



Number 16

Winter 2018

BIRD DETECTIVES

The magazine for Junior Members of BirdWatch Ireland



GARDEN
BIRD
SURVEY

WHERE DO
SWALLOWS GO
IN WINTER?

WINTER
ACTIVITIES





Welcome!

Hi everybody!

It's that time of year when the days are really short, the weather gets really cold and the birds get really hungry!

Please don't forget to put out plenty of food for the birds in your garden this winter. Seeds, peanuts, fat, fruit – there are lots of different options, and the more different foods you go for, the larger the variety of birds you will attract.

Oh, and don't forget to put out some water for them too, especially if the temperatures drop below freezing. Birds need water to drink and to bathe in, just like we do, and when ponds and puddles are covered with ice this becomes pretty difficult for them. You don't need a fancy bird bath or anything like that: a simple plastic bowl placed on top of your bird table or in the middle of your lawn, topped up with fresh water every few hours, will do the job nicely.



Chaffinch at a peanut feeder

Now, while you are busy taking care of the birds in your garden I have another important job for you. For many years now garden birdwatchers all over Ireland have taken part in BirdWatch Ireland's **Garden Bird Survey**. It would be great if you could give it a go yourself this winter. You just have to count how many of each different kind of bird you see in your garden each week, write the numbers on the special form on pages 14 and 15 (you can use a photocopy if you don't want to tear or cut your magazine – I know I don't!)

and then send it back to us.

It's great fun to do and will help you find out lots more about the birds that live in and around your garden, and the information you send them helps my friends the scientists in BirdWatch Ireland to work out lots of important stuff about how Ireland's birds are getting on.

The survey only covers the birds that are found here during the winter, but of course some types of bird leave Ireland altogether before the winter hits. The most famous ones are probably the Swallows: we see lots of them during the summer months, but in the autumn every single one of them leaves us. Have you ever wondered where they go and what they get up to while their friends back here in Ireland are trying to stay warm? Well,



Shay Connolly

Swallows gather before autumn migration. But where do they go?

if you turn to pages 4 and 5 you'll find out. Finally, although it may be cold out, winter is actually a fantastic time to see lots of birds in Ireland. BirdWatch Ireland's branches right across the country have all sorts of special free outings lined up, so why not go along to one with your family and see how many different kinds of bird you can see? If you like, you can write to me to tell me all about them, or even send me some of your drawings, paintings or photos – I'd really love that!

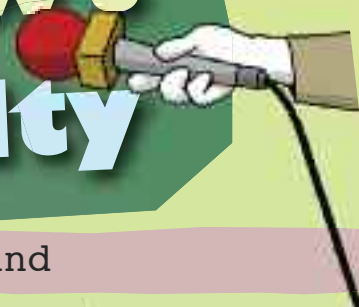
Shelduck Holmes

Editorial Address: Bird Detectives, BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20 Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, A63 RW83. Edited by Niall Hatch, with special thanks to our contributors this issue: Ricky Whelan, John Lusby, Darren Ellis, Barbara Sullivan & Stephen Newton. Design by Michael O'Clery.

Cover pic: Greenfinch, by Brian Burke.



Interview: Dara McNulty



We interview a young birder from Northern Ireland

Hi Dara! Tell us a bit about yourself. How old are you, where are you from and how or when did you become such a committed young wildlife hero!?

Hi! I'm 14. I live in Co Down in Northern Ireland. I wouldn't call myself a wildlife hero, but I've always been fascinated by all things wild. When I was a crawling baby I'd pick up caterpillars and as the years went by my passion grew so much I wanted to do all I could to protect what wildlife we have left.

You're a young guy and you have had major success gaining attention for issues that are important to you. Tell us about one of the campaigns you've been involved in that you feