

# Merlin

*Falco columbarius*

## Description

The Merlin is a little falcon (weighing just 129 to 236 grams and measuring up to 30 cm), about the size of a Jay. Female Merlins are about 1/3 larger than males. Both have a sturdy build for their small size. Males (called tereels or tiercels) and females (just called falcons) have different colouring. The males have a gray/blue upper and the females are brown. The males also have a black and gray barred tail. They both have whitish streaked throats, and buff coloured under-body with brown streaks. The feathered young look more like the female. The Merlin prefers to nest in trees (coniferous and deciduous) with a good view in open woodlands, marshy areas and open countryside. Merlins hunt songbirds, small mammals, reptiles and insects. They hunt other birds by surprise attack from a hidden perch, or from searching flights, attacking from below and tiring out their prey. They usually capture birds in the air during a high-speed attack. They are powerful fliers and have been observed hunting in pairs, working together to flush out and confuse their prey.

## FUN FACTS



- Merlins used to be called pigeon-hawks because in flight they often look like fast-flying pigeons
- Merlins can easily fly 50 kmh and when hunting can fly even faster!
- Merlins were used to hunt skylarks by many medieval European noblewomen.
- Rather than build their own nest, they prefer to take over old nests from crows, magpies or other raptors.




If you find an injured or orphaned wild animal in distress, please contact the Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society hotline at **403-214-1312** for tips, instructions and advice, or visit the website for more information [www.calgarywildlife.org](http://www.calgarywildlife.org)



## Contact Us

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