



giving
nature
a home



Your guide to Big Garden Birdwatch

Count the wildlife that's counting
on you on 24-25 January 2015

“I hear the rustling long before I see her. She’s my spiky little gardener’s mate.”

Edwin Kats (rspb-images.com)

Take part in Big Garden Birdwatch

Every year, up and down the country, people watch the birds in their gardens and report what they see. Come and join us all this year!

How to do it

- 1** It’s wonderfully simple. Just count the birds in your garden or local park for an hour. Record the highest number of bird species you see at the same time.
- 2** Let us know what you see by completing the enclosed form or using the live bird counter at rspb.org.uk/birdwatch Here you can also find out all you need to know about taking part, share your sightings and enjoy general Birdwatch chat with our community group.

Why do it?

The results of the Birdwatch help us to spot problems, but they also help us find ways of putting them right. The decline in house sparrows could be due to a lack of food or habitat, which is why we encourage people to feed their garden birds. But it’s not just birds that are facing tough times: it’s also other wildlife, such as hedgehogs. So a section of the Birdwatch form asks you about the other wildlife that you’ve seen in your garden.

Count the wildlife that’s counting on you



Ray Kennedy (rspb-images.com)

The Birdwatch has revealed alarming things. Birdwatch data has told us **we have lost a staggering 62% of our house sparrows** since 1979.

Join the largest wildlife survey

Thank you for taking the first step and finding out more about Big Garden Birdwatch: the exciting annual snapshot of our birds and wildlife.

About the birdwatch

The Big Garden Birdwatch is the **world's largest wildlife survey** and **thousands of people** take part every year. It started as a children's activity in **1979**, and it's really simple: just watch your garden birds for an hour and tell us what you see. The survey hasn't changed in that time, so we now have **thirty-five years of data** on how our garden birds are faring.

Join a cast of thousands

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

And this year, you'll be joining us!



Genevieve Leaper (rspb-images.com)

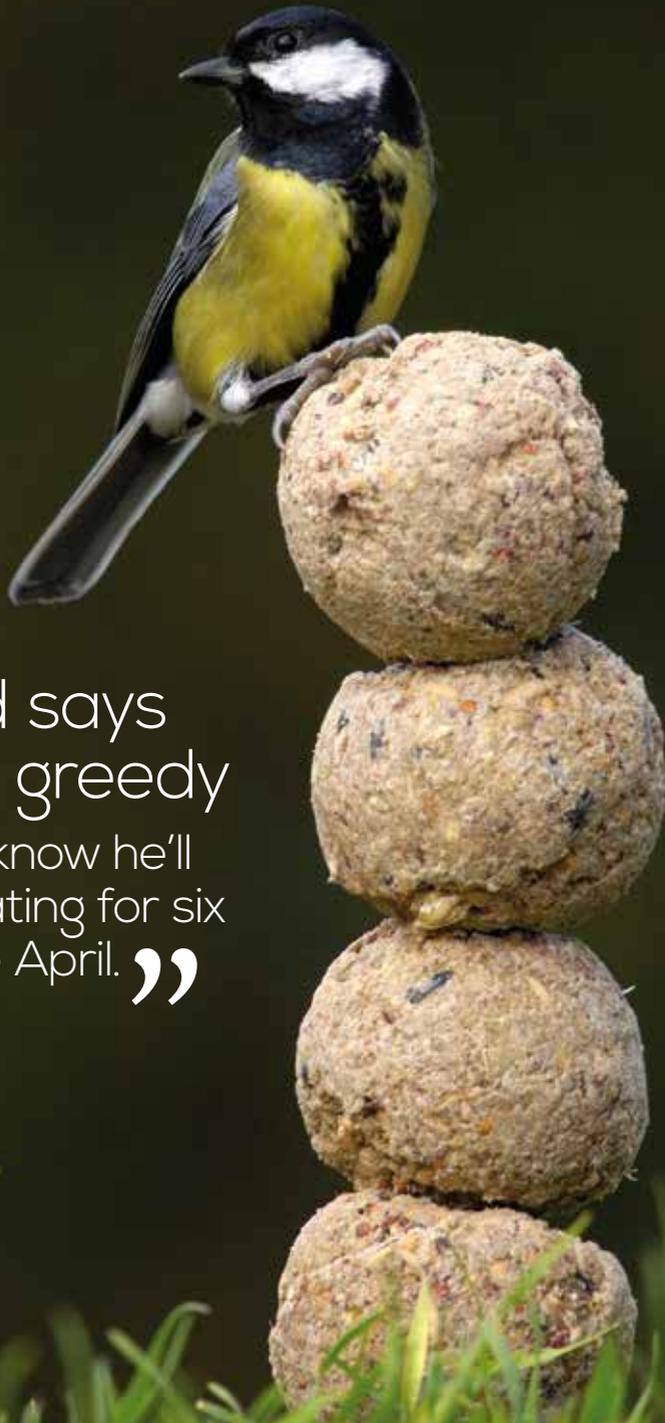
"I love hearing the birdsong as I walk to work, so watching them for an hour is a real treat."

