

Bird Task

1. *How are birds caught for ringing? Explain catching method(s), equipment etc, preferably with drawings. Specify which rings they use (sizes, metal etc.)*

- Ways of capturing

- Dependent on the species/size of the bird
- as young birds in nests
- In fine mist nets



- Heligoland traps = funnel trap



- Cannon nets



- Bal-chatri traps



- The ringing process takes usually not longer than 1,5 minutes.
- The ring is fitted around the tarsometatarsus (between the foot and 'knee')
- The bird is usually also weighed, measured, examined for data (sex, condition, etc.)
- Equipment (not able to find specifically for Austria)
 - Depends on the species
 - Different traps, materials
 - Bird holding bags



- Leg gauge determines the circumference of the leg



- Sound recording to record birds
- Binoculars for easy spotting and observations
- Caliper for measuring



- Wing ruler to measure wings



- Scale to collect data about weight



- Ringing pliers helps place the ring around the bird's leg



- The rings in Austria are made by a Swedish company 'Mekaniska'
- The ring sizes vary:
 - Diameter: 2mm – 31mm
 - Hight: 5mm – 20mm
 - Thickness: 0.35 mm – 2mm
- Material:
 - aluminium
 - stainless steel
 - plastic
- Small birds receive a small, light metal ring

- bigger birds receive additionally to the metal ring another bigger ring which can be easily read when close up. These bigger rings are put on the wings, legs or necks of the birds.
- Example of Austrian rings:



- For how long time have birds been ringed (in the world and in your country)?
 - Earliest attempt to mark birds by Roman soldiers (sending messages)
 - Falconers in Middle Ages fit plates on their falcons with a seal of their owner
 - Ringing of birds started in 1899 by Hans Christian Cornelius Mortensen
- What can we find out by ringing birds?
 - Individual identification
 - Map travel routes
 - Control the amount of species
 - Observe variability of bird population which implies the effect of factors like climate change
 - Define the proportion of younger and older birds
 - Define their age more accurately
 - No double counting
 - Study territory size
 - Study feeding behaviour
 - Information about size of population
 - Observe bird lifespan
- What to do if you find a ringed bird? In Austria:
 - Send data to 'Österreichische Vogelwarte' or KLIVV.AT
 - o species, details of the ring, like ring number and colour code and position of the ring, age, gender, place, coordinates, date and contact details of the person that found the ringed bird
 - o before January 15th of following year

- a template is provided and needs to be checked by the person who found the bird before sending in (<https://www.vetmeduni.ac.at/de/klivv/oesterreichische-vogelwarte/ringfund/>)

Types of Birds - Forest, green areas



Turdus merula (Adjalstern, April 29)

Name: Turdus merula (common blackbird)

Description: The adult male is all black, except of a yellow eye-ring and yellow beak. The adult female and young birds are mainly dark brown. The one in the picture is a male adult, which can be seen from its black colour. The female beak is brown to dark brown. This bird is about 25cm long and has a wingspan between 34-38 cm. The common blackbird has the role of distributing wild cherry tree seeds for examples by consuming and regurgitating the seeds after consuming the fruit.



male

Habitat: The common blackbird breeds in Europe, Asia, Russia and North Africa. It has also been introduced to Australia and New Zealand. As it is found in varying latitudes it depends on the region if it is resident, partially migratory or fully migratory. The species found in Europe breeds in woods and gardens. It can also be found on farmlands with hedges, with a focus on urban areas.



female

Food: Turdus merula are omnivorous and frugivore, which means that they eat a variety of different insects, earthworms, but also berries and fruit.



Passer domesticus (Adjalstern, April 29)

Name: Passer domesticus (house sparrow)

Description: Female house sparrows are coloured pale brown and grey. Male adults can be identified by its more intense black, white and brown colours. It can grow up to around 18 cm. The shape of the bird is rather round and compact, with a full chest and rounded head. Its beak is strong, stable and conical – perfectly built for eating seeds. The house sparrow has a wing chord from around 6 to 9 cm. The female birds are usually a bit smaller than males. Species that are found in higher latitudes, colder climates are larger.



male

Habitat: This type of bird is found almost all over the world. It can be found in most parts of Europe, in Mediterranean climate as well as Asia. It was also introduced to Australia, Africa and America. The house sparrow lives in urban and rural areas and avoids extensive woodlands, grasslands and deserts. It can be found close to human life.



female

Food: The house sparrow eats mainly seeds of grains and weeds. However, it's what it finds, which also leaves it to eat insects and many other foods.



