

## Belted Kingfisher

*(Megaceryle alcyon)*



Flora  
Fauna



The Belted Kingfisher is one of the few bird species in which the female is more brightly colored than the male

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### How to Identify:

- Top-heavy physique
- Smaller than an American Crow; larger than a Hairy Woodpecker
- Stocky, large-headed bird with a shaggy crest and thick daggerlike bill, their legs are short, their tails are medium length and square-tipped
- Females are blue-gray with a chestnut belly and flanks, males are blue-gray with white collar and blue-gray breast band
- You'll probably hear a loud chattering, rattling call before you see the kingfisher.

### Habitat:

- Found near streams, rivers, ponds, lakes
- They hunt in unclouded water that allows them to see prey below the surface
- Belted Kingfishers excavate burrows for nesting in earthen banks, usually avoiding ones with vegetation

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### More Fun Facts!

- From a perch or by hovering over the water, the Belted Kingfisher catches fish by plunging headfirst into shallow water with their eyes closed, then grabbing the prey in its bill.
- Returning to a perch with its prize catch, a Belted Kingfisher pounds the prey against a hard surface before swallowing it headfirst
- The nest burrow is usually in a dirt bank near water. The tunnel slopes upward from the entrance, perhaps to keep water from entering the nest. Tunnel length ranges from 1 to 8 feet.

## VOCABULARY

**Burrow:** A hole or tunnel dug by a small animal for a dwelling or nest

**Crustacean:** Any of various types of animals that live in water and have a hard-outer shell and many legs such as crayfish

**Flank:** The side of an animal between the ribs and hip

**Mollusk:** Any animal that has a soft body, no spine, and is often covered with a shell. Many mollusks live in water

**Organism:** An individual animal, plant, or single-celled life form

**Physique:** The form, size, appearance, and development of a body

**Prey:** An animal that is hunted and killed by another for food

**Territory:** An area defended by an organism or a group of similar organisms for such purposes as mating, nesting, roosting, or feeding

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### Help Protect the Belted Kingfisher

- Belted Kingfishers are sensitive to disturbance and may abandon territories if people begin frequenting the area, especially during nesting season
- When searching for and observing these birds, look for signs the bird feels uncomfortable with your presence
- Both the male and female vigorously defend their territory by chasing away intruders while giving loud rattle calls.
- If threatened, it may scream, spread its wings, and raise the patch of white feathers next to each eye.
- If you observe signs of distress, leave the area and observe from a greater distance





# Portals to Parks



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# ACTIVITY TIME

Find a video on the internet that shows a Belted Kingfisher diving into the water to catch a fish. Next, find videos of a Bald Eagle, Western Osprey, and an American Pelican catching fish. How are their hunting styles different?

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Which bird dives into the water feetfirst? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which bird dives into the water headfirst? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which bird feeds from the surface of the water by dipping their beaks into the water? \_\_\_\_\_

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Which bird swoops over the surface of the water and plucks out a fish while flying? \_\_\_\_\_

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