

Kingfisher sets European migration record

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The Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*, also known as Eurasian Kingfisher or River Kingfisher, is a small kingfisher with seven subspecies recognized within its wide distribution across Eurasia and North Africa. Image: Wikipedia

(PhysOrg.com) -- A Kingfisher caught and released by members of the Landguard Bird Observatory at the British National Trust's Orford Ness reserve, appears to have migrated all the way from Gdansk, Poland, which would mark a record migration (some 620 miles) for the species between Britain and mainland Europe. The birds, tagged with identification rings by ornithologists all over Europe track the small birds as part of a conservation effort.

The Kingfisher, known as the Common, Eurasian or River Kingfisher is mainly known in Britain as a resident breeding species, but some small number of them choose to cross the English Channel as part of their migration pattern. Those that fly over from the “continent” are believed

to do so because of cold weather patterns. In this case, the bird from Poland was likely seeking to escape the impending harsh winter that is so common in Eastern Europe. The record, if it is indeed one, won't be certified until experts in the field (from the British Trust for Ornithology) have a chance to look at the data from the ring. Once that happens, it will also mean the bird traveled from the most eastern part of Europe seen thus far.

The Common Kingfisher is a small brightly colored bird; about the size of a sparrow. Members of its species generally sport large heads and short tails. Both genders are blue or green on top (depending on the angle at which they are viewed) including their wings, and orange underneath. It is likely because of their unique coloring (iridescence rather than pigmented) that they are so popular among bird lovers. They also have long bills which they use for catching small fish, thus the need to migrate if they live in an area where the rivers tend to freeze over in the winter.

The previous record for a Kingfisher migrating between Britain and mainland Europe was a bird captured and released in Irun, Spain, which had traveled 603 miles from Marloes, Pembrokeshire. Over the years, some Kingfishers have been tracked to such varied locations as France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

Kingfishers can usually be found next to still or nearly still water. They are most easily seen when they swoop down to snatch a minnow or [small](#) fish swimming in shallow water.

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