

Belted Kingfisher

Megaceryle alcyon

With its top-heavy physique, energetic flight, and piercing rattle, the Belted Kingfisher seems to have an air of self-importance as it patrols up and down rivers and shorelines. It nests in burrows along earthen banks and feeds almost entirely on aquatic prey, diving to catch fish and crayfish with its heavy, straight bill. These ragged-crested birds are a powdery blue-gray; males have one blue band across the white breast, while females have a blue and a chestnut band.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Belted Kingfishers are stocky, large-headed birds with a shaggy crest on the top and back of the head and a straight, thick, pointed bill. Their legs are short and their tails are medium length and square-tipped.

Color Pattern

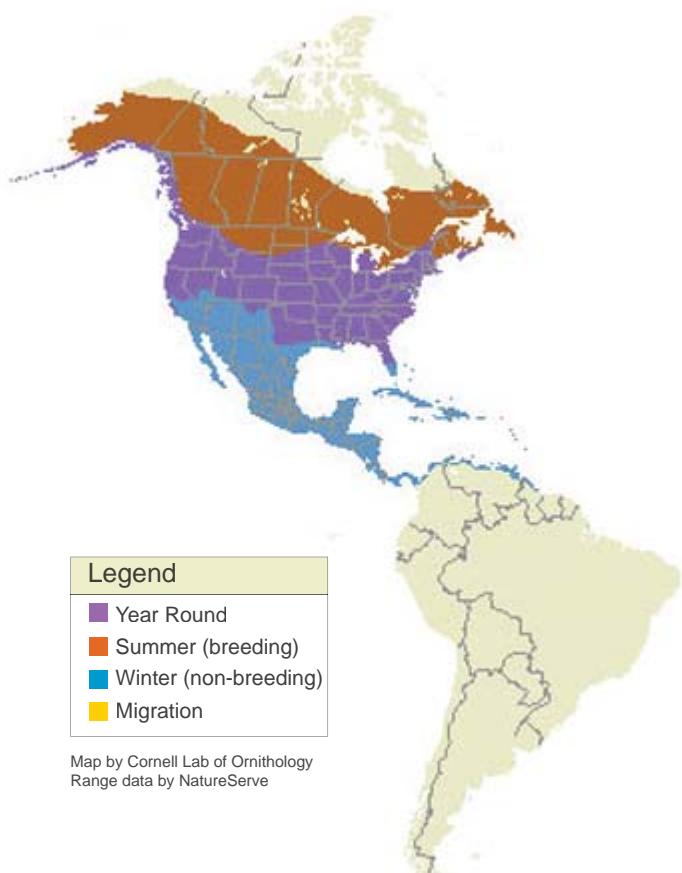
These kingfishers are powder blue above with fine, white spotting on the wings and tail. The underparts are white with a broad, blue breast band. Females also have a broad rusty band on their bellies. Juveniles show irregular rusty spotting in the breast band.

Behavior

Belted Kingfishers spend much of their time perched alone along the edges of streams, lakes, and estuaries, searching for small fish. They also fly quickly up and down rivers and shorelines giving loud rattling calls. They hunt either by plunging directly from a perch, or by hovering over the water, bill downward, before diving after a fish they've spotted.

Habitat

Kingfishers live near streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, and estuaries. They nest in burrows that they dig into soft earthen banks, usually adjacent to or directly over water. Kingfishers spend winters in areas where the water doesn't freeze so that they have continual access to their aquatic foods.



Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 11 - 13.8 inches
- Wingspan - 18.9 - 22.8 inches
- Weight - 4.9 - 6 ounces