



Count the wildlife
that's counting on you

BIG
Garden
Birdwatch

Your guide to the
Big Garden Birdwatch

27-29 January 2018

Thank you for counting the
wildlife that's counting on you

Join in the conversation at
#BigGardenBirdwatch

rspb.org.uk/birdwatch



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The RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654.
Front cover image: robin by Genevieve Leaper (rspb-images.com) 356-0449-17-18. ITM05235. 409430.

Relax...

...sit back, and welcome to the Big Garden Birdwatch.

What is it?

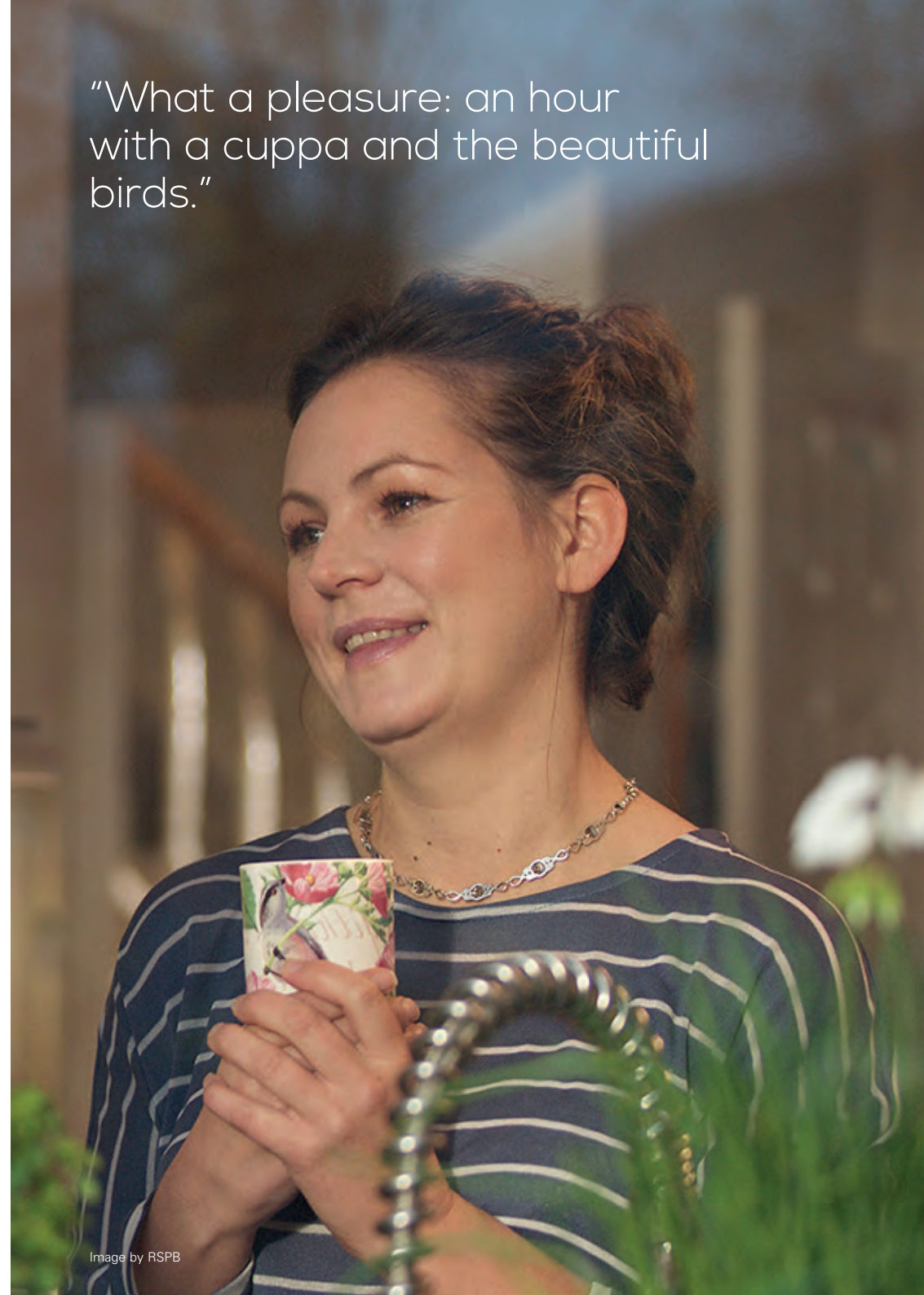
It's an hour to yourself, simply watching the birds in your garden or local park, then telling us what you see. Since the Big Garden Birdwatch began almost 40 years ago, hundreds of thousands of people like you have taken part. This gives us an astonishing amount of insight into how our wildlife is faring.

