



Bird Watch September



Welcome to this month's Bird Watch. I'm one of two volunteer Ambassadors for the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Garden BirdWatch Scheme in South Wales. Each month I introduce you to a bird or other animal that you might see in your garden.

Bird of the Month: Woodpigeon

Most birds have finished breeding by now, but Woodpigeons are still in full-swing raising their second or third brood of the season; each clutch containing two eggs. Woodpigeons produce 'crop milk' for their young (similar in composition to mammalian milk) and are one of only a small number of birds to do this. The Woodpigeon has a round belly, grey upperparts and a pink breast, and is our largest pigeon. The white neck feathers below a petrol-green patch aid identification, although young birds lack this plumage. When taking off in flight, the wings may make a clattering noise and you will be able to see their other distinguishing marking - white wing crescents. Woodpigeons are often seen in large flocks on farmers' fields where they cause economic damage to crops such as rapeseed; as a result they are regarded as pests with large numbers being shot each year. Understandably rural birds are wary of humans whilst their urban cousins are much bolder. The Woodpigeon may also be regarded as a pest by many people who feed the birds due its ability to clear the bird table of food – it can, after all, eat the same quantity as seven sparrows! It has a monotonous and repetitive call making it an easy one to learn – 'coo **cooo** coo, coo-coo', or as my dad taught me 'my **toe** hurts cuck-oo'; a series of these calls is abruptly ended with one extra 'oo'.

Did you know?

- A Woodpigeon weighs about 450g, the equivalent of a flock of 41 Blue Tits!
- Woodpigeons do not have to lift their heads when drinking water.
- The Welsh name is *Ysguthan*.

How to attract them to your garden: They will readily eat cheap seed mixes, as well as kitchen scraps such as bread, whether provided on the ground or bird tables. The Woodpigeon is a helpful cleaner as it 'hoovers' up any spilt food from hanging feeders.

Conservation status: **Green** (no cause for concern).

Garden BirdWatch data show that fewer Welsh gardens are occupied by this particular bird than an average garden in Britain and Ireland.

Make Your Garden Count!

If you enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden, and want to help track their fortunes, then BTO Garden BirdWatch could be perfect for you. Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk.

Happy Garden Bird Watching!

Amanda Skull, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador

Evenings and weekends only:

07952 758293 or 01792 891013

gbw@hiafi.co.uk www.bto.org/gbw

Follow me on Twitter @amanda_skull



Woodpigeon: Derek Moore