



Bird Watch May



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: Greenfinch

As the name suggests, the predominant colour of the Greenfinch is green. However, look closely and you'll notice that the male also has streaks of bright yellow on his wings and tail (particularly noticeable on a sunny day). The female is a dull green-brown. The Greenfinch is similar to a House Sparrow in terms of size. Traditionally a bird of farmland or woodland, the Greenfinch has only been a regular visitor of gardens since the early 1900s but is now one of our most familiar garden birds. The beak of the Greenfinch is strong and robust, perfect for its diet of seeds. It prefers to eat seeds found within fleshy fruits like rosehips, but also eats the large seeds of trees such as Elm and Hawthorn. As seeds become depleted in one area they must travel to find new food sources and some birds migrate from Norway to Britain late each autumn. Several pairs of Greenfinches may be found nesting in a small area if there is sufficient food nearby. They are even more social in the autumn and winter, searching for food together in flocks. The chicks are fed regurgitated seeds and insects but the adults eat only seeds. Greenfinches are susceptible to the parasitic disease *trichomonosis*, although it is not clear as to why they seem to be more susceptible than species of similar habits. In some areas, there was around a 20% decline of the breeding population between 2005 and 2006. Affected birds appear lethargic and fluffed up and sometimes drool at the mouth (this may also be a general sign of ill-health). By keeping feeders and water dishes clean, you can help to reduce the risk of disease transmission.

Did you know?

- Over the course of two months, bird ringing has shown that over 1,000 Greenfinches used a single garden; despite no more than 12 birds ever being seen together at one time!
- Look out for the Greenfinch's 'forward threat' display as they dominate the bird table or feeder.
- The Welsh name is *Llinos Werdd*

How to attract them to your garden: Greenfinches enjoy peanuts (always feed from a metal mesh feeder), black sunflower seeds and, in particular, sunflower hearts.

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

Garden BirdWatch data show a recent decline in the numbers of Greenfinches in gardens. When I began the survey in 2004 I regularly had 40 or more individuals in my garden at a time; now I rarely see more than a few. Disease will have played a large part but perhaps also the increasing variety of bird species competing for food in my small garden.

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:

07952 758293 or 01792 891013

gbw@hiafi.co.uk www.bto.org/gbw

Follow me on Twitter [@amanda_skull](https://twitter.com/amanda_skull)



Male Greenfinch: Mike Davies