



giving  
nature  
a home



# Count the wildlife that's counting on you

All you need to know  
for your Big Garden  
Birdwatch.

30–31 January 2016



“Wow!  
I never thought I’d  
see any of those  
in my garden.”

# You can make a difference

We’re delighted you’ve taken the first step in helping us find out how the wildlife near you is doing. Welcome to the Big Garden Birdwatch.

## What’s it all about?

The Big Garden Birdwatch is simple. Just choose any hour over the weekend of 30–31 January 2016 and see which birds come to your garden or local park. Tell us what you see at [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch), or send the survey form back to us. You can also let us know about other wildlife that you see in your garden or local park during the year. We’ll then analyse the results and see which birds are doing well and which might be in trouble.

## Why do it?

With hundreds of thousands of people taking part each year, we get a snapshot of how the birds in the UK are doing. The more people who count, the more accurate that snapshot will be. The results of the survey help us to spot problems and find ways of putting them right. For example, results show that numbers of house sparrows and starlings have fallen, which could be due to a lack of food or somewhere safe to nest. That’s why we encourage people to give nature a home near them.



Ray Kennedy (rspb-images.com)

The survey has revealed alarming things. Data has told us that **we have lost a staggering 58% of our house sparrows** since 1979.

# The world's largest wildlife survey

Thanks to people like you, the Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's largest wildlife survey. You're helping us find out how wildlife is doing.

## About the event

The Big Garden Birdwatch started as a children's activity in **1979**, and it's still the same simple format today. That means we've collected 36 years of records for our scientists to analyse. Other surveys show that it's not just birds that face problems. That's why we're asking you whether you see other creatures in your garden or park.

## You're joining a cast of thousands

Now, **over half a million people** take part every year. We compare the records year-on-year, so every single response is **vitaly important** in giving us a big picture of how our garden birds are faring.

## And this year, you'll be joining us!



Chris O'Reilly (rspb-images.com)

"I love hearing the birdsong as I walk to work, so watching them for an hour is a real treat."

**Adam, Huddersfield**

“Look at them all scrapping over the food. I'm proud to be helping them through the winter.”

Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)

“All the stresses of the week just disappear.”



# Get yourself ready

You'll see more birds if they've got a reason to come to you. The first step is to make your garden a tasty spot for dinner so they know to visit!

## Feed the birds

Different birds like different kinds of foods, from shop-bought fat balls to things you may have in already.

## From the **RSPB shop**

- **Sunflower hearts** are full of energy. You can put them in a feeder, on a table or simply sprinkle them on the ground.
- **Suet balls.** These are great in winter when birds need high-fat foods to survive the cold.

Visit [rspbshop.co.uk](https://www.rspbshop.co.uk) for other bird food and ways to give nature a home in your garden.

## From your cupboard

Try putting out grated cheese, cake, cooked potato, fruit, pastry, dry porridge oats or sultanas (avoid the dried fruit if you have a dog, as it can be poisonous).

## Don't forget the water

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

Find more activities you can do to get ready for the day at [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch). If you are taking part with your family or children, you'll find fun things to do together online too.



“My three-year-old doesn't normally sit still for long, but he's always fascinated by the birds that visit us.”

**Harriet, Biggleswade**

# The Big Garden Birdwatch is here

The last weekend of January will soon come round, so here's what you need to do on the day itself.

## On the day...

- 1 It's wonderfully simple. Choose when you want to start, make yourself comfortable and watch the birds for an hour. Record the highest number of each bird species you see at any one time.
- 2 Let us know what you see. Fill in the survey form online, or use the live bird counter at [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) on your laptop, tablet or phone. You can also fill in the form that came with this pack. Why not share your highlights via our online community group and social media channels?

## ...and afterwards

It's a sad fact that nature is in trouble. But there are always things we can do. Everyone needs to act now, and Big Garden Birdwatch is just the start. No matter how big or small your garden, we can all work together to give nature a home. Have a look at [rspb.org.uk/homes](https://rspb.org.uk/homes) for simple ways you can create special places for nature in your garden.



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

"Such a simple hour of watching, but it keeps me smiling for the rest of the day."

**Jane, Liverpool**

"I'd never really looked at the birds in my garden before.

Yes, I'd seen them, but not looked. Now I will look whenever I can."





“It’s just my small patch. But look closely and there’s so much wildlife hiding there.”

# Let’s give nature a home together

We can all help give nature a home. All over the UK, the RSPB is working round the clock to save nature and special places. Here’s what we do.

## We believe everyone can do their bit

If we all take small actions for wildlife, together we can make a real difference for nature. It’s what we do on our reserves, and you can do it at home too. Take a look at [rspb.org.uk/homes](https://rspb.org.uk/homes)

## We campaign for nature

Everything we do in our lives can have an impact on nature and the environment. We encourage politicians and decisionmakers to think about nature and sustainability up front. Nature has a huge value. We want this to be recognised before it’s too late.

## We protect important places

We look after a staggering 200+ nature reserves and they’re all teeming with wildlife. Why not come and visit one near you? Go to [rspb.org.uk/reserves](https://rspb.org.uk/reserves) for more.

## We can’t do it alone

We work with landowners, farmers, businesses and other environmental organisations to make more space for nature across the UK. If there’s more nature, we all benefit.



Chris Gomersall

“I feel like I’m making a small difference to the birds in my garden.”

**Chris, Glasgow**



Rahul Thanki (rspb-images.com)

Thanks for  
counting the  
wildlife that's  
counting on you

Share your story at  
**#biggardenbirdwatch**  
and find out the latest at:

 RSPBLoveNature

 @natures\_voice

 rspb\_love\_nature

**[rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch)**



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# Who are you looking at?

You can use this handy counting sheet during the Big Garden Birdwatch. Please count the most you see of each species at any one time, not the total seen over the hour. Then submit your results at [rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](https://rspb.org.uk/birdwatch) or fill in and send us the survey form from the pack – **don't send this sheet!**

Seen something else? Go to [rspb.org.uk/birdidentifier](https://rspb.org.uk/birdidentifier) to find out what it might be.



## Great tit

Look for a black stripe down its yellow front. The males have a slightly thicker stripe than the females.

How many have you seen all at once?



## Robin

Unmistakable orange breast. Some visit from the Continent in winter. You could hear its song almost any time of year.

How many have you seen all at once?



## Woodpigeon

This large garden bird is mostly grey with a white patch on its neck. Often on the ground hoovering up fallen seed.

How many have you seen all at once?



## Long-tailed tit

Tiny body; long tail. Known affectionately as "bum barrels" in some parts of the country. Often in groups.

How many have you seen all at once?



## Blue tit

Blue is not the only colour on this tit. Look out for yellow on its front, green on its back and white on its face too.

How many have you seen all at once?



## Magpie

This large bird will feed on scraps. Look closely and you might see purples and greens in its iridescent feathers.

How many have you seen all at once?

   

## Goldfinch

Look for the gold in its wings, but also the red on its head. More than one? A flock of goldfinches is called a charm.

How many have you seen all at once?

   

Male



## 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?

   

## Greenfinch

Bigger than goldfinches, greenfinches have a chunky beak to crack seeds. Look out for green/yellow in the wings.

How many have you seen all at once?

   

Female







## Collared dove

Look for its black neck collar. It came 10th in the 2015 Birdwatch, after only colonising the UK in the 1950s.

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?

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 dunnoek (all dreamstime.com), male chaffinch (thinkstock), female chaffinch, greenfinch, starling, female blackbird, male sparrow, female sparrow and collard dove (all shutterstock), long-tailed tit, male blackbird and coal tit (all 123rf.com).