



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: Waxwing

The Waxwing is a bird that I have wanted to see for many years. My wish came true at the beginning of November when I saw seven of these stunning birds - I gave an excited shout as I ran to the window with my binoculars for a closer look. It's a shame I can't add this species to my garden bird list - I was on the Isle of Islay, off the west coast of Scotland, at the time! Annual numbers of these Scandinavian winter visitors to Britain can vary from a few dozen to more than 12,000. Irruptions of birds are most likely following poor berry crops or when population numbers have boomed (causing greater competition for food) in their homelands. Waxwings first arrive into eastern Scotland and gradually move southwards as berry crops become depleted. The most defining feature of this Starling-sized bird is its head-crest, which is particularly useful when looking at the silhouette of this bird in a tree. Waxwings have pinkish buff-coloured plumage, a black eye-mask and chin, yellow and white wing stripes and a bright yellow tail-tip. The Waxwing takes its name from the red blobs of 'sealing-wax' at the tips of the wing weathers. At the time of writing Waxwings have reached Bangor and Rhyl; in previous years they have been seen on Swansea's Kingsway and Bute Park in Cardiff, so keep your eyes peeled!

Did you know?

- One Waxwing will eat 600–1,000 berries a day – that's more than twice its own body-weight!
- The Waxwing is Europe's only specialist frugivore (fruit-eater) – at times their diet is 100% fruit, mainly in the form of berries.
- Given that out of town shopping centre car parks are often landscaped with berry-laden Rowan trees, they can be great places to see large flocks of feeding Waxwings.
- Their Welsh name is *Cynffon Sidan*.

How to attract them to your garden: Plant lots of berry-bearing trees and bushes, such as Rowan and cotoneaster. If you know Waxwings are in the area you could try tempting them in by tying apple-halves to the branches of trees.

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

BTO Garden BirdWatch data show that we need more records of this bird in order to build up an accurate picture! If you see this species outside of your garden you can record it via BirdTrack (www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack)

Make Your Garden Count!

Do you enjoy watching the birds in your garden? If so, you could help track their fortunes by taking part in BTO Garden BirdWatch. For more information about the survey, or to book a talk, please contact me.

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



Photographed by Garry French of Sussex