have been from the back seat of my dad's car when I was little, whilst out walking with my daughters in the UK, from a taxi in India or just sitting on a porch in Victoria, Australia. I've had some amazing guides and dedicated bird-watching trips, but the really special spots are the ones that come out of the blue, most often shared with other people – friends, family or strangers.

This book is my personal selection of the most amazing birds in the world – the most beautiful, strange, scary, speedy and enchanting. Some are exotic or rare, but equally some you can see every day. That is the bird world's greatest gift to us; they are all around us – in the trees and sky, with their songs and calls – and in our folklore and sayings. We need to do our bit, say thanks whenever we can and help protect these amazing creatures, whether that is by consumer power, or by helping dedicated charities to stop our ever-expanding world from eating into theirs.

So let's not take our treasured birds for granted and remember to always look up and around as you never know what you are going to see.
Birds are wonderful!

Just a quick note to say that the illustrations of the birds side-by-side in this book aren't always to scale. I've given the dimensions of each bird, though, so you can get an idea of how big, or small, they really are.

Enjoy the book – and get out spotting wherever you are!

Matt Sewell







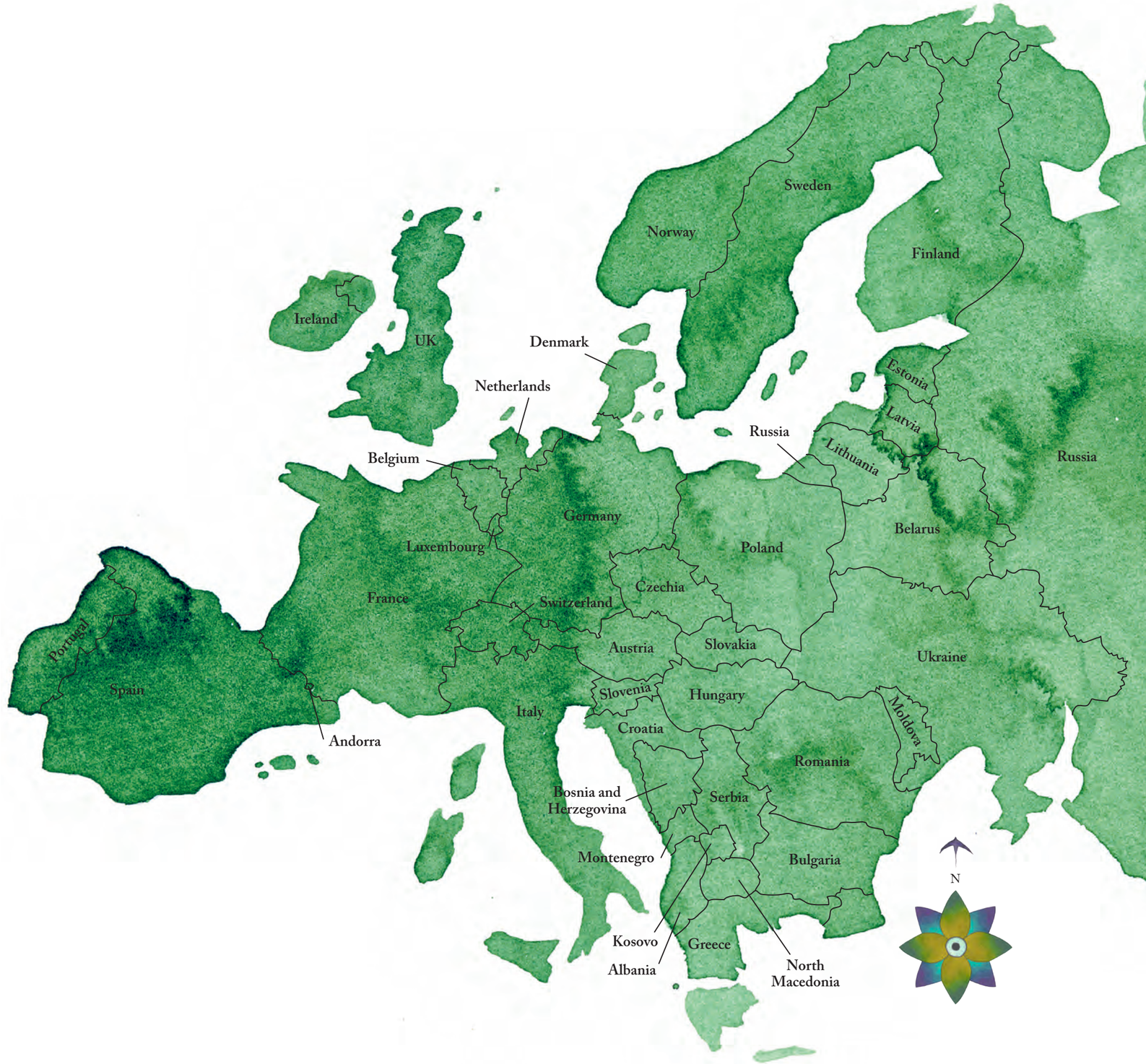
Common kingfisher

Europe

Europe covers over 10 million square kilometres, and is made up of around 50 sovereign states – Russia being the largest. The continent is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Arctic Ocean to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The climate is largely affected by warm Atlantic currents, meaning that, close to the shores, the weather tends not to get too hot or too cold – perfect for a wide variety of our feathered friends. Further inland, the weather can be more extreme.

There are around 700 species of birds in Europe. It's not the most bird-heavy continent, but it contains some beauties – amazing birds of prey, beautiful owls, teeny-tiny wallcreepers and strong and resilient sea birds.

006 European roller
007 Iberian magpie
008 Manx shearwater
009 Red-billed chough
010 Bohemian waxwing
011 Siberian jay
012 Rosy starling
014 Great grey owl
015 Western barn owl
016 Vinous-throated parrotbill
017 Azure tit
017 Wallcreeper
018 Ruff
019 European golden plover
020 Common kingfisher
021 Black-necked grebe
022 Peregrine falcon
023 Bearded vulture
024 Corncrake
025 Tenerife blue chaffinch
026 Arctic tern
027 Atlantic puffin



European roller
Coracias garrulus

This cyan stunner is a migrant that summers in southern Europe and the Middle East and winters in Africa. This means that keen bird-spotters from many countries will be able to experience the roller's lovely colours and impressive flight displays as it twists and turns in the air. Although you might want to steer clear of the chicks – they can vomit a foul-smelling liquid over themselves to keep predators at bay.

