

Garden Birds

Whether you live in a village, town or city, you will have seen British garden birds in your garden, school grounds or local park. The UK is lucky enough to have many **native** garden birds. Let's find out about some of them...



Robin

Latin Name:
Erithacus rubecula

With their bright red breast and face, robins are easy to spot, despite being only around 13cm long. You will often hear them singing into the evening with their high 'tic tic tic' song.

Robins can be seen in gardens throughout cities, towns and villages. They will nest almost anywhere, including inside old watering cans or sheds, in a cup-shaped nest made mainly from moss. They will lay 4-6 eggs (white with sandy or red freckles) between May and July.

Their usual diet includes:

- insects and their larvae;
- spiders;
- worms;
- weeds;
- seeds;
- fruit;
- berries;
- nuts.



Robins may even become very tame and feed out of your hands!

Blackbird

Latin Name:
Turdus merula



Male blackbirds are usually jet-black with an orange beak, whereas females are dark brown with a brown beak. They are larger than robins, at around 25cm long, but can also be heard singing in the evening with their tuneful song.

Blackbirds are found in a wide variety of habitats, including woodland, fields, gardens, towns, cities and countryside. Originally, blackbirds were woodland birds; still usually found nesting in bushes, shrubs or trees. They use grass, horsehair and fine roots held together with mud to form their nests, which are usually lined with grass, and lay their bluish green eggs in them.



Blackbirds mostly eat insects but have been known to have a very varied diet, including nuts, berries, cheese, fruit, newts and shrews – one of the reasons they thrive in the wild. Blackbirds are also able to catch worms if the grass is soft enough for them to dig with their beaks.



Wren

Latin Name:
Troglodytes troglodytes

Despite their miniscule size, at only 9-10cm long and weighing 8-13g (the same weight as a £1 coin), wrens are not actually Britain's smallest native bird – a title held by the goldcrest, at just 9cm long and 6g in weight. However, wrens are Britain's most common native bird. To spot an adult wren, look out for brown **plumage** and a short tail which constantly flicks.

Wrens are good at hiding in amongst trees and bushes, where they build their nests from grass, moss and leaves and line them with feathers.



Within these nests, adult wrens will lay 5-8 white eggs with brown speckles. When born, young wrens are almost identical to their parents except that they don't have prominent pale eyebrows. Wrens have a varied diet but mainly choose to feed on insects and spiders.



Did You Know...?

Although it is so small, the wren has the loudest song of our native birds; they can be heard making a loud "teck teck teck" call ending in a **trill**.



Threats to Garden Birds and How You Can Help

There are things that we use in our gardens which could harm garden birds, such as:

Netting – People use nets in their gardens to stop birds getting to their vegetables, but birds can become tangled in them. If nets are needed, it is best to use fine mesh nets made of natural material.

Outside lights – Outside lights can confuse birds causing them to collide with windows as they use the light to **navigate**. If you have outside lights, put them on a timer so they do not stay on at night.

Artificial Grass – **Artificial** turf destroys habitats for birds and the insects they eat so it is best to use natural grass wherever possible.



Did You Know...?

Although they are not always **resident** in the UK, nightingales are special summer visitors to parts of southern England. They are very secretive and hard to spot but their melodic song can be heard through the day and night. They are some of the loudest, fastest singers of the bird world!

Glossary

artificial: Something made by humans; not natural.

native: Born in a particular place.

navigate: To find its way.

plumage: A bird's feathers.

resident: Living somewhere permanently.

trill: A quavering sound.



Questions

1. How long are blackbirds? Tick one.

- 9cm
 9-10cm
 13cm
 25cm

2. Draw three lines to match each bird to the description of their egg.

robin

wren

blackbird

bluish green eggs, spotted with brown

white with sandy or red freckles

white with brown speckles

3. Name two habitats that blackbirds can be found in.

- _____
- _____

4. Fill in the missing words from this sentence:

People use nets in their gardens to stop birds getting to their _____, but birds can become _____ in them. If nets are needed, it is best to use fine mesh nets made of _____.

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text that shows that nightingales do not live permanently within the UK.

6. Summarise the information about nightingales in 30 words or less.

7. Why do you think that robins can become so tame that they feed out of people's hands?

8. Why do you think that nightingales are described as a 'special summer visitor'?

9. Why has the author included a glossary? Choose one other word to include and write a definition for it.
