

## Merlin

### *Falco colombarius*

This is the commonest of Icelandic raptors, they are similar to the Gyrfalcon but smaller. The males are bluish-grey above, with darker wingtips and a dark tail tip, rust-red below and on nape. They are black-streaked on breast and belly, with pale brown throat and thigh feathers. The males are smaller than the females. Females are dark-brown above, with distinct streaks below, base colour is white or buff. The tail is dark brown with buff streaks. Both sexes have an indistinct moustachial stripe. The bill is hooked, grey with yellow base. The feet are yellow and eyes are dark brown.

They are agile, aggressive hunters. They fly fast over ground, often tire out their prey by pursuit. Observed in pairs or in solitary. They breed in lowlands or in rocky places, like ravines, craters or steep slopes. They don't build nests. They either use old raven nests or make shallow scrapes. Most of the population winters in the British Isles and Western Europe, only a few stay in Iceland.



Jóhann Óli Hilmarsson. (2005). *Icelandic bird guide*. Reykjavík: Iðunn.

Image: Daníel Bergmann, taken from

[https://www.ni.is/biota/animalia/chordata/aves/falconiformes/smyrill-falco-columbariu](https://www.ni.is/biota/animalia/chordata/aves/falconiformes/smyrill-falco-columbarius)

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