



The Lesser Redpoll

The Lesser Redpoll is normally a winter visitor to gardens. I had never before seen this species in my garden until 2008, and since then, I have had them in my garden every winter with the exception of 2011.

The Lesser Redpoll is a resident of the UK but is found mostly in Scotland, Wales and north and east England. In winter they will move further south to escape the harsher weather of the north. Some even travel as far as the continent. In the mid 1970's the species drastically declined in numbers and as a consequence they are now a red listed bird. However, it's not all bad news because more of these birds now frequent our gardens and the main reason for this is the introduction of nyger seed by wild bird food companies. The bill of the Lesser Redpoll is perfectly adept at tweaking out this very fine seed. It seems that putting out nyger seed in our gardens has been a saviour for this bird.

How does one identify the Lesser Redpoll? It is a very small finch about the size of a Blue Tit. It is an acrobatic bird and out in the countryside, you may see it in woodland, high up on the thin twigs of birches and alder. It may often be found amongst flocks of Siskins. Its plumage is streaky brown in colour and it has a red forehead, hence its name. It also has a tiny black bib under its bill. The male often has a rosy pink flush on its breast.



There are two other species of Redpolls which may be seen in the UK but only in winter and they are the Arctic and the Common Redpoll. Sometimes it can be extremely difficult to differentiate between the three species but the Lesser Redpoll is the one you are most likely to encounter.

If you haven't done so already, why not hang out some nyger seed and you may be fortunate enough to attract some Lesser Redpolls to your garden? Goldfinches will also enjoy this seed. You will need a special dispenser as the port holes in ordinary feeders are too large for nyger seed and it will simply spill out as it is so fine. These are readily available at garden centres etc.

Jean Parrott

Jean is a voluntary Ambassador for the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch scheme in Nottinghamshire. If you enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden, then BTO Garden BirdWatch may be perfect for you. Please contact me if you would like a free enquiry pack at jpbirds@talktalk.net or visit www.bto.org/gbw