Adam, Huddersfield

"It's just my small patch. But look closely and there's so much wildlife hiding there."

Paul Cliff

“Dad says he’s greedy but I know he’ll be eating for six come April.”



Ray Kennedy (rspb-images.com)

Getting ready...

Create a bird café

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!

The good news is that it’s really easy. Different garden birds like different kinds of foods, from shop-bought fat balls to things you might have at home.

From your cupboard

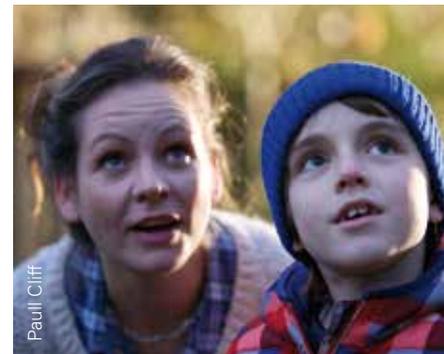
Have a look for bird food you may be hiding in your kitchen.

Try putting mild grated cheese, cake, cooked potato, currants, fruit, pastry, dry porridge oats and sultanas on your bird table.

From the **RSPB** shop

- **Sunflower hearts.** These are full of energy and ideal for nearly all garden birds. You can put them in a feeder, on a table or simply sprinkle them on the ground. RSPB sunflower hearts are now ‘Fair to Nature’ accredited.
- **Suet balls.** These are a great food in winter when birds need high-fat foods in order to fight the cold over the chillier months.

For more great food ideas, visit rspbshop.co.uk



Pauli Cliff

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

Harriet, Biggleswade

Getting ready...

Make them welcome

Now you've started feeding your garden birds, you'll probably find they'll be returning. Here are two other things you can do to help them.

Thirsty

It's a good idea to give birds something to drink too, as they need water to drink and clean themselves. Again, this doesn't need to be expensive or complicated: a shallow bowl with water is ideal.

A place to stay

You've started attracting birds by giving them something to eat. Now see if they will make your garden a place to stay by putting up a nestbox.

There's nothing better than knowing that a family of birds has made your garden their home, and a wonderful spring sight is parents tirelessly feeding their hungry, open-mouthed chicks.

Nestboxes appeal to many birds and can be fixed to most things you're likely to have in your garden already: walls, fences and trees. They come in all shapes and sizes: have a look at rspbshop.co.uk to see the variety on offer.

If you put one up now, they might be occupied come the spring but if not, then there's always next spring – birds do not always change their nesting spots every year.

If you're lucky enough to have birds using your nestbox in the first year, make sure you give it a good clean-up in the autumn after the inhabitants have left, so the birds that use it next can start out with a clean home.

A variety of nestboxes are available from rspbshop.co.uk

Don't forget to tell us about the other wildlife you have seen in your garden.



Eleanor Bentall (rspb-images.com)

Getting ready...

Garden for wildlife

Whatever the space you have, there are many things you can do to make your garden more bird and wildlife friendly.

Natural food

Many plants will add colour to your garden, and supply an amazing birds' buffet.

Try planting apple or crabapple, honeysuckle, ivy, lavender, rowan, sunflower, teasel and grey willow.

Berry good

These shrubs and trees grow tasty fruit and berries for birds.

Try planting alder buckthorn, buckthorn, cherry, climbing rose, elder, hawthorn, hedge barberry, holly, spindle, white dogwood, wild privet or yew.

Different varieties of trees, shrubs and flowering plants provide nectar and other food sources for insects throughout the year. Try planting hawthorn: it's a food plant for more than 150 insect species!

Give the mower a rest

It's not just about what you plant – leaving a section wild is great too!

Kick back and leave a corner of your garden uncut to encourage tall plants and weeds. This will create a habitat for a range of wildlife including bees, caterpillars of many butterflies and moths, hedgehogs and even frogs and toads.



Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)

"A gang of fluffy long-tailed tits were my stars of the show last year."

Natasha, Bedford

Give nature a home in your garden

As part of the Birdwatch, we ask you about other wildlife in your garden too. Nature is in trouble: we need to look after all of it.

Here's some simple ways to give nature a home in your garden.

Build a bug hotel

Dead and rotting wood provides a home where fungi, mosses and lichens can grow. As it decays, a pile of wood becomes a bug hotel for a variety of bugs. So whenever you prune, add the cut branches to the pile. If you have a balcony, fill a well-drained bucket with soil and wood chippings to attract bugs. To make it even better, you could add a couple of small rotting branches and put it next to flowers. The creepy crawlies will love it!