Why do it?

It's a relaxing and interesting way to spend an hour, and it will help you to get closer to the birds and other wildlife near you.

By counting the wildlife that you see, you're giving us valuable information. We can then see what's thriving, and what's under threat – and then we can find out why.

"What a pleasure: an hour with a cuppa and the beautiful birds."



"My favourite is the robin.
He brightens my day every
time I see or hear him."

#BigGardenBirdwatch



Robin by David J Slater (rspb-images.com)

How?

Here's what you need to do to take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch on 27, 28 or 29 January 2018.

- 1** Choose a time of day that's convenient for you. You'll probably see more birds if you do it early in the morning, but any time of day you can do it is useful for us. The event takes place over three days: Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- 2** Make yourself comfortable and watch the birds for an hour.
- 3** Record the highest number of each bird species that you see at any one time. Then answer the other questions about other wildlife species that visit your garden during the year.
- 4** Don't worry if you don't see anything over the hour, as it's still really useful information for us.
- 5** Let us know what you see. You can use the survey form in this pack, or go online at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch. Remember to join in the conversation on social media: [#BigGardenBirdwatch](https://twitter.com/BigGardenBirdwatch)

Good luck with
your Birdwatch!



Blue tit by Shutterstock

Attract

You'll see more birds if they know your garden as a feeding spot.

Here's how to turn your garden into a Michelin-starred restaurant for birds. Different birds like different kinds of foods, from shop-bought fat balls to kitchen scraps.

From the kitchen

Try putting out grated cheese, cake, cooked potato, fruit, pastry, dried porridge oats or sultanas. Avoid dried fruit if you have a dog, as it can be poisonous. Check out your recipe card included in this pack for details of how to make a simple bird cake.

Birds and other wildlife also need water to drink and bathe in, so make sure there's always a fresh supply.

You can find more activities to help you get ready for your Birdwatch at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch

From the RSPB shop

Sunflower hearts are full of energy for blue tits, great tits, greenfinches, goldfinches, blackbirds and house sparrows. Put them in a feeder, on a table, or simply sprinkle them on the ground.

Suet balls are great for blackbirds, house sparrows, starlings and robins in winter, when birds need high-fat foods to survive the cold.

Vist rspbshop.co.uk for other bird foods and ways to give nature a home.

"I was completely engrossed by the birds' acrobatics for food, and felt the time spent watching was a great stress-buster. Wonderful!"
#BigGardenBirdwatch



What the Birdwatch has told us

You're joining a huge team: the Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest wildlife survey and around half a million people take part each year. Because of the Birdwatch we know that, in our gardens since 1979, starlings have declined by 79% and song thrushes have declined by around 70%.

Since 2014 we've also been asking you about wildlife other than birds that visits your garden. Through this, we now know that only 25% of people see hedgehogs in their garden at least once a month.

All this information adds up to create a detailed snapshot of how our wildlife is faring around the UK.



Impact

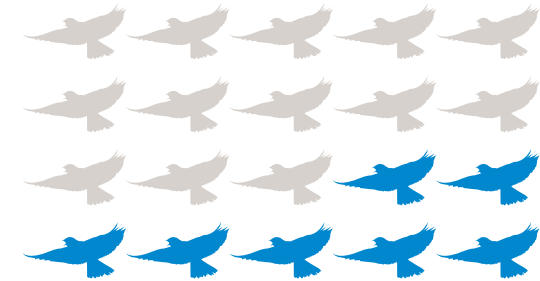
The Birdwatch tells us what's happening to garden birds both UK-wide and closer to home.

Over the last 10 years we've seen huge changes to the numbers of wrens and greenfinches. See what's happened in your country opposite.

