



Bird Watch November



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.

Subject of the Month: Feeding

The types of food you offer your garden birds will have a big impact on the species that you attract. Remember, where you live will also determine this. You're unlikely to attract a Crested Tit, which lives in the Scottish Highlands, if you live in the Swansea Valleys!

Should I feed the birds all year round?

Yes. Both the BTO and RSPB advocate offering food throughout the year. In springtime it can be difficult for adult birds to find enough natural food for themselves and their chicks; in the autumn birds will turn to gardens if there's a poor seed/berry crop; frosty ground in the winter keeps worms safe from probing beaks.

Is bread bad for birds?

Bread certainly fills birds up and, whilst it isn't harmful, it has very poor nutritional value and should really be fed alongside other food types. Like us, birds need a varied diet. Birds which feed predominantly on bread will be deficient in vital vitamins.

Bird food is expensive, is there a cheap alternative?

Any food you put out should be free from salt. Some foods you could try are: porridge oats (uncooked); mild grated cheese; potatoes; cooked rice (most attractive to pigeons and doves); tinned dog or cat food as an alternative to worms (but may attract local cats); raw suet and lard (not fat from cooking); finely cut bacon and rind; chopped apple; dried fruits (sultanas and raisins can be poisonous to dogs); cooked or uncooked pastry, especially if it was made with real fat.

Who eats what? This is just a guide; birds will often feed on more than food type.

Water: All birds need water, whatever the weather or season for drinking and bathing.

Peanuts (always feed from a metal mesh feeder): Blue, Coal and Great Tit, Nuthatch

Nyger: Goldfinch, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll

Sunflower hearts: Greenfinch, Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Bullfinch

Fat blocks and balls (always remove from netting): Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit

Mealworms: Robin, Blackbird, Starling

Seed mixes on ground: Woodpigeon, Dunnock, Collared Dove, Jackdaw, Magpie, Song Thrush

A BTO study found that the simple act of putting out food significantly increases the likelihood of 24 of our most familiar garden birds visiting gardens.

Make Your Garden Count!

Enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden? Want to help track their fortunes? Then join BTO Garden BirdWatch! You don't have to feed birds to take part! Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk (Swansea and surrounding areas).

Happy Garden Bird Watching!

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