Make a mini-pond

Adding a pond to your garden is one of the best ways of giving nature a home, and the best thing is you don't even need a lot of space to do it! A mini-pond could attract dragonflies, frogs and pond skaters.

Get a washing up bowl, then add gravel to the bottom. Add rocks on one side to help animals climb in and out. Finally, add in a native oxygenating plant such as hornwort.

For more ways to give nature a home in your garden, visit rspb.org.uk/homes



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

"It's my chance just to sit and enjoy nature, knowing thousands of others are doing it too."

Sheila, Saffron Walden



Edwin Kats (rspb-images.com)

“He's my prince. Hearing that little 'quark quark' call at the end of the day puts my world at one.”

Ready to do the Birdwatch?

You've followed the tips in this booklet and you're all prepared for Big Garden Birdwatch, and how to start giving nature a home.

On the day..

Over the weekend of **24–25 January 2015**, why not use our online bird counter at rspb.org.uk/birds? As your hour starts, record the birds as you see them directly on your laptop, tablet or smartphone. Just start the timer and once your hour is up, all you need to do is press "send". And remember to join in the conversation at **#birdwatch**. You can also send in your results with your paper form.

If you spot something you're not sure of, use the pictures on your form or look at rspb.org.uk/birdidentifier

...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 for simple ways you can join the community and build special places for nature in your garden.

“Look at that. Yesterday they knew 'bird', today they know 'sparrow'.”



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

Phil, Liverpool

We give nature a home

All over the UK, the RSPB is working round the clock to save nature and special places. Here's a bit more about what we do.

We believe everyone can do their bit

If we all pull together and take small actions for wildlife in our gardens and outdoor spaces, 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://www.rspb.org.uk/homes)

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?

We campaign for nature

Our campaigner, a red squirrel called Bob, has been working his squirrel socks off to ask people to "Vote for Nature" before the next General Election. For more details about Bob and what he's been up to, have a look at [voteforbob.co.uk](https://www.voteforbob.co.uk)

We don't do it alone

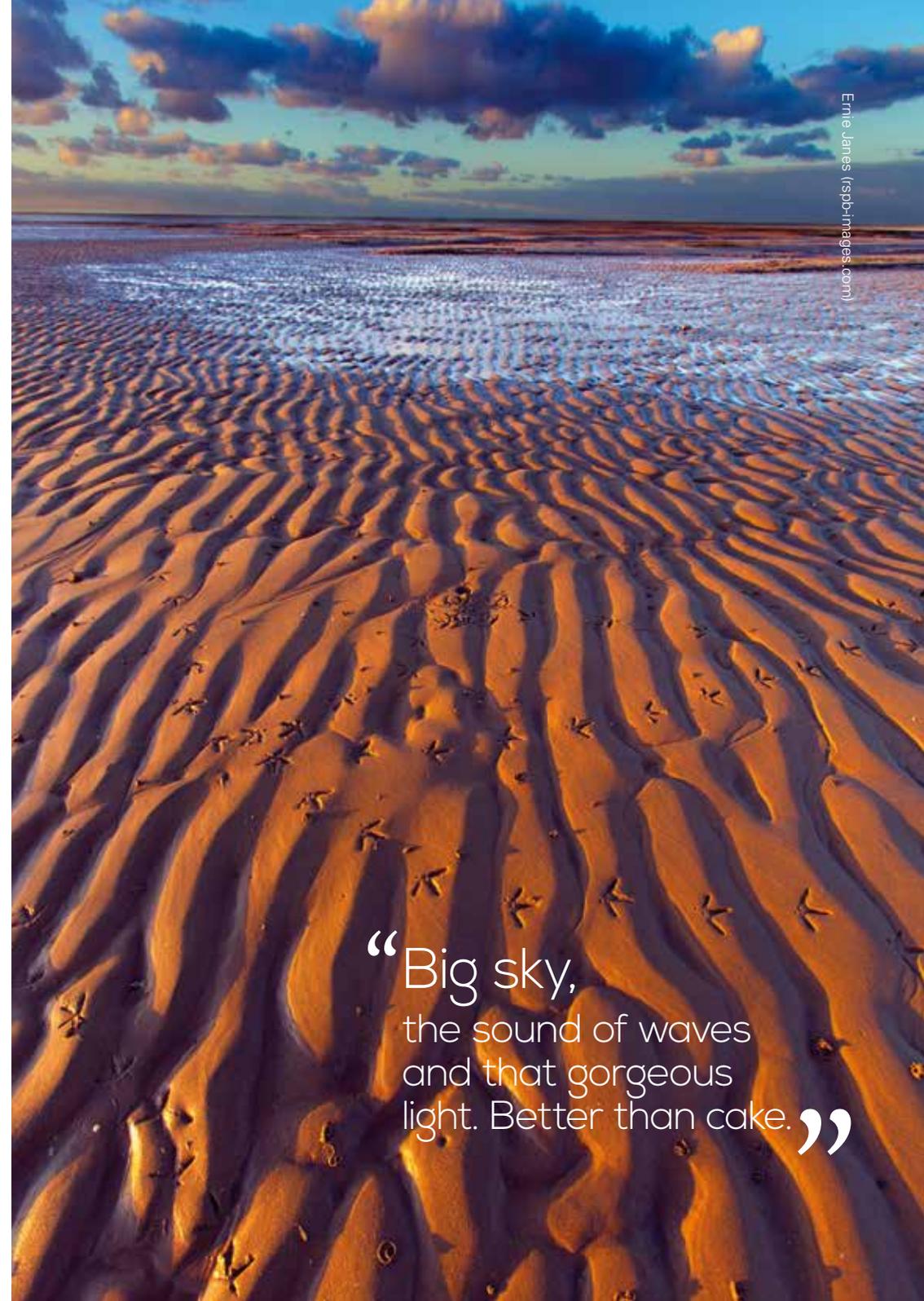
We work with landowners, farmers, businesses and other environmental organisations to make more space for nature across the UK. Because if there's more nature, we all benefit.



