



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: Dunnock

The days are starting to get longer this month; in response to this birds' bodies are gearing up for breeding. By January the Dunnock will have started singing its sweet and wistful warble and, by the end of the month, it will have been joined by the voices of many other species. Whilst the Dunnock is often referred to as a Hedge Sparrow, it is not a sparrow and doesn't even belong to the same family! It is a member of the accentor family which originated in the Himalayas. The Dunnock is most commonly seen foraging under bushes and has mouse-like movements. This bird is often referred to as dull, but seen up close you'll notice that the Dunnock has a rich brown plumage streaked with black on top, and slate grey under parts; adults have brilliant mahogany-red eyes.

Did you know?

- The Dunnock is not considered a garden bird in other parts of Europe.
- Some Cuckoos choose to lay their egg in the nests of the Dunnock; even though the egg looks nothing like that of her own the surrogate mother doesn't seem to notice.
- The Welsh name is *Llwyd y Gwyrch*.

How to attract them to your garden: Dunnocks will take seeds, fats and grated cheese from the ground; they rarely visit bird tables.

Conservation status: **Amber** (there has been a long term decline in overall population numbers since the 1960's).

BTO Garden BirdWatch data show that despite their overall long term decline, garden numbers have remained stable. Around 80% of Garden BirdWatchers usually record Dunnocks using their gardens at this time of year.

Make Your Garden Count!

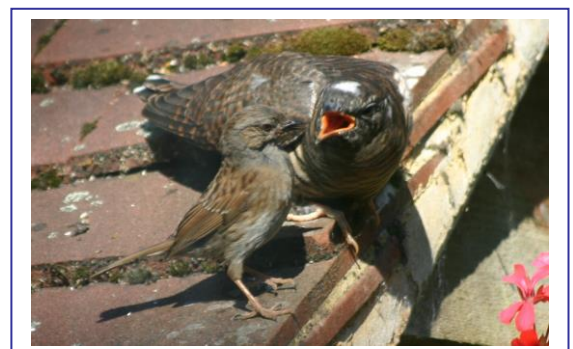
If you enjoy watching birds and other creatures in your garden, and want to help track their fortunes, then BTO Garden BirdWatch could be perfect for you. Please contact me for a free enquiry pack or to book a talk (Swansea and surrounding areas).

Happy Garden Bird Watching!

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Dunnock feeding a Cuckoo: Alick and Sarah Jones