Large decrease 2007-2017

Greenfinch

2007
2017



England:
-66%

N. Ireland:
-77%

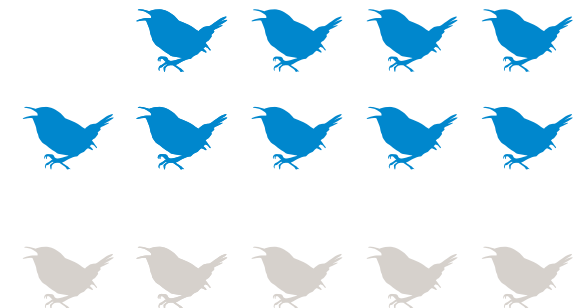
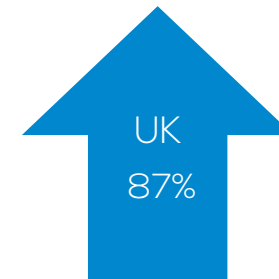
Scotland:
-64%

Wales:
-67%

Large increase 2007-2017

Wren

2007
2017



England:
91%

N. Ireland:
55%

Scotland:
46%

Wales:
92%

March

March is a good planting month. Try planting evergreen plants such as holly or ivy.

Thu 1	St. David's Day	Sat 17	St. Patrick's Day
Fri 2		Sun 18	St. Patrick's Day Holiday (NI)
Sat 3		Mon 19	
Sun 4		Tue 20	
Mon 5		Wed 21	
Tue 6		Thu 22	
Wed 7		Fri 23	
Thu 8		Sat 24	
Fri 9		Sun 25	
Sat 10		Mon 26	
Sun 11	Mothering Sunday	Tue 27	
Mon 12		Wed 28	
Tue 13		Thu 29	
Wed 14		Fri 30	Good Friday
Thu 15		Sat 31	
Fri 16			

3rd

Keep an eye on ponds for the first frogspawn of the year.



Common frog by Fotosearch

April

You might be tempted to tidy up after winter, but leaving areas undisturbed is great for wildlife.

Sun 1	Easter Sunday	Tue 17	
Mon 2	Easter Monday	Wed 18	
Tue 3		Thu 19	
Wed 4		Fri 20	
Thu 5		Sat 21	
Fri 6		Sun 22	
Sat 7		Mon 23	St George's Day
Sun 8		Tue 24	
Mon 9		Wed 25	
Tue 10		Thu 26	
Wed 11		Fri 27	
Thu 12		Sat 28	
Fri 13		Sun 29	
Sat 14			
Sun 15			
Mon 16			

1st

It's Easter - but if there are any real Easter eggs in your garden, make sure you don't disturb them



Nest by Dreamstime

May

Bring the countryside into your garden by planting some wildflower seeds.

Tue 1	Thu 17
Wed 2	Fri 18
Thu 3	Sat 19
Fri 4	Sun 20
Sat 5	Mon 21
Sun 6	Tue 22
Mon 7	Wed 23
Tue 8	Thu 24
Wed 9	Fri 25
Thu 10	Sat 26
Fri 11	Sun 27
Sat 12	Mon 28
Sun 13	Tue 29
Mon 14	Wed 30
Tue 15	Thu 31
Wed 16	

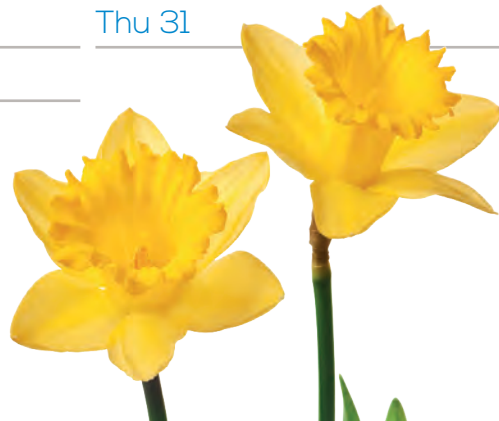
Bank Holiday

Bank Holiday

2nd

Keep a look out for swifts returning from Africa.

Daffodils by iStock



June

Leave an area of your lawn uncut until late summer to create your own mini-meadow. Wildlife will love you for it, and it'll give you a bit of a rest, too.

Fri 1	Sun 17	Father's Day
Sat 2	Mon 18	
Sun 3	Tue 19	
Mon 4	Wed 20	
Tue 5	Thu 21	
Wed 6	Fri 22	
Thu 7	Sat 23	
Fri 8	Sun 24	
Sat 9	Mon 25	
Sun 10	Tue 26	
Mon 11	Wed 27	
Tue 12	Thu 28	
Wed 13	Fri 29	
Thu 14	Sat 30	
Fri 15		
Sat 16		

21st

It's the longest day. Whilst you're enjoying the long evening, blackbirds and sparrows need to raise another brood.

House sparrow by Shutterstock



July

Remember to keep your bird bath topped up during the warm summer months. It can be a lifeline for thirsty birds when natural supplies have dried up.

