



Bird Flu and Garden Bird Hygiene

With the recent finding of a dead Whooper Swan carrying the H5N1 type of bird flu virus in Scotland, people are understandably concerned about the risks from birds of bird flu and other diseases. The BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch have produced a free leaflet that provides much-needed advice on the diseases that may affect garden birds and how to minimize the risks of disease transmission between birds visiting garden feeding stations and ourselves.

The British Trust for Ornithology is issuing clear advice to inform the public, and to counter some of the concerns that have understandably developed as a result of the media coverage of the spread of bird flu (H5N1). Knowing the facts will help to reassure you, so that you can continue to enjoy feeding birds and watching them in your garden.

“Many people are worried about a risk from bird flu,” says Martin Fowlie from the Garden BirdWatch Team. “We are trying to remedy this by stating the simple facts that garden birds are not a threat and that one should always follow simple hygiene rules after feeding birds. To this end we have produced a free leaflet giving people the information they need to allay their fears.”

“Birds carry a variety of diseases, such as salmonella. The single most important action we can take, to protect both the birds that feed in our gardens and ourselves, is to follow the basic hygiene rules of keeping feeding stations clean and washing hands with soap and water after contact with bird feeders and food,” Martin adds.

Remember that many species of birds make use of the food that people provide, so keep feeding and keep enjoying your garden birds

To receive a free copy of the hygiene leaflet, phone on 01842 750050, email gbw@bto.org or write to GBW (Hygiene Leaflet), British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

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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) **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.** 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.

For further information please contact:

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Out of office hours, please telephone: 07704 847935 (mobile)**