



Bird Watch September



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: Robin

Last month many young Robins were seeking out their territories - perhaps one has chosen your garden as their patch? Now that their annual moult is over, Robins are beginning to start defending their territorial boundaries, unlike most other birds which wait until the spring. Given their old name of 'Robin Redbreast' it is easy to think that only the breast is red (or rather orange) but it actually extends up onto the forehead and is used as a warning to other individuals to 'keep out'. Their territory is also defended with a slow and melodic song, sung in different phrases with gaps in between so that the singer can listen out for any responses. Robins are the only garden birds likely to be singing regularly in early autumn. When the display of the red breast and song fails to warn off an intruder, they will sometimes defend their territory to the death, particularly in autumn and in early spring. The Robin's call is a rather cross and metallic sounding 'tick' which often reminds me of the rapid fire of a machine gun.

Did you know?

- Robins follow a gardener around to take advantage of uncovered insects; in forests they often follow deer for the same reason.
- Female Robins will also be singing at this time of year, whilst only the males sing in the spring.
- The Robin was recently voted Britain's National Bird.
- The Welsh name is *Robin Goch*.

How to attract them to your garden: Robins are mainly insectivores so live mealworms are a real hit. Alternatively there are many seed mixes which contain mealworms and insects. They also enjoy fat-based products and finely grated mild cheese. Robins tend to feed from the ground or a table, rather than from hanging feeders (although some have learned to do so).

Conservation status: Green (no cause for concern).

BTO Garden BirdWatch data show that Robin is the third most commonly seen bird in my garden (92%). In recent years populations have been relatively stable. Whilst they may be knocked back by very bad winters, populations are able to recover quickly from such losses due to the Robin's ability to raise up to five broods in a year (although two or three is more typical).

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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Robin: Keith Cooper