

The British Beauty

This is a European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster* - 'merops' means bee-eater and 'apis' means bee in latin) and it is classed as a British bird because it visits this country in summer. It has unmistakable, brilliant, colouring and is most closely related to the kingfisher, roller and hoopoe, all very distinctive British birds.

From left to right:
European Bee-eater,
Kingfisher, Roller &
Hoopoe.



▲ The proud, and
hardworking, parents of
the first British-born
bee-eaters in 47 years.

At 8a.m. on 28th August the four left their nest for the last time and flew south following a flight of swallows. They were seen over Beachy Head in Sussex at 7 p.m.

Bee-eaters could also be called beetle-eaters, ant-eaters, dragonfly-eaters or even grasshopper-eaters as they enjoy munching on all of these insects.

Dish of the Day,
bee-eaters branch out.

Darlings of Durham

Usually breeding birds are not found north of Paris, they have occasionally bred in England (once in 1920 and again in 1955) but they are usually only visiting. There was, therefore, great excitement in the village of Bishop Middleham in County Durham this year when a pair of the birds successfully raised two chicks there.

Security was high, egg thieves still exist even in 2002, and the nest was guarded around the clock. A viewing platform was constructed and the crowds of onlookers were treated to watching the parents feeding and the chicks fledging. Bee hives were even erected near the nest to help the birds feed.

How do you eat food that bites back?

Bee-eaters didn't get their name by chance, they just love eating bees. But how do you swallow something that is likely to sting you on the way down? Young bee-eaters soon learn that the best, and only, way to swallow a bee is to rub it against a hard surface until it has stung itself completely dry. The bee is usually dead by then anyway.

