

Garden Jottings from Ken

Have you taken part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch? This annual event encourages members of the public up and down the country to watch and record all types of birds and other creatures that visit their garden over a one hour period on a set weekend in January. Individual observations are then collated, and the results build up an over-all picture of the spread of wildlife across the UK, and an indication of species increasing or declining in population.

For those of you that already take part it's worthwhile fun and a personal challenge to beat the previous year's count, but what can you and newcomers to this activity do to increase your odds and attract more of our feathered friends into your gardens?

Obviously, the best way to tempt garden birds in is to provide something they just can't do without, and food is pretty high up on the list. Imagine if every restaurant in the country served free food, you would naturally choose to eat at the best and most convenient outlets, where the food is fresh, nutritious and plentiful, then you and many others would literally be flocking in! For nature it's much the same, the quality, accessibility and variety of food available will determine the numbers and types of birds you are likely to attract.



Cheap basic seed mixes usually contain a large amount of wheat and other bulking ingredients to help keep its cost down, but most small birds will sift through these in order to find more nutritious seeds, discarding all but the best bits onto the ground, either for larger species such as pigeons and pheasants to Hoover up, or to germinate into a small lawn. Try upgrading to a 'no mess' mix which will contain a larger proportion of small seeds and no husks, plus any wheat that is included should have been crushed or rolled (our mix is also heat-treated which softens the seed making it more palatable, and also stops it from germinating).

Birds adore sunflower seeds and most can split open the husks of black sunflowers, but for an even more rewarding snack sunflower hearts will fit the bill! These provide a luxury food source for almost all species, and a choice feed for goldfinches instead of the usual thistle (nyger) seed which requires a specialist feeder to stop wastage.

Peanuts and suet-based snacks are high in fat and great for feeding year round but especially in cold weather. Once again, quality varies greatly, so we now stock a premium fat ball, and although each costs a few pence more you can really see the difference, packed full of seed and containing 59% more protein than standard ones.

Always keep your food offering fresh by putting out just enough for a couple of days, and try to serve at different heights, some at ground level for foraging birds such as dunnocks and thrushes, on tables (robins and blackbirds love mealworms), or in feeders for acrobatic tits and finches, and don't forget to provide a source of clean water as eating is thirsty work!

Call in for more suggestions on creating a garden that's enticing for you and for wildlife.

Cheers, Ken

The Garden Enclosure, Banham - naturally better!

The Garden Enclosure

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With a continually growing number of people in the world, nature needs all the help it can get to reduce our impact on it, and as garden owners we can all make a bit of a difference.

Find us at Banham Zoo, NR16 2HE - outside Zoo ticket kiosks
Open Thursday to Monday 10am to 4pm (9.30am to 5pm March to October)

Make your
garden
special!