Sun 1	Tue 17
Mon 2	Wed 18
Tue 3	Thu 19
Wed 4	Fri 20
Thu 5	Sat 21
Fri 6	Sun 22
Sat 7	Mon 23
Sun 8	Tue 24
Mon 9	Wed 25
Tue 10	Thu 26
Wed 11	Fri 27
Thu 12	Sat 28
Fri 13	Sun 29
Sat 14	Mon 30
Sun 15	Tue 31
Mon 16	

20th

Dragonflies are at their peak. Keep an eye out next time you're near a lake or pond.



Dragonfly by Fotolia

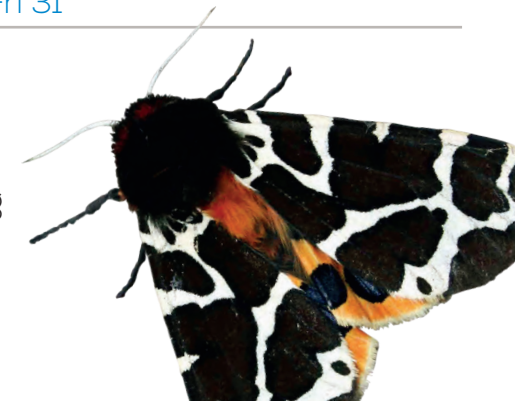
August

Now's the time to dead-head roses and other perennial plants to encourage them to keep flowering.

Wed 1	Fri 17
Thu 2	Sat 18
Fri 3	Sun 19
Sat 4	Mon 20
Sun 5	Tue 21
Mon 6	Wed 22
Tue 7	Thu 23
Wed 8	Fri 24
Thu 9	Sat 25
Fri 10	Sun 26
Sat 11	Mon 27
Sun 12	Tue 28
Mon 13	Wed 29
Tue 14	Thu 30
Wed 15	Fri 31
Thu 16	

27th

Look out for moths on the evening of the Bank Holiday.



Tiger moth by Tom Marshall (rsqb-images.com)

September

Create a water feature. Even if you don't have space for a full-blown pond, a washing up bowl will provide a great place for wildlife to drink and bathe.

Sat 1	Mon 17
Sun 2	Tue 18
Mon 3	Wed 19
Tue 4	Thu 20
Wed 5	Fri 21
Thu 6	Sat 22
Fri 7	Sun 23
Sat 8	Mon 24
Sun 9	Tue 25
Mon 10	Wed 26
Tue 11	Thu 27
Wed 12	Fri 28
Thu 13	Sat 29
Fri 14	Sun 30
Sat 15	
Sun 16	

5th

Over the next couple of weeks, watch out for swallows and house martins congregating before they migrate to Africa.

Swallow by Fotolia



October

Make your own compost and leaf piles. Not only will it be good for the garden, but the compost heap itself is great for all sorts of wildlife.

Mon 1	Wed 17
Tue 2	Thu 18
Wed 3	Fri 19
Thu 4	Sat 20 RSPB AGM & Members Day
Fri 5	Sun 21
Sat 6	Mon 22
Sun 7	Tue 23
Mon 8	Wed 24
Tue 9	Thu 25
Wed 10	Fri 26
Thu 11	Sat 27
Fri 12	Sun 28
Sat 13	Mon 29
Sun 14	Tue 30
Mon 15	Wed 31 Hallowe'en
Tue 16	

31st

Boo! Remember that spiders are nature's pest controllers, so don't scare them away.

Spider by Shutterstock



November

This is a good time to plant trees and shrubs. It'll give them plenty of time to get established before winter.

Thu 1	Sat 17
Fri 2	Sun 18
Sat 3	Mon 19
Sun 4	Tue 20
Mon 5	Wed 21
Tue 6	Thu 22
Wed 7	Fri 23
Thu 8	Sat 24
Fri 9	Sun 25
Sat 10	Mon 26
Sun 11	Tue 27
Mon 12	Wed 28
Tue 13	Thu 29
Wed 14	Fri 30
Thu 15	
Fri 16	

Bonfire Night

Remembrance Sunday

St Andrew's Day

5th

Remember, remember... to check your bonfire for hedgehogs before you light it, in case they're hibernating in there.

Leaf by Judy Lawrance / Alamy



December

The bare branches of winter make it easier to see the birds that are active. Listen out for robins, who may be starting to claim their territory.

