

Garden Birds

Why do Birds Matter?

Birds aren't just there to look pretty; they help the environment too in the following ways:

- They help plant life by scattering seeds. This means that seeds get to travel to different places and grow in other places.
- They control insect growth as many birds eat insects. Without birds eating them, there would be a dangerously high number of insects.
- Some birds, like magpies and crows, eat dead animals. This gets rid of the rotting animals which could cause diseases.



Numbers of Common Garden Birds

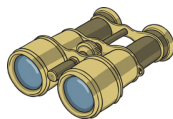
The number of starlings has greatly declined in recent years. The reason could be that farming has made it more difficult for them to find their favourite food – the crane fly larvae.

According to the results of the **Big Garden Birdwatch**, house sparrows are the most widely spotted bird in the UK and have been for the past 16 years running. Despite this, the number of house sparrows has dropped massively since the 1970s. This could be because of cats or air pollution due to more cars being used. Fortunately, over the past decade, there has been an increase in house sparrows reported although their numbers are still much lower than they were.

There has also been an increase in less well-known birds, such as fieldfares. One reason for seeing more fieldfares in gardens seems to be that the cold weather has made them leave the countryside and look for food in gardens.



RSPB: The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - a charity that protects British birds.



Big Garden Birdwatch A yearly event where people tell the RSPB which birds they see. The information is gathered to see if there are any changes in bird populations.

At the beginning of 2019, there were more sightings of goldfinches and redwings. A warmer winter meant more of these tiny birds survived.

Migration

Some birds migrate from the UK during the winter months and return when the weather becomes warmer. Swifts and swallows migrate to Africa, sometimes flying 200 miles in a day. Many die from starvation, exhaustion and storms.

Migrate - move to live in another area.

British Birds



Robins:

- have a bright red breast;
- are very aggressive and will defend their territory;
- sing all year round;
- can be seen in British gardens all year round.

Magpies:

- have a loud, chattering cackle;
- can be easily seen with their black and white feathers;
- hunt for leftover food and dead animals;
- are important insect controllers.



Blue Tits:

- have bright yellow and blue feathers;
- lay eggs between the end of April and May;
- male and female blue tits look the same;
- in winter, family flocks join up with other blue tits to find food together.

Questions

1. How do birds help the environment? List **three** ways.

2. Which is closest in meaning to the word **declined**? Tick **one**.

- In partnership
- below
- reduced
- risen

3. What is the Big Garden Birdwatch?

4. Why do you think the RSPB started the Big Garden Birdwatch?

Give **two** reasons for your answer.

5. Read the second paragraph of the **Numbers of Common Garden Birds** section. Why has the author used the word **fortunately**?

6. Why has there been an increase in the number of fieldfares spotted in gardens?

7. Tick the boxes to say whether the sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True	False
Some birds migrate from the UK during the summer months.		
Robins are aggressive birds.		
Magpies eat lots of insects.		
Blue tits lay their eggs at the end of June.		

8. Read the **British Birds** section. Which bird do you like best and why?
