



Bird Watch May



Welcome to this month's Bird Watch. I'm one of two 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: Greenfinch

As the name suggests, the predominant colour of the Greenfinch is green. However, look closely and you'll notice that the male also has streaks of bright yellow on his wings and tail (particularly noticeable on a sunny day). The female is a dull green-brown. The Greenfinch is similar to a House Sparrow in terms of size. Traditionally a bird of farmland or woodland, this species has only been a regular visitor of gardens since the early 1900s but is now one of our most familiar garden birds. The beak is strong and robust, perfect for its diet of seeds. The Greenfinch prefers to eat seeds found within fleshy fruits like rosehips, but also eats the large seeds of trees such as Elm and Hawthorn. As seeds become depleted in one area the birds must travel to find new food sources and some migrate from Norway to Britain late each autumn. Where there is sufficient food nearby, several pairs of Greenfinches may be found nesting in a small area. Birds are even more social in the autumn and winter, searching for food together in flocks. The chicks are fed regurgitated seeds and insects but the adults eat only seeds. Greenfinches are susceptible to the parasitic disease *Trichomonosis*, although it is not clear as to why they seem to be more susceptible than species of similar habits. In some areas, there was around a 20% decline of the breeding population between 2005 and 2006. Affected birds appear lethargic, fluffed up and sometimes drool at the mouth (though these may also be general signs of ill-health). You can help to reduce the risk of disease transmission by keeping feeders and water dishes clean.

Did you know?

- Over the course of two months, bird ringing has shown that over 1,000 Greenfinches used a single garden; despite no more than 12 birds ever being seen together at one time!
- Look out for the Greenfinch's 'forward threat' display as they dominate the bird table or feeder.
- The Welsh name is *Llinos Werdd*

How to attract them to your garden: Greenfinches particularly enjoy sunflower hearts but will also feed on peanuts (always use a metal mesh feeder) and black sunflower seeds.

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

Garden BirdWatch data show that since the outbreak of *Trichomonosis*, numbers of Greenfinches in gardens remain lower than pre-disease. When I began the survey in 2004 I regularly had 40 or more individuals in my garden but in 2013 I only ever saw one or two at a time. Disease will have played a large part but perhaps it is also due to the increasing variety of bird species competing for food in my small garden.

Make Your Garden Count!

If you enjoy watching the birds and wildlife in your garden why not take part in BTO Garden BirdWatch – the largest year-round survey of garden birds in the world? Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk.

Happy Garden Bird Watching!

Amanda Skull, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador
07952 758293 (evenings & weekends only)

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

Follow me on Twitter @amanda_skull



Greenfinches: Mike Davies