Length: 29-32cm
Where to find me: southern Europe, Middle East (summer); Africa (winter)



Iberian magpie
Cyanopica cooki

It may be similar in shape and size to a regular black-and-white Eurasian magpie, but the Iberian looks more like its closest relative – the azure-winged magpie of East Asia. This is nearly 9000km away from the isolated Iberian peninsular of Spain and Portugal where the Iberian magpie is found. So how can it be that these two birds are related? It was originally thought that the Iberian magpie may have been brought back by adventurous sailors visiting Japan in the 15th century. But magpie fossils have been found in Iberia that can date the bird back 40,000 years. It's still a mystery!

Length: 44-46cm
Where to find me: Portugal/ Spain border





Manx shearwater
Puffinus puffinus

This strong-flying seabird breeds cliffside on the coastlines of Ireland, France, Iceland and the UK – in particular at the Isle of Man, after which it was named.They also breed in Wales before setting sail on an epic voyage to South America where they spend winter. This is remarkably similar to a journey of the 1860s by a Welsh minister and a group of emigrants who set up a new life in Argentina. Over 5000 people speak Patagonian Welsh and the Welsh dish *bara brith* is on many menus in the area. The shearwaters must feel quite at home as some make this 22,000km round-trip between South America and the Welsh Isle of Skomer every year. The oldest recorded Manx shearwater was believed to have been 55 years old in 2003. It could easily have flown over 11 million kilometres in its lifetime – not bad for an ancient mariner.

Length: 30-35cm
Where to find me: northwestern Atlantic coastline, including the Isle of Man (summer); Brazil, Argentina (winter)

Red-billed chough
Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

The crow family is pretty cool, ranging from hulking great ravens to little grey jays, but red-billed choughs must be the coolest of them all. You need to meet the birds in person to understand their name, as you can hear them coughing out a raspy "chough" as they fly overhead. But it is probably their amazing appearance that makes them super-cool, as they mix the classic crow black with bright red appendages. That curved crimson beak looks like it's made from the hardest, glossiest, most shatterproof red plastic ever imagined! Alpine choughs are found throughout mountainsides and cliff edges across southern Europe and the Middle East. However, it is the red-billed choughs of Cornwall, UK, that have really captured people's imaginations. Once an integral and famous part of the local bird community, the Cornish chough had completely disappeared from the area. In 2001 a few birds flew over from Ireland and re-established themselves back on the Cornish coastline with the help of a project set up to protect and monitor them, and now their numbers are on the rise. Proper job!

Length: 39-40cm
Where to find me: southern Europe, the Middle East – and Cornwall, UK!