



BLACKBIRDS IN GARDENS



Adrian Dancy / BTO

Blackbirds love our gardens more than any other bird

In the spring, Blackbirds make more use of our gardens than any other bird: for nesting, feeding and sheltering.

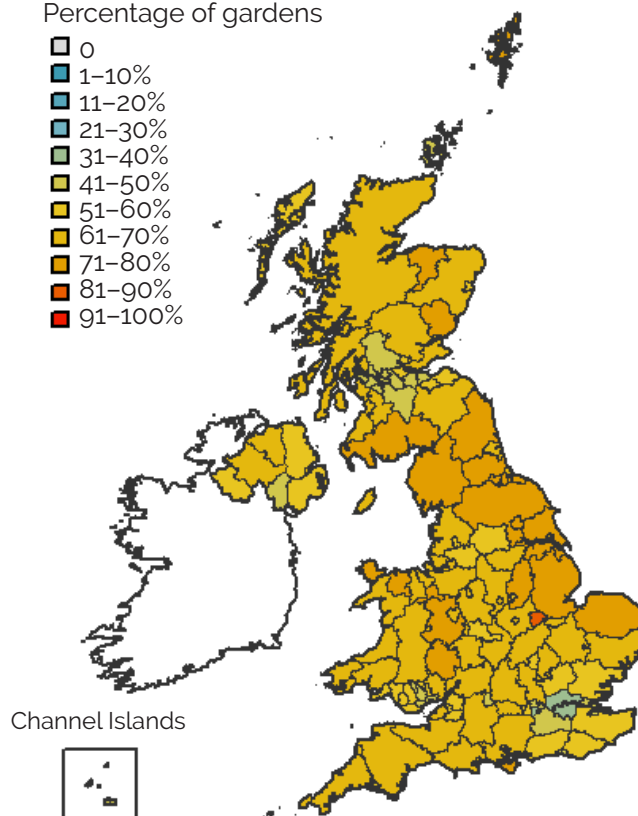
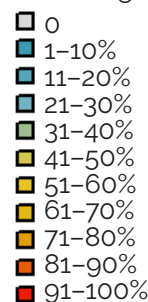
We know that gardens are valuable for birds, but which species uses them the most? According to Gardenwatch results, the answer is the Blackbird.

The survey looked at how birds were using gardens, including using bird feeders, eating natural foods, sheltering, drinking, and nesting; for every behaviour Blackbirds were observed in over half of Gardenwatch gardens.

No other bird was so regularly observed making use of gardens in so many different ways. Blackbirds often nest in gardens, and will nest in Ivy, in shrubs and sometimes in outbuildings. However, they make less use of plants in gardens for nesting and sheltering in central and southern England, and some parts of Scotland, and use of gardens for nesting is particularly low in urban areas, suggesting that gardens in cities could be lacking the structure needed for nesting.

Blackbird nesting activity

Percentage of gardens



For other maps visit www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results

Blackbird facts

- Feeder use: 58% of gardens.
- Natural food use: 90% of gardens.
- Shelter use: 75% of gardens.
- Water use: 65% of gardens.
- Breeding activity: 62% of gardens.
- Nest use: 52% of gardens.

Maps by Kate Plummer, BTO

Gardenwatch was the UK's biggest ever garden wildlife audit, running during Springwatch in May 2019. The complete set of maps can be found at: www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results



