



Bird Watch March



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: Siskin

Spring officially begins this month. Most bird species have already paired up and are just waiting for the right time to begin nest building and breeding. Siskins have been known to pair up in their British wintering grounds and then migrate to Scandinavia together to breed. One Siskin ringed in Shropshire was re-captured three days later in the Scottish Highlands meaning it had flown, on average, 118 miles each day! Not all Siskins travel and many will winter and breed in the same place if there are conifer plantations. The Siskin is a member of the finch family. It is smaller than a Goldfinch and much smaller than a Greenfinch. It is predominately yellow-green in colour and the male has a striking yellow band on the wing and a handsome black crown. Females are duller in appearance than males but both are exciting visitors to your garden.

Did you know?

- Siskins are most likely to be seen in gardens early in the morning or on wet days as the conifer cones from which they feed in other habitats only open to reveal their seeds when they are dry.
- The species was first recorded feeding in gardens in Guildford (Surrey) during the 1960s.
- The Welsh name is *Pila Gwyrdd*.

How to attract them to your garden: Being seed eaters, Siskins enjoy nyger seed, peanuts (always feed from a metal mesh feeder) and sunflower hearts. Ornamental conifers may also attract them to your garden.

Conservation status: Green (no cause for concern).

Garden BirdWatch data show that the reporting rate for Siskins peaks in March when their natural seed sources are at their most scarce. In Wales, Siskins are more likely to be seen in gardens in the west of the country. Siskins' use of gardens is largely dependent on how good or bad the conifer crop is each year; the reporting rate can vary from 10% to 40% of participating gardens.

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!

Amanda Skull, Garden BirdWatch Ambassador

Evenings and weekends only:

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Siskin (Male): Derek Moore