



## Strange Birds in Your Garden this Weekend

**As we batten down the hatches in expectation of a wintry weekend spare a thought for Scotland's birds. Forced out of the wider countryside by freezing conditions, many birds may be appearing in our gardens this weekend. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) needs volunteers to help to assess the importance of Scottish gardens for wild birds, particularly during cold spells, by reporting unusual visitors.**

The Met Office is forecasting a period of cold and very strong northerly winds to extend across Scotland from Thursday to Saturday, with all areas at risk of seeing some snow. Eastern Scotland is one of the highest risk areas for snow. Localised accumulations of a few centimetres of snow are likely over the northern half of the UK. If you're gearing up to stay indoors this weekend – keep an eye out the window for some unusual visitors!

Recent frosts are making it harder for many of our countryside birds to find food resulting in some more unusual birds appearing in our gardens. These include some of our most colourful birds such as Siskin, Brambling and Goldfinch. Other species to look out for are Redwings, Fieldfares and even the pink and crested Waxwing.

The use of gardens by British birds is monitored through the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch Scheme. Hundreds of keen volunteers collect information on the birds seen in their gardens every week. Through the scheme the BTO has discovered the importance of gardens as sources of food, shelter and breeding sites for our birds. Because the survey is conducted throughout the year, BTO can track birds' use of gardens throughout the seasons.

### How to help your birds

The birds seen in our gardens will often depend on the types of food we provide for them. There is now a wide variety of special food mixtures available from both shops and via mail order. A mix containing wheat, for example, will attract pigeons and doves into gardens. Black sunflower seeds are a favourite of the tits, finches and other small birds. Leaving fruit such as windfall apples on the ground will attract thrushes, as will raisins and other dried fruit that has been soaked in water. Crumbled or grated cheese is especially good for attracting those charismatic Robins. Fat smeared into cracks in tree bark might attract Treecreepers, woodpeckers and, for the lucky few in the far south of Scotland, a Nuthatch.

Scottish readers can help the BTO to understand the importance of garden birds by joining the Garden BirdWatch scheme. To learn more write to GBW S2, FREEPOST, Norfolk. IP24 2BR, phone 01786 466560 or visit [www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw).

**See notes for editors overleaf**

The BTO is the UK's leading bird research organisation. Over thirty thousand birdwatchers contribute to the BTO's surveys. They collect information that forms the basis of conservation action in the UK. The BTO maintains a staff of 80 at its HQ in Norfolk, who analyse and publicise the results of project work. The BTO's investigations are funded by government, industry and conservation organisations.

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch is the only nationwide survey of garden birds to run continually throughout the year, providing important information on how birds use gardens, and how this use changes over time. For more information: <http://www.bto.org/gbw/> or [scot.info@bto.org](mailto:scot.info@bto.org)
2. Some 16,300 people take part in Garden BirdWatch nationwide and record the birds using their gardens from week to week. There are approximately 1,000 Garden BirdWatchers in Scotland and we would like to recruit more.
3. Garden birdwatchers can discover which birds are likely to be found in their gardens by visiting [www.postcodebirds.bto.org](http://www.postcodebirds.bto.org) and entering their postcode.
4. A free information pack on Garden BirdWatch is available from GBW S2, FREEPOST, Norfolk. IP24 2BR.
5. Colour photographs of garden birds are available for use in association with this press release. Please contact [images@bto.org](mailto:images@bto.org) to request an electronic version.
6. The BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch is funded by participants' contributions and supported by CJ WildBird Foods Ltd and is the largest year round survey of garden birds anywhere in the world.
7. The 'top ten' garden bird species in Southern and Northern Scotland since October 2005 are:

Position	Species	Southern Scotland Rate (%)	Northern Scotland Rate (%)
1	Blue Tit	92	91
2	Robin	92	90
3	Chaffinch	90	89
4	Dunnock	87	83
5	Great Tit	86	82
6	Blackbird	85	93
7	Coal Tit	85	75
8	Greenfinch	75	89
9	House Sparrow	66	68
10	Woodpigeon	56	26

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