What you can do to help

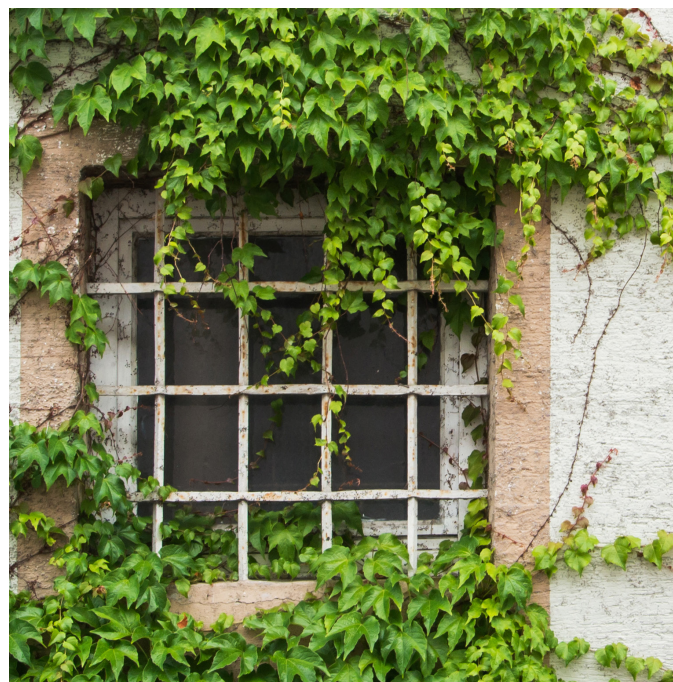
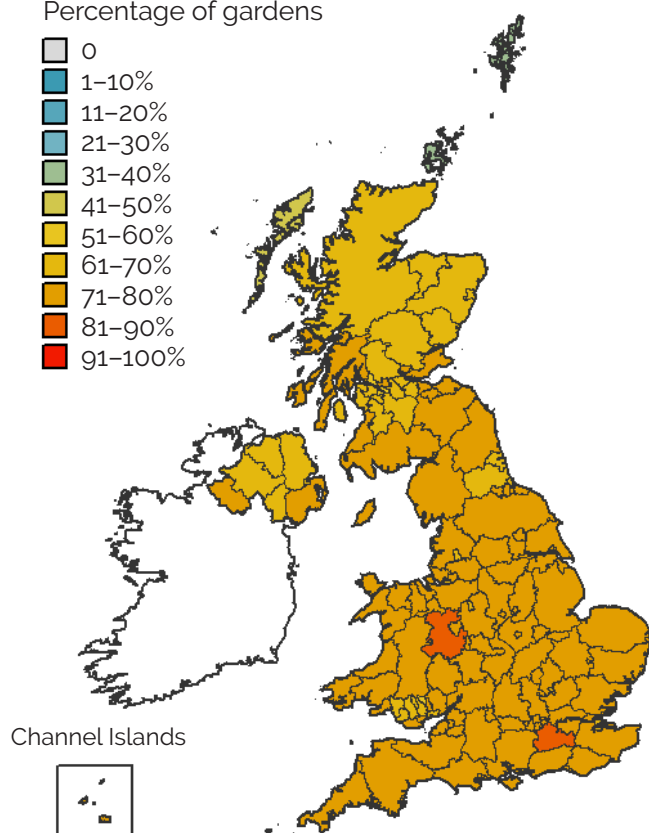
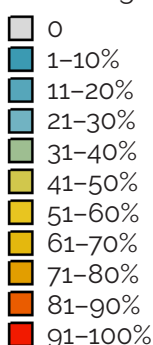
Blackbirds, along with other wildlife, including Hedgehogs and Toads, feed on earthworms and other soil invertebrates, and these rely on healthy soils rich in organic matter.

To encourage soil invertebrates and Blackbirds in your garden you can collect leaves in autumn and spread the resulting leaf mould on the soil.

Leaving plants to die down naturally will also add to organic matter in the soil, as will spreading peat-free compost. Most importantly, avoid using pesticides in the garden if you want to encourage invertebrates.

Climbing plants in gardens

Percentage of gardens



Victoria/stock.adobe.com

Providing dense vegetation in your garden gives birds shelter from predators and a place to nest. Climbers can make bare walls and fences more wildlife-friendly; evergreen Ivy is favoured by Blackbirds as they start nesting early in the year when deciduous plants are still bare.

Native climbers such as Ivy, Dog-rose and Honeysuckle also provide food for invertebrates, which in turn provide food for birds. If you have space, a hedgerow of native plants, such as Hawthorn and Blackthorn, can provide shelter, nesting habitat and food for visiting birds.

For more information on how to help the wildlife in your garden, please visit: bit.ly/bto-wildlife-gardening

Help monitor Blackbirds

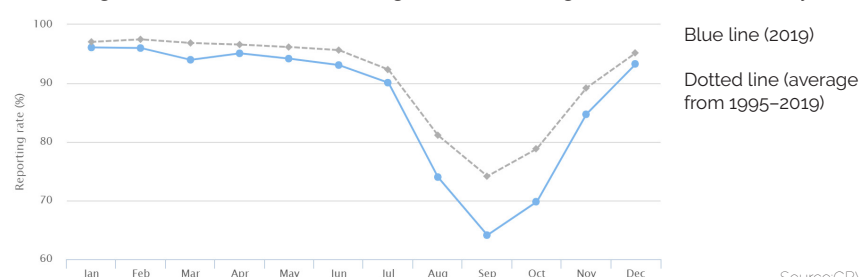
RECORD THE WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

FOR BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH www.bto.org/gbw

You can record the wildlife visiting your garden through the BTO's Garden BirdWatch. Keeping simple lists of the birds and other animals that visit your garden over a week will help with national research into the importance of gardens for wildlife.



Percentage of BTO Garden BirdWatch gardens recording Blackbirds across the year.



Source:GBW

Find out more about Gardenwatch and what we discovered: www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results