Passer montanus (Adjalstern, April 29)

Name: Passer montanus (Eurasian tree sparrow)

Description: The bird has a brown crown and neck, white cheeks with a little black. The chin and throat are black as well. From underneath the bird is slightly brown. The brown wings have two white distinct lines. Female and male Eurasian tree sparrows look similar colour-wise, the younger birds are a bit duller. Due to its small size, parasites or diseases and a great amount of predators, like falcons and owls, the life span of this bird is only about three years. The bird is between 12 and 14 cm long, with a wingspan of around 21cm. It is slightly smaller (10%) than the house sparrow.



Habitat: The passer montanus breeds across most of the more temperate European and Asian area, as well as Southeast Asia. It has also been introduced to the US. In Eastern Asia the tree sparrow can be found in cities and towns, whereas in Europe it mainly lives in wooded countryside. Due to changes in farming, use of herbicides, the population decreased slightly in Europe. The tree sparrow is mostly sedentary. However, the most northern populations migrate South for the winter. Some populations also leave southern Europe for North Africa and the Middle East.

Food: This type of sparrow eats mainly seeds as well as insects, e.g. spiders. They eat in flocks often on the ground, e.g. spilled grain. It could also visit feeding stations.



Erithacus rubecula (Adjalstern, April 29)



Name: Erithacus rubecula (European robin)

Description: The European robin is also known as robin redbreast. Color-wise the male and female robin looks similar. It has an orange breast and face, with a grey/brown body and whitish belly. The legs and feet are brown. The young birds are spotted brown and white, with orange colour slowly showing. The robin gets around 12 – 14cm long with a wingspan of 20-22 cm. The robin is active during the day, although it has also been seen hunting insects on moonlit nights or near artificial light.

Habitat: The European robin is found in Europe, Western Siberia and south to North Africa. Apart from the most northern parts, it is sedentary. Scandinavian robins migrate to Britain and western Europe for example. These robins can be distinguished by their duller orange breast and greyer bodies. The European robin is mostly found in spruce woods in northern Europe. However, in Ireland or Britain it prefers parks and gardens.

Food: Robins hunt for insects. During the autumn and winter times, they also eat invertebrates, such as spiders and worms as well as berries and fruit. Additionally to that, the robin also feeds from seeds at bird feeders.



Sitta europaea (Adjalstern, April 29)

Name: Sitta europaea (Eurasian nuthatch)

Description: The Eurasian nuthatch is a short-tailed bird with a long beak. The upperbody is blue/grey and a black stripe across the eye. The different species each have slightly different underparts – varying from orange underparts to those with white underparts. The bird in the picture has a white belly and throat. It gets around 14 cm long and has a 22.5 - 27 cm wingspan. The female and male Eurasian nuthatch are similar in colour, although the female can be distinguished by its slightly paler upperpart and more brown eyestripe.

Habitat: *Sitta europaea* are found across the Palearctic and Europe. The bird prefers to live in mixed woodlands with old, large trees. Most populations are sedentary and are reluctant to cross short stretches of open water.



Food: It mainly eats insects, especially caterpillars and beetles. During winter and autumn it adds nuts and seeds to its diet. The Eurasian nuthatch stores food all year round. They find their food on tree trunks when going down head first or climbing, larger branches or even the ground. The nuthatch stores food all year-round in cracks of bark or in walls or the ground. Then it gets sealed off with lichen, moss or small pieces of bark.



male



female

Name: *Fringilla coelebs* (Common chaffinch)

Description: The male common chaffinch is bright in colour. It has blue-greyish crown, red-brownish body and a grey tail. The female chaffinch is not as brightly coloured. It is browner in colour. Both have two white wing bars and white sides at the tail.

Habitat: The common chaffinch can be found across Europe to Siberia and northwest Africa. They usually live in flocks in open countryside. The birds in more temperate regions are sedentary, others in more colder areas migrate to the south over winter.

Food: The common chaffinch hunts for invertebrates, such as caterpillars, which are fed to their baby birds. They also look for seeds on the ground, when not breeding.

This bird can be heard on Audio 1 with a common blackbird.



Name: *Corvus cornix (hooded crow)*

Description: The hooded crow has different names, depending on the country, such as mist crow in German or Danish crow. It has a grey body with a black head and throat. They can get between 48 and 52cm long. The young birds are blacker when they are born and gradually develop the ash grey plumage.

Habitat: It is found across northern, eastern and southeastern Europe, and the middle east. It is a sedentary bird.

Food: The hooded crows are omnivorous as well as opportunistic eaters, which means they could also eat left over food from humans for example. The hooded crows hide a lot of their food and by observing each other can also steal someone else's food.

This bird can be heard on Audio 2.

