



Birdwatch



Pic: 'Starling': Tim Porter (a Bird Watch reader)

NOVEMBER

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: Starling

November brings shorter days and longer nights. A bird's activities during the day will be focused on obtaining enough food to survive the night. Starlings travel up to 30 miles to their roost sites, preferring urban sites, wherever possible, since night-time temperatures here are slightly warmer than in the open countryside. Starlings coming in to roost are a sight not to be missed. Small flocks join with other flocks until there are many thousands of birds moving en masse and performing mesmerising aerial displays. Such flocks are known as murmurations. The action does not stop there, however, as roosting Starlings gabble throughout the night – hardly something that is conducive to sleep! One theory for roosting together in such high densities is to compare the condition of birds which have spent the day feeding in different areas – it's a good idea to follow the best-fed birds when departing the following morning. Starlings have iridescent purple / metallic green plumage with small white spots. In flight their wings are triangular in shape and they fly fast and straight with quick wing-beats followed by short wing closures and the occasional glide. On the ground they have a self-confident walk, often stopping along the grass to probe the ground for insect larvae.

Did you know?

- A Starling's intestine grows longer at this time of year to cope with the increase of plant materials in its diet.
- Starlings are excellent mimics and their repertoire includes car alarms, mobile phones

and other bird calls.

- The Welsh name is Drudwy.

How to attract them to your garden: Fats and scraps will go down a treat, as will mealworms. They may also be attracted by trees laden with berries.

Conservation status: **RED** (of high conservation concern).

My BTO Garden BirdWatch Data show that the reporting rate of Starlings increases dramatically during winter months due to an influx of migrants from Europe.

Make Your Garden Count! Thinking about Christmas and stuck for ideas? A Garden BirdWatch membership gift pack (£19.95) makes an ideal present for anyone who enjoys watching the birds in their garden and, by taking part, they'll help track the fortunes of our birds. If you're interested in a gift pack for a friend or relative, please get in touch with me for more information. Also, please get in touch if you would like to book a talk.

Happy Garden Bird Watching!

Amanda Skull,
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