



# Birdwatch



Pic: 'Robin'; Tim Porter (a Bird Watch reader)

## SEPTEMBER

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: Robin**

Last month young Robins were seeking out their territories; this month they may choose your garden as their patch. Now that their annual moult is over, Robins are already starting to defend their territorial boundaries, unlike most other birds which wait until the spring. Given their old name of 'Robin Redbreast' it's easy to think that just 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 much 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 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.
- A small number of Robins may migrate to Spain or Portugal to spend the winter, moving at night and navigating by the stars.
- 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 cheese. Robins tend to feed from the ground or a table, rather than from hanging feeders.

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

**My BTO Garden BirdWatch Data** show the Robin is currently the third most common garden bird recorded in Wales. 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, including a guide to feeding garden birds, 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 • www.bto.org/gbw**