



# Bird Watch January



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: Redwing

I'm writing this in November and today we had our first snow in Swansea (admittedly only a few flakes). Redwings are increasingly likely to visit our gardens during cold winters as hedgerows become stripped of autumn fruits and they struggle to find invertebrates in the frozen ground of rural fields. They can suffer high mortality rates during such cold and difficult conditions. Migrants from Iceland and Scandinavia, Redwings arrive into the UK in late October during the night. The birds we see in Wales are likely to be of Icelandic origin as these tend to winter further west. Redwings are often seen in flocks with other thrushes such as Song Thrush and Fieldfare, particularly in fields and open woodland. At night, several hundred may roost together in tall conifers calling to each other as they arrive; they quickly settle, however, unlike the much noisier Starling. Their call is a reedy 'tseep'. The Redwing is slightly smaller than a Song Thrush and can be recognised by the prominent white stripe above the eye and a less obvious one below the cheek. Despite its name, Redwings do not actually have red wings but rusty-red coloured flanks which are revealed as it beats its wings in flight, making identification fairly easy.

## Did you know?

- The Redwing is the smallest of our European Thrushes.
- In just a few hours a flock of Redwings can strip a *Cotoneaster* or Holly bush of its berries.
- The Welsh name is *Coch yr Adain*.

**How to attract them to your garden:** Redwings tend only to venture into gardens during the coldest weather. They may be attracted by windfall apples or dried fruit. You may stand a greater chance of attracting them if you have trees or bushes with berries.

**Conservation status:** **Amber** due to their unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

**Garden BirdWatch data** show that the reporting rate of Redwing peaks in late December or early January and that they are more likely to use gardens during very cold weather. On average less than 10% of Garden Birdwatchers record this species but in the first few weeks of January 2010 this shot up to around 30% in Wales. This autumn has been a good one for berries, so perhaps natural food supplies will remain plentiful and I'll have to wait another year before we can record our first Redwing in our garden.

## 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](mailto:gbw@hiafi.co.uk) [www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw)

Follow me on Twitter @amanda\_skull



Redwing: Derek Moore