

Pheasant

Scientific Name: *Phasianus colchicus*
Irish Name: Piasún



Photo by Susan Murphy Wickens



Photo by Robbie Murphy

Top: The colourful male pheasant.
Above: The less colourful female.

The male pheasant is a very striking bird. He has beautiful reddish-brown plumage, a colourful head and neck and a long tail. The female is very different as she has much plainer colouring and a shorter tail. Her paler brown plumage helps to camouflage her when she is on her nest, which she usually builds out of leaves and grass on the ground. Sometimes however, she will roost on trees where she can be safe from foxes. When out and about, pheasants spend the day on the ground searching for roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects. Pheasants are not native to Ireland but are a species which originally came from Asia and were introduced into Ireland in the 16th century. There is no other bird in Ireland that is similar to the pheasant. Pheasants are gamebirds, which means they are hunted for food and for sport.

A Colourful Visitor

On Sherkin, my Dad loves feeding the birds in the garden and keeps the feeder well stocked with seed. It attracts many birds but in recent weeks he has got more than he bargained for! Everyday, usually in the morning, a beautiful male pheasant arrives to pick at the seed on the ground. The little birds don't seem to mind the pheasant, which Dad has named George, and they all happily feed together.



Photo by Susan Murphy Wickens

George might like the daffodils as well as the bird seed!

What does it sound like?

A pheasant has a hoarse alarm call when it is frightened, which sound like *ke-tuk, ke-tuk*. It decreases in strength when the bird flies off.

Fact File

Colour: Female is brown, male has reddish-brown plumage with black bars on feathers. His head is a shiny green, black and violet colour and has red around the eyes. Also has white collar around the neck, but this may not be present on the least common race of the two races that are present in Ireland.

Length: 70-90 cm

Diet: Roots, berries, seeds, leaves and insects.

Habitat: Woodlands, marshes, hilly areas, rough land and tillage farmland.