



Bird Watch October



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: Feral Pigeon

We are probably all familiar with the Feral Pigeon, a bird we perhaps associate more with urban settings rather than our gardens. We share our sandwich crumbs with them in our towns, cities and parks, and small children love to chase them. Urban populations are boosted by escapees from dovecotes and 'lost' racing pigeons. Although they may look plump on the ground, they are surprisingly lean in flight with long wings and tail. Feral Pigeons are fairly sedentary birds and tend to stick together in permanent flocks with their own 'patch'. This species can breed year-round and you'll regularly see coo-ing, strutting males or a pair with the male running close behind his mate, ensuring she can't mate with another. This is the only time you know which sex you're looking at! Garden BirdWatch data show that only around 10% of gardens are visited by this species, with a peak in the spring. Since 1995, when the project began, there has been a slight but steady increase in gardens. We've never recorded a Feral Pigeon in our garden.



Feral Pigeons don't all look the same! A descendant of the Rock Dove, which has been domesticated for many thousands of years, the Feral Pigeon can so closely resemble its wild cousin to make it impossible to distinguish between the two. However, look closely at a flock and you'll notice a vast array of plumage types. Why is there such a variety? Do birds actively choose mates of a particular colour? Are some colours more vulnerable to predation?



The **Feral Pigeon Project** needs **your** help to answer these questions and to build up a nationwide map. All you have to do is count the different plumage types you see and where you saw them. You'll soon become a plumage expert, quickly learning to distinguish your blue-bar (the Rock Dove descendent) from your red, white, black, grizzle, pied and chequered! Whilst I may not have recorded a single Feral Pigeon for Garden BirdWatch, in the past month I've counted over 200 for this fascinating project! Could you contribute to this exciting piece of citizen science? Simply log your sightings via www.feralpigeonproject.com or their simple to use Smartphone app!

To download the Android™ app, go to [Google Play™](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.feralpigeonproject) and search for *Feral Pigeon Project* or scan the QR Code.

Make Your Pigeon Watching Count!

Please take part in the **Feral Pigeon Project**! You can also record the birds and other creatures in your garden with BTO Garden BirdWatch. Contact me for your 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

**The
Feral Pigeon Project**

