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 easily noticeable, despite being only around 13cm long. You will often hear them singing into the evening with their high 'tic tic tic' song.

Seen throughout gardens in cities, towns and villages, robins will nest almost anywhere, including in old watering cans or sheds. Between May and July, robins will lay 4-6 eggs in a cup-shaped nest made mainly from moss. The eggs are predominantly white with sandy or red freckles and adult robins may lay a clutch of eggs up to three times per year.

The usual diet of robins consists mainly of insects and their larvae, spiders, worms, weeds, seeds, fruit, berries, nuts and oats. In order to encourage robins into your garden, provide mealworms on a bird table. Robins have the potential to become very tame and may even feed out of your hand!

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, and can also be heard singing in the evening with their tuneful song or their 'tchook tchook tchook' alarm call.

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. They will lay 3-6 bluish green eggs, spotted with brown, in each clutch and this can occur up to three times per year.

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 8-13g in weight, wrens are surprisingly not Britain's smallest native bird – a title held by the goldcrest, at just 9cm long and 6g in weight. Although tiny in stature, the wren has the loudest song (relative to their size) of all UK native birds and they can be heard making a loud 'teck teck teck' call ending in a trill (quavering note).

Wrens are good at hiding in amongst trees and bushes, where they build their nests from grass, moss and leaves and line them with soft feathers. To spot an adult wren, look out for brown plumage and a short tail which constantly flicks. The young (juveniles) – born in clutches of 5-8 eggs once or twice per year – are almost identical to their parents except they don't have prominent pale eyebrows. Wrens have a varied diet but mainly choose insects and spiders, which they find along the ground with their beak.

Threats to Garden Birds and How You Can Help

There are things that we use in our gardens which could harm garden birds but you could make a difference by making small changes, 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, rather than nylon.

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, ensure they are 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.

Weed Killers – Weed killers can poison birds or destroy the insects that they feed on. Try to use natural methods to control the insects within your garden, such as by encouraging insect-eating birds or other wild animals, such as hedgehogs, to visit.

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!

Questions

1. What is the Latin name of the wren? Tick one.

   - ○ Luscinia megarhynchos
   - ○ Troglodytes troglodytes
   - ○ Turdus merula
   - ○ Erithacus rubecula

2. Draw **three** lines to match each bird to its song.

robin	tchook tchook tchook
wren	tic tic tic
blackbird	teck teck teck

3. What does **trill** mean?

   _____

4. Find and copy **two** things that robins will eat.

   - _____
   - _____

5. What is the problem with using nets in a garden?

   _____

6. Why do you think wrens are so good at hiding?

   _____

   _____

7. Summarise the information from the third paragraph in 40 words or fewer.

8. Which of the threats do you think is the most problematic? What could you do to help the problem?

9. Why do you think that robins are Britain's favourite bird? Give at least two reasons.

10. Can you think of any other threats to garden birds? What could you do to help the problem?