Sat 1	Mon 17
Sun 2	Tue 18
Mon 3	Wed 19
Tue 4	Thu 20
Wed 5	Fri 21
Thu 6	Sat 22
Fri 7	Sun 23
Sat 8	Mon 24
Sun 9	Tue 25
Mon 10	Wed 26
Tue 11	Thu 27
Wed 12	Fri 28
Thu 13	Sat 29
Fri 14	Sun 30
Sat 15	Mon 31
Sun 16	

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

Boxing Day

New Year's Eve

25th

Give your garden birds a tasty Christmas treat.

Robin by Shutterstock





Male



Female



Starling

Look closely in winter and you'll see lots of different colours in this mostly black bird, including white spots.

How many have you seen all at once?

Chaffinch

Male chaffinches have a pinky-orange breast, while females are more brown. Both have distinctive white bars in their wings, which you can see well when they fly. They usually prefer feeding on the ground or a birdtable.

How many have you seen all at once?



Male



Female



House sparrow

Although still at the number one spot in the 2016 Birdwatch, results show that house sparrows have declined by 58% since 1979. The male has a grey head, black bib and brown streaky back, while the female is more brown all over.

How many have you seen all at once?

Collared dove

Look for its black neck collar. It came 11th in the 2016 Birdwatch, after only colonising the UK in the 1950s.

How many have you seen all at once?

Dunnock

The dunnock is a small streaky brown and grey bird. It feeds on the ground, flicking its wings nervously as it goes.

How many have you seen all at once?

Coal tit

Smaller than a great tit, with a black head and white stripe down the middle at the back.

How many have you seen all at once?

Male



Female



Blackbird

Males are black and females brown, both with yellow beaks. Often feed on the ground on fruit, worms or insects.

How many have you seen all at once?

Don't forget to submit your results at [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) or fill in the survey form from the pack and post it back to us!

Great tit by Steve Round, blue tit by Tony Hamblin, woodpigeon by David Kjaer (all rspb-images.com), robin (Alamy Stock Photo), magpie, goldfinch and dunnock (all dreamstime.com), male chaffinch (thinkstock), female chaffinch, greenfinch, starling, female blackbird, male sparrow, female sparrow and collared dove (all shutterstock), long-tailed tit, male blackbird and coal tit (all 123rf.com). The RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654. 356-0922-16-17.

For the birds

Bird cake

You will need:

- Yogurt pots
- String
- Scissors
- Suet or lard
- Mixing bowl
- RSPB bird seed
- Raisins
- Grated cheese

1. Using scissors, make a hole in the bottom of the yogurt pot.
2. Thread string through the hole and tie a knot on the inside. Leave enough string so that you can tie the pot to your tree or a bird table.
3. Allow the lard to warm to room temperature, cut it up into small pieces, and add to a bowl.
4. Add the other ingredients to the bowl, and mix them together with your fingertips.
5. Keep adding the seeds, raisins and cheese, and knead until it is all held together by the fat.
6. Fill the yogurt pot with the bird cake mixture, and put it in the fridge to set for an hour or two.
7. Hang your bird cakes from trees or your bird table. Watch out for greenfinches, tits, and even great spotted woodpeckers.



NB: Don't use raisins if you have a dog, as they are poisonous to them.



BIG
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For you

Birdwatch bites

You will need:

- 100g/3.5oz butter
- 100g/3.5oz sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 apple (eg Golden Delicious), diced
- 50g/1.7oz grated coconut
- 50g/1.7oz sunflower seeds
- 50g/1.7oz raisins or dried cranberries
- 175g/6.25oz oats
- 140g/4.5oz brown flour
- 3/4 tsp baking powder

1. Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/Gas Mark 5.
2. Grease and line a baking tray.
3. Cream together butter and sugar.
4. Add the egg and vanilla extract, and beat.
5. Stir in the coconut and sunflower seeds, and add the diced apple.
6. In a separate bowl, mix together oats, flour, baking powder and raisins.
7. Add to the butter mixture.
8. Form into 2.5cm (1 inch) spheres. The idea is that they look like bird cakes!
9. Bake in a preheated oven for 10–15 minutes, until lightly browned.
10. Cool on a wire rack.
11. Enjoy with a cup of tea or coffee during your Birdwatch, and feed any leftover sunflower seeds, apple and raisins to your birds.



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Top tip!

This is the basic recipe, but if you're a star baker, feel free to add icing, glitter, or any other dried fruit or flavouring you choose.



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27-29 January 2018

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Greenfinch by Andrew Marshall (rspb-images.com). The RSPB is a registered charity in England and Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654. 356-0499-17-18. ITM05239. 409435.

