

News Release No. 2008/01/03

For immediate use



A call to arm(chair)s!

The British Trust for Ornithology is putting a call out to armchair birdwatchers, particularly those who took part in the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch. It wants people to develop their interest in garden birds and, by doing so, make a major contribution to our understanding of how birds use the garden habitat, and how this use changes with season.

The last weekend in January saw at least 120,000 people get involved in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, an annual project which provides a snapshot of garden bird populations. The British Trust for Ornithology hopes that this brief introduction to the concept of watching and recording garden birds will spur many of the participants into joining the BTO's year-round monitoring efforts, coordinated through the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch.

Mike Toms, BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch Organiser commented "*The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch is brilliant because it introduces tens of thousands of people to the concept of citizen science, getting them to keep simple notes of the birds using their gardens over a single weekend. We want to engage with these people and get them recording birds throughout the year. By doing so, they can make a very valuable contribution to our understanding of how and when birds use gardens, information that can then be used to underpin conservation research. If just one in 20 of the people who took part in Big Garden Birdwatch went on to participate in our year-round survey it would make a huge difference to our work and to the monitoring of this increasingly important habitat.*"

The BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch has been running since 1995 and the records submitted by participants have already highlighted the decline of House Sparrow and Starling, the increasing use being made of gardens by Goldfinch and Wood Pigeon, and the changing seasonal use of gardens by a range of species.

A free enquiry pack is available from the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch Team at GBW, Room 3, 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** is the only nationwide survey of garden birds and other garden wildlife to run weekly throughout the year. It provides important information on how birds and other wildlife use gardens and how this use changes over time. Currently, some 16,000 people take part in the project. The scheme is funded by participants' contributions and supported by CJ WildBird Foods Ltd. For more information see **www.bto.org/gbw**
2. **CJ WildBird Foods Ltd** is Europe's leading supplier of bird food and bird feeding products. The company 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. CJ WildBird Foods Ltd has also been supporting research into the changing fortunes of garden bird populations, most notably through its association with the BTO/CJ Garden BirdWatch.
3. **Colour photographs** of garden birds are freely available for use in association with this press release. Please contact **images@bto.org** to request an electronic version, **quoting reference 2008/01/03**
4. The BTO has an ISDN line available for **radio interviews**.

For further information, please contact:

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