

Garden Birdwatch

Have you heard of Garden Birdwatch? I expect you have, and it may well be the Big Garden Birdwatch you are thinking of. This is a weekend at the end of January where you count the maximum number of each species in your garden in an hour. This is good for getting people involved in birds but not very good as citizen science – the weather greatly affects the numbers counted.

The BTO Garden Birdwatch scheme, however, is different. Again you count the maximum number of each species in the garden, but this time during a week. And you do it every week of the year, or as many as you can. Together with all the thousands of other Garden Birdwatchers around the country this provides quite a robust dataset of information on populations of garden birds around the country and how they change. So, for example, the decreases in Greenfinch and Chaffinch numbers, and the increase in Goldfinches, are well recorded. It also enable comparison between areas and countries – the disastrous decrease in House Sparrows in London is not reflected in Scotland and Wales where they have actually increased.

I have been taking part in Garden Birdwatch for 19 years in my current garden – I know this because I have just been sent a very useful summary of my participation in the scheme with full details of the last year.

Apparently I recorded 45 different species of bird in the garden in 2022. I also recorded 43 different species of other wildlife e.g. fox, squirrel, toad, and quite a few species of dragonflies, butterflies and bumblebees.

My rarest sightings in the year were Snipe, Weasel and Golden-ringed Dragonfly.

My 2022 GBW year

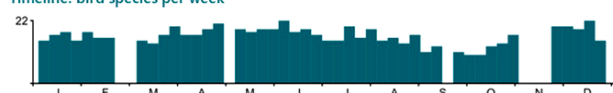
45 bird species, 8 mammals, 1 amphibians, 1 reptiles, 33 insects

Top species:

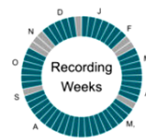
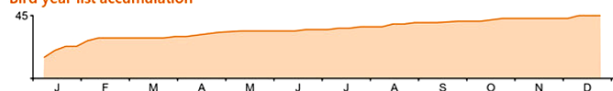
Seen in fewest gardens

- 1: Snipe
- 2: Weasel
- 3: Golden-ringed Dragonfly

Timeline: bird species per week



Bird year list accumulation



www.bto.org/gbw

One of the interesting things about the above graph is how the number of birds species in the garden is surprisingly constant, despite the comings and goings of summer and winter visitors. The busiest month seems to be December, which I would not have guessed - it must be all those winter thrushes eating the apples and visiting wagtails on the lawn! (As you may have guessed, the gaps are when we were on holiday).

The whole process of recording the garden birds each week is quite fun – Peter and I compete to get the greatest number of Blue Tits – and it does help you to understand your garden birds and other wildlife a bit more. If you fancy joining up, go to bto.org.uk and click on “How you can help”.

Rosemary Royle