



Red Grouse



© Mike Brown

Latin: *Lagopus lagopus scotia*

Irish: *Cearc fhraoigh*

Size: 30-35cm long

Months seen: All year. Red grouse are resident birds and do not migrate for the winter. If there is snow cover on the ground during winter, they will move to ridges and lower ground.

Habitat: Heath moorland, where there is plenty of foraging and ground cover, is the natural habitat of red grouse.

Food: A herbivorous animal, the red grouse feeds on shoots, seeds and flowers of heather, and other plants. It also eats berries and cereal crops, and occasionally insects.

Features: The red grouse has a rounded, plump body that is red-brown in colour, a small head, small bill and a short tail. It is principally a ground animal and will not usually be seen in flight, except when frightened.

Red grouse begin to pair for breeding during the autumn. Throughout the breeding season, the male will display a bright red eyebrow. The female will lay 6 to 9 eggs during April and May, and these are incubated for up to 25 days. The chicks are fully grown about a month after hatching.

In Ireland, the red grouse is considered a game species and has benefitted from careful management of heath moorland. Foxes, stoats, hen harriers and crows are predators of the red grouse.

Red grouse has been put on the Red List of Endangered Species due to significant declines in breeding populations, although the European population is considered to be 'Secure'.