



Add some glamour to your garden

Results just published by the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch have revealed how one of our most glamorous songbirds has benefited from food put out by garden birdwatchers. Goldfinch numbers fell dramatically during the late 1970s because changes in farming practices reduced food availability during the winter months. However, British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) research has shown that sunflower seeds and other high-energy seed mixes have provided Goldfinches with a lifeline, enabling the population to recover almost back to where it was before the decline began.

The latest set of results to be published by the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch scheme have revealed some really positive news for the brightly coloured Goldfinch. The figures show that Goldfinches now visit more than half of all garden feeding stations during early spring, compared with less than a quarter of gardens just 10 years ago. The provision of new high-energy foods, such as sunflower hearts and nyger seed, have helped Goldfinches to survive the difficult winter months when there is little natural seed available within their favoured farmland habitats.

“Thirty or so years ago, Goldfinches were occasional visitors to gardens, appearing in late winter and early spring to feed on small seeds. Participants in BTO surveys noticed Goldfinches beginning to feed on peanut feeders and since then there has been a tremendous increase in the use of new foods, like sunflower hearts and, more recently, nyger seed” notes Mike Toms, National Organiser for the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch.

“There is no doubt in my mind that people putting out high-energy seed mixes in their gardens have made a real difference for this species. This shows what we, as individuals, can achieve collectively by taking an interest in wildlife and by providing suitable foods at particular times of the year” he continued.

Mike Toms said *“The latest results from the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch, a year round study of garden birds involving some 17,000 people, also highlight the importance of carrying out long-term studies of how birds use gardens so that we can assess the benefits of providing food for wild birds. I would encourage more people to get involved in this sort of recording.”*

A new leaflet providing information on how to attract Goldfinches into your garden has been produced by the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch Team. To receive a free copy of this leaflet, phone 01842 750050, write to GBW (GF), British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, or email gbw@bto.org.

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) BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch is the only nationwide survey of garden birds to run weekly throughout the year, providing important information on how birds use gardens, and how this use changes over time. Currently, some 17,000 people take part in the project across the British Isles. 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. For more information see www.bto.org/gbw
- 2) CJ WildBird Foods is Europe's leading supplier of bird food and bird feeding products. CJ WildBird Foods has been responsible for a number of significant developments within the bird food and feeding industry, including the introduction of black sunflower seeds to the UK as a major new bird food and the development of specialist seed mixes for use in tubular feeders. The company has also been supporting research into the changing fortunes of garden bird populations, most notably through the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch.
- 3) The Goldfinch is a small, delicate and beautifully marked finch. So endearing are these delightful little birds that they used to be very popular as cagebirds, a fashion that put a great strain on their population throughout the 19th Century. The species is found across Britain and Ireland but is most abundant in lowland areas where it feeds on a range of plants, including groundsels, dandelions and ragworts. The birds prefer to take seeds that are not fully ripe, a preference that means that Goldfinches are mobile feeders, moving to new areas to find plants with seeds in a suitable state.
- 4) **Colour photographs.** Images of Goldfinches are freely available for use in association with this press release. Please contact images@bto.org to request an electronic version.
- 5) **Radio Interviews.** The BTO has a dedicated ISDN line available for radio interviews.

For further information please contact:

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