

Garden BirdWatch

How to take part



Female Blackbird, by Liz Cutting / BTO

What you need to do

Keep a list of the different birds that you see using your garden over the course of a week (which runs from Sunday to the following Saturday). You can also record the maximum number of each species you see together during the week (e.g. three Blackbirds seen together at one time). If you want you can also record other types of garden wildlife (including mammals, amphibians, reptiles, butterflies, bumblebees and dragonflies), and help us collect information on wildlife disease.

What to record

Record species that you are confident you can identify correctly; if you can't identify the less common birds in your garden, it's OK to leave them off. You can choose whether or not to record other wildlife.

You should **only record birds and animals actually using the resources in your garden**. For example:

- Birds on your bird feeders, perching in shrubs or nesting on your house.
- Birds feeding on insects in your garden, e.g. Swallows flying low.
- Butterflies feeding on your flowers or frogs in your pond.

Do not include birds that are flying past overhead and not using your garden.

It's fine to just record if a species is present, and to not include a count. If you choose to include a count, remember that it should be **the maximum number of the species that you saw together at any one time** (e.g. three Blackbirds seen at the same time). You should not add counts from different times together. If you see two Blue Tits on your bird feeder one day, then four together another day in the same week, this should be recorded as four, as this is the maximum.

You should not add up counts even if you know different individuals are visiting your garden at different times, for example a male and a female Blackbird visiting separately. This is because not all species can be differentiated or sexed effectively, so it would inflate the counts for those that can if we allowed this.

You don't have to provide bird food, but if you do please record the food you provide. If you have a pond, please mark 'water' each time.

Where to record

We are interested in **records from all gardens**, even if you don't see many birds! Records from a small city garden are just as valuable as those from a large rural garden.

Decide what part of your garden will be your 'recording area'; all your lists should be from this area. For most people this will be their whole garden, but if you have a large garden, or it is not all visible from the house, it should be an area you can easily see. You will be asked to answer some simple questions about your garden when you register for the survey.

When to record

You can spend as much or little time as you like recording for GBW, but **please try to spend a consistent amount of time making your weekly lists**, so that they are comparable with each other.

Many people will simply record what they see during the course of a week. However, if you spend different amounts of time at home from week to week, you might want to define a set recording period, e.g. while having breakfast each morning, or just at the weekends. The main thing is that **your lists should reflect the birds using your garden, not the amount of time you have spent watching them!**

If you are able to send in a list every week this would be very valuable data. However, it's still useful if you are able to send in lists less often, or only occasionally.

How to record

The GBW recording week runs from Sunday to Saturday, so you should start a new list on Sundays. How you note down your records throughout the week is up to you. Many people simply keep a notebook and pen handy, but you could keep lists on your phone or download one of our log sheets.

You can't enter your data online via the data entry link at www.bto.org/gbw until the week it has ended; you can then choose to enter data straight after the week is finished or you can save up several lists to enter later.

If you have any questions about recording for GBW, please contact us (gbw@bto.org); we'll be happy to help!

