



Lonely Herts.

Gardens are an incredibly important habitat for many of the UK's bird species. They are used not only for feeding but also as a safe place to breed and raise a family and, as spring approaches, birds will be looking for that 'special someone' with whom to pair up with. The BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch Survey is urging people to keep an eye out for these discrete liaisons and help them monitor the fortunes of Britain's garden birds.

At the recent Hertfordshire Bird Club's annual half-day conference in Harpenden, Mike Toms, the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch coordinator, treated participants to a talk on the importance of gardens for many of the UK's bird species. Mike spoke at length on the results and discoveries of the first 10-years of the survey and showed just how important garden owners can be in the lives of birds.

At this time of year, gardens are a great place for amorous birds to set up home and think about starting a family. Bushes, hedges or even a nest box provide the perfect location to carry out these nesting attempts, whilst feeding the appropriate foods can really help birds get through this tough time. Blue Tits are the number one bird most commonly recorded in the Hertfordshire's gardens (see Notes for Editors) but are they the most common nester? We need your help to find out.

"Over the last decade Garden BirdWatch participants have really helped to show us just what is happening in Hertfordshire's gardens. By simply recording what they see, these 'citizen scientists' are adding to our knowledge of how birds use gardens throughout the year. Watching and recording at this time of year, as birds begin to breed, will enable us to see just how important Hertfordshire's gardens are for nesting birds," says Mike Toms.

The BTO scheme needs people in Hertfordshire to record the occurrence of birds in their gardens. It has been running its Garden BirdWatch survey since 1995 and has highlighted changes in the use of the nation's gardens by different bird species. Some 339 participants currently take part in Garden BirdWatch in Hertfordshire and send in simple weekly records of the bird species using their gardens. In order to help people select appropriate foods and to provide food in a suitable manner, the BTO's Garden BirdWatch Team have produced a leaflet on feeding garden birds. **To receive a free copy of this leaflet and a free information pack about the survey, please send your name and address details to GBW, BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, email gbw@bto.org or telephone 01842-750050.**

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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.** The 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 with 339 in Hertfordshire. 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. For more information see www.bto.org/gbw
- 2) **CJ WildBird Foods.** 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) **Colour photographs.** Images of garden birds are freely available for use in association with this press release. Please contact images@bto.org to request an electronic version.
- 4) The BTO has an ISDN line available for radio interviews.
- 5) The top 10 garden birds in Hertfordshire and the percentage of gardens in which they are recorded.

No.	Species	% of gardens
1	Blue Tit	92
2	Blackbird	90
3	Robin	87
4	Woodpigeon	81
5	Collared Dove	79

No.	Species	% of gardens
6	Great Tit	79
7	Dunnock	77
8	Chaffinch	74
9	Greenfinch	68
10	Magpie	61

For further information contact:

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