



Bird Watch June



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: Song Thrush

We are now at the height of the breeding season. Song Thrushes have two to four broods every year, but it is only the female who incubates the eggs and young; the male is still busy defending his territory through song. His song is made up of a series of phrases, many of which are repeated three times, and may contain human sounds such as alarms and telephones. The pauses between phrases allow the male to listen for any answering males in the vicinity. The male will only take an active part in bringing up the young once they have fledged. In a process known as 'brood splitting' the parents divide the young between them taking sole charge of the fledglings assigned to them. The Song Thrush is warm-brown in colour with arrow shaped spots on its front. It has a long-legged, upright stance, and is slightly smaller than a Blackbird. It often follows a series of quick hops with a short run, as if to prevent itself from over-balancing and falling over.

Did you know?

- The Song Thrush is the only British species to have mastered how to crack open a snail shell. It beats it against a hard surface, i.e. an 'anvil', with a quick sideways flick of the head. Snails are taken as an emergency food when earthworms are harder to find.
- The 'tic' call of the Song Thrush is rather like the sound made by a free-wheeling bicycle wheel.
- The Welsh name is *Bronfraith*, meaning mottled breast.

How to attract them to your garden: Whilst Song Thrushes eat invertebrates, fruit and berries, they will also take seed that has fallen onto the ground below bird tables and feeders.

Conservation status: **Red.** The decline of the Song Thrush began in the 1970's, dropping by 50% over 38 years. They were once more common than Blackbirds but now there are around 12 Blackbirds for every Song Thrush in urban areas. Changes in farming practices, land drainage, woodland management and the use of slug-pellets (resulting in fewer snails) are all suggested as contributors to the poor survival rate of newly fledged birds.

Garden BirdWatch data show that Song Thrushes are usually present in around 35% of gardens during the early part of the summer.

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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Song Thrush: Mike Davies
To see Mike's video of this bird, go to:
<http://goo.gl/64Jtz>