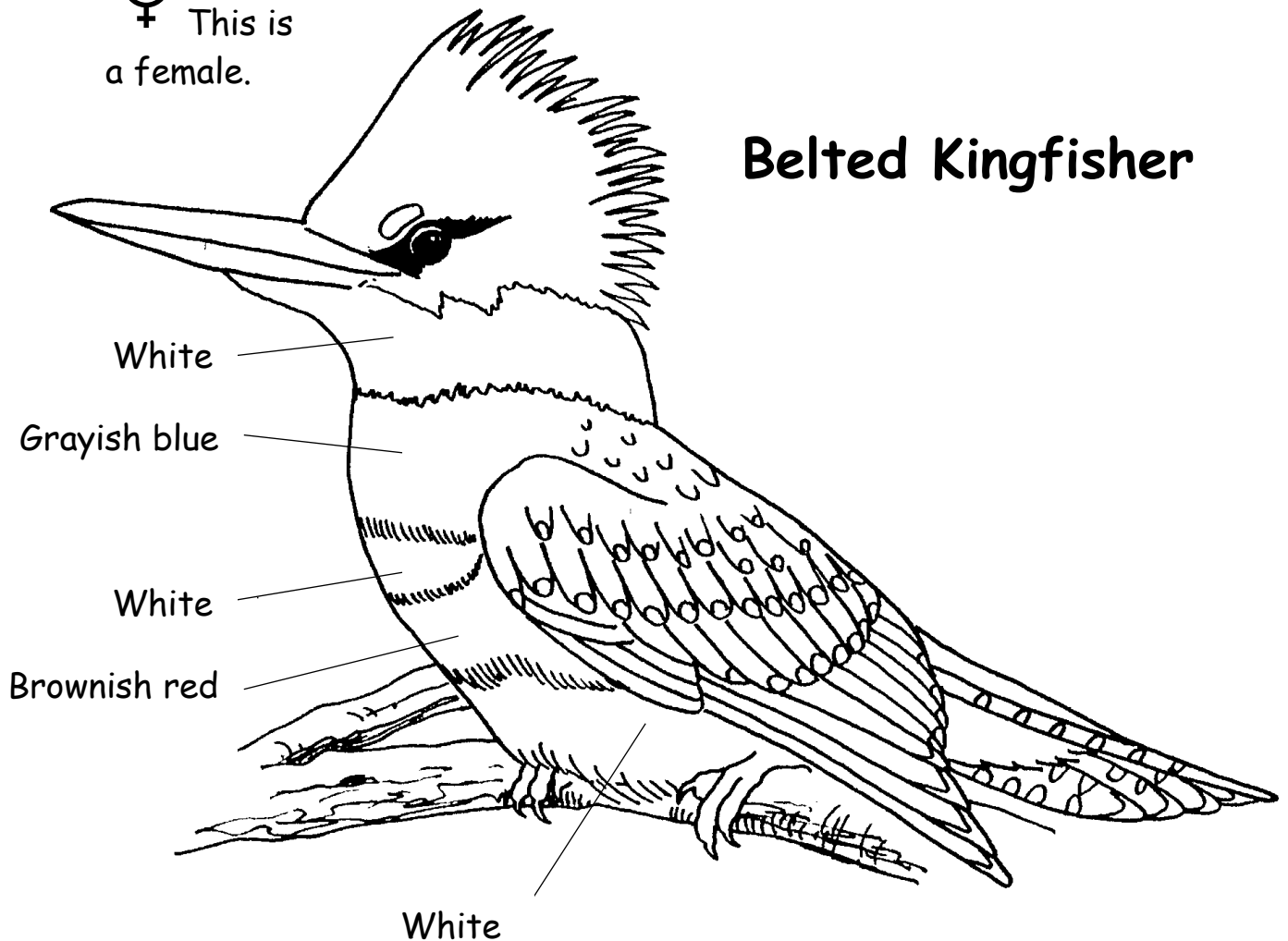


♀ This is
a female.

Belted Kingfisher



Coloring instructions:

Black - the bill and the wing tips

Grayish blue - the head, back, wings, rump, and the tail
(except for the white spots)

Brownish orange - the feet

White - the patch near the eye and the patch on the
shoulder

Belted Kingfisher

Length: 12"

Habitat: Resident along streams and ponds

Field marks: Large, dark crested head and long, heavy black bill

The Belted Kingfisher is a treat to watch. It has a large bill and crest that give it an unusual look. Its loud, rattling call is easy to hear. When you hear it, you know to look up to see a bird flying over the water. This is a bird that is common in **riparian** areas. That means you will find it along the river and near large creeks.

The kingfisher feeds on small fish. It catches the fish by diving headfirst into the water. You might see it drop from a high branch over the water. You might see it hovering like a helicopter high above the water just before it folds its wings back and dives like a fighter jet into the water. The kingfisher must drop into the water very fast so that it can go under deep enough to spear the fish with its bill. It does not have the webbed feet to push itself forward once it is underwater, like ducks and geese do. In fact, kingfishers have very short legs.

Another unusual thing abouts Belted Kingfishers is the way they nest. They dig tunnels straight into the sandy banks of the creek. The tunnels are up to six feet long! Both the male and the female work on the tunnel. They use their front claws—with two forward-pointing toes fused together for added

strength—and their strong bills to dig the hole. At the end of the tunnel, the female lays the eggs. The kingfishers have short legs so that they can back and forth down the tunnel.

You will almost always see kingfishers alone. They don't like company very much. There will be two together only during the breeding season when they must act like a family. But they don't do it for long.

Belted Kingfisher Challenges

- Identify a female Belted Kingfisher. She has a reddish band on her belly.
- Identify a male. He does not have the reddish band.
- Hear the loud, rattling call.
- See a kingfisher flying down a creek.
- See a kingfisher dive.
- Find a kingfisher nest tunnel. Look just below the top of a steep riverbank which has no plants growing on it. Usually there is a dead tree limb nearby where the adults can perch and see the hole.
- Find a kingfisher pellet which is full of fish bones. The pellet is popped out of their throats when they are done digesting the meat.

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