



# Bird Watch February



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: Long-tailed Tit

This month birds will be looking for a mate and setting up their breeding territories. It won't be until March, however, that Long-tailed Tits begin building their delicate domed nest, often in a very thorny site. The intricate nest is made of moss, woven together with spider webs and hair, camouflaged with lichens and lined with feathers. It's no wonder that nests can take up to three weeks to complete! Long-tailed Tits are highly sociable and are usually seen in extended family parties of 8-20 individuals, although I've only ever been lucky enough to see groups of 5 in my garden. During the breeding season a bird helps to raise the chicks of a sibling if their own nesting attempt has failed. Long-tailed Tits are only distantly related to the more familiar Great or Blue Tit. They have a small round black, white and pink body (the colours merge together giving a fuzzy effect) and, not surprisingly, a long tail. This pretty little bird has to be one of my favourite visitors and one that I only see for a few weeks each year.

## Did you know?

- A Long-tailed Tit's nest may contain as many as 2,300 feathers.
- A pair will fly an incredible 600–700 miles gathering nest materials!
- The Welsh name is *Titw Cynffon Hir*.

**How to attract them to your garden:** Whilst mainly insect-eating, Long-tailed Tits will readily take peanuts, fats, bread crumbs and finely grated cheese. They are acrobatic feeders, often hanging upside down by one foot.

**Conservation status:** **Green** (no cause for concern)

**Garden BirdWatch data** show that these birds are less common in Welsh gardens than elsewhere in Britain. They are most frequently seen in February when their natural prey items are most scarce.

## 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.

## Happy Garden Bird Watching!

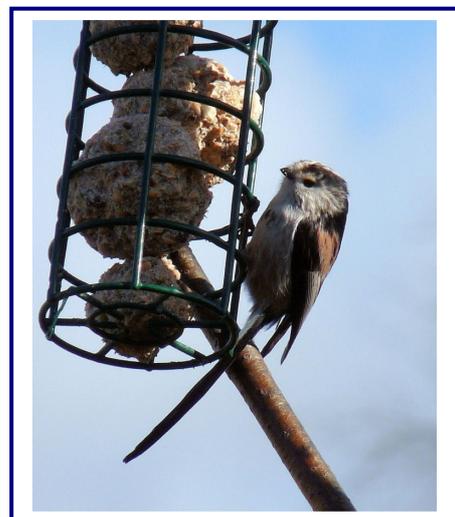
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Long-tailed Tit: Mike Davies (Bird Watch Reader)