David Trilling (rspb-images.com)

"A guilt-free indulgent hour to forget everything. It's just me and the birds."

Chris, London



Ernie James (rspb-images.com)

"Big sky, the sound of waves and that gorgeous light. Better than cake."



Rahul Thanki (rspb-images.com)

Count the wildlife that's counting on you

Join in the conversation at
#birdwatch and follow us at:

 RSPBLoveNature

 @natures_voice

 rspb_love_nature

rspb.org.uk/birdwatch



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Count the wildlife that's counting on you

- 1 Watch the birds in your garden or local park for one hour.
The more people watching the better – so why not invite your family and friends?
- 2 Record the highest number of each bird species you see at the same time – not the total over the hour as birds may visit more than once.
- 3 Only count the birds that land in your garden or park, not those flying over.
- 4 Once your hour's up, fill in the details for other wildlife that visits your garden or park during the year.
- 5 Tell us what you've seen! Even if you don't see any birds, we still need to know, as it's really useful information.
- 6 Return the form (FREEPOST) to the address at the bottom of the page.

Big Garden Birdwatch

Join thousands of others and discover the wildlife in your garden for an hour over **24–25 January 2015**.

Name of bird

Most seen at one time

Blackbird.....	<input type="text"/>
Blue tit.....	<input type="text"/>
Chaffinch.....	<input type="text"/>
Coal tit.....	<input type="text"/>
Collared dove.....	<input type="text"/>
Dunnock.....	<input type="text"/>
Goldfinch.....	<input type="text"/>
Great tit.....	<input type="text"/>
Greenfinch.....	<input type="text"/>
House sparrow.....	<input type="text"/>
Long-tailed tit.....	<input type="text"/>
Magpie.....	<input type="text"/>
Robin.....	<input type="text"/>
Starling.....	<input type="text"/>
Woodpigeon.....	<input type="text"/>
Other species <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Other wildlife

You may not see these creatures in your hour watching (especially hedgehogs, slow worms and grass snakes which are hibernating now), but we'd like to know if any of them visit your garden or park and, if so, roughly how often. Please put the appropriate letter in the box next to the animal.

A = daily, B = weekly, C = monthly, D = less than monthly, E = never, F = don't know

Badger.....	<input type="text"/>
Hedgehog.....	<input type="text"/>
Grey squirrel.....	<input type="text"/>
Red squirrel.....	<input type="text"/>
Muntjac deer.....	<input type="text"/>
Roe deer.....	<input type="text"/>
Slow worm.....	<input type="text"/>
Grass snake.....	<input type="text"/>

How many people took part?

Adults Children

Please use CAPITAL letters.

Title (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, etc)

First name

Last name

Address

Town

County/Council area

Postcode

Telephone

Mobile

E-mail (over 18s only)

Date of birth if under 18

We respect your privacy and will not sell your personal data to any third party. The RSPB and RSPB Sales Ltd will use your details to tell you about our conservation and fundraising; to run your membership; to conduct analysis and to contact you for research purposes. If you do not wish to receive marketing information in the following ways, please tick the relevant box:

Mail Telephone E-mail Text

For further information on the full range of our activities and your privacy choices, please go to the Privacy Policy on our website rspb.org.uk or contact Membership Services on **01767 693680**.

Please send us your results by **13 February 2015** to:

FREEPOST RSTS-ZZCC-KJXU, The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch, Halifax Road, Melksham SN12 6YY

BWFNAM0065

The results of this year's Birdwatch will be released in March, and will be summarised on our website and in *Nature's Home* magazine. Image by Andrew Parkinson (rspb-images.com). The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654 368-1109-14-15