

(Jim Guyton)



## Alcedinidae the KINGFISHERS

The Kingfisher family is an easily recognized group of 117 species of birds which are distributed throughout the world. They are all generally similar in appearance and behavior as well. They have large heads, many with crests on top, and they have long, heavy, pointed bills. They are generally solitary birds, and many live near water and rely on catching fish and other wetland creatures for survival. Many nest in holes, which are often excavated in the side of a steep earthen bank along a stream or lake.

The famous Australian Kookaburras are members of the Kingfisher family. In 1877, the *Carolina Watchman*, a newspaper in Salisbury, carried a detailed account of a bizarre bird being called the “Laughing Jackass,” which had been found in Australia. In it they described this strange bird’s call as a “peculiar screaming laugh, not unlike the bray of a donkey.” Today, this bird is known as the “Laughing Kookaburra.”

There are only three types of Kingfishers found in North America. The Ringed Kingfisher is found from southern Texas to the south. The Green Kingfisher is found from southern Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, to the south. The Belted Kingfisher is our common kingfisher. It is found across the continent.