Types of Birds – Coast, Water



Larus argentatus (USN Vestfold, April 29)



Right juvenile; left adult

Name: *Larus argentatus* (European herring gull)

Description: The European herring gull can get up to 67cm long with a wingspan from 125 – 155 cm. Breeding adults have a grey back and upper wings, a white head and white underparts. The beak is yellow with a red spot, a ring of yellow skin round the eye. The wintips are black with white spots. The colour of the legs is usually pink but can also vary and be yellow. Non-breeding adults have brown streaks on their heads and necks. Male and female are identical from the colour, but the male gull can be bigger. Younger birds develop different colours of the years from being mainly brown to having a whiter head to then only showing some brown feathers.

Habitat: This gull breeds across Europe, Scandinavia and the Baltic states. Depending on the area they live they are sedentary, but residents of colder areas migrate to the south in winter. Although the fish population decreased, the European herring gull adapted well and can often also be seen in towns looking for food.

Food: Their varied diets includes fish, crustaceans, dead animals and plants. Often look for food in towns, or more human-habitated places as well, e.g. garbage, sewage outflows.

This bird can be heard on Audio 3.



Oenanthe oenanthe (Fjugstad, May 1)

Name: Oenanthe oenanthe (Northern Wheatear)

Description: The northern wheatear is around 14.5 – 16 cm long. The female and male bird have a white back underpart with a black tail. The feathers in summer of the male are grey on the upperbody and head, black wings with black stripes across their eyes. In autumn the plumage resembles more the female bird except of the black wings. The female northern wheatear is more brown in the underbody with dark brown wings.

Habitat: Its migratory bird. Most populations spend their winter in Africa. It makes one of the longest journeys of the small birds. In summer and spring the northern wheatear can be found in Asia, Europe, Greenland, Alaska and Canada.

Food: Northern wheatears are insectivorous.



male



female



Motacilla alba (Fjugstad, May 2)



Name: Motacilla alba (White wagtail)

Description: The white wagtail can get between 16 to 19 cm long, whereas subspecies in East Asian can get longer. Its characteristic is its wagging tail. A various of subspecies which vary in colour. It has white underparts, a grey upperpart, long black tail and black throat.

Habitat: This species can be found across most Europe, Asian Palearctic and some parts of North Africa. It is sedentary in the temperate parts of but otherwise migrates to Africa. The white wagtail is often found near habitation and water. It can not be found in deserts.

Food: It is and insectivorous bird, which means it feeds from insects. It prefers to hunt in open areas, which could also be paved areas like car parks in more urban areas. The diet might vary to its location, but mainly terrestrial and aquatic insects, such as beetles, or small snails.



Anas platyrhynchos (Fjugstad, May 1)

Name: *Anas platyrhynchos* (mallard)

Description: The male ducks, called drakes, have a shiny green head and grey wings and bellies. A white collar separates the head from their neck. Its beak is yellow/orange tipped with black. The female's beak is usually darker from black to orange or brown. The females, called hens or ducks, are mainly brown speckled. Both have an area of white-bordered black or blue feathers, males usually show blue feathers. The mallard can be between 50 and 65cm long with a wingspan of 81-98 cm. This species are social animals and usually stay in flocks.

Habitat: The mallard is a duck that breeds throughout temperate and subtropical Eurosiberia, North Africa and Americas. It has been introduced to other areas, such as New Zealand or Australia. The mallard can be found in fresh and salt-water wetlands- This includes parks, ponds, rivers, lakes, estuaries and open sea close to the coastline.



Male showing its blue feathers

Food: They eat water plant and small animals and are generally flexible in their diet.



left female; right male



Name: Somateria mollissima (Common eider)

Description: The common eider can also be called St. Cuthbert's duck. It is the largest duck found in Europe with a length between 50 – 71 cm and a wingspan of 80 – 110cm. The male common eider, drake, has black and white feathers and a green neck. The female, hen, is brown and can be distinguished from other ducks by its size and head of shape.

Habitat: The common eider can be found across the northern coasts of Europe, North America and eastern Siberia. It migrates to more southern temperate regions over winter.

Somateria mollissima (Fjustad, May 1)



male

Food:They feed on crustaceans and molluscs. The mussels are swallowed whole, the shells later excreted. Crabs are eaten in a similar way, after removing the claws and legs.



female



Name: Actitis hypoleucos (Common sandpiper)

Description: The adult common sandpiper is between 18 – 20 cm long with a wingspan of 32-35 cm. Its legs are yellowish-brown, has a white belly and brownish-grey upperbody. Its beak is quite long and thin. In winter their colour is a bit duller.

Habitat: It can be found across temperate and subtropical Europe as well as Asia. However, it migrates to Africa, southern Asia and Australia in winter.

Food: It hunts for small insects or crustaceans on the ground or in shallow water.

This bird can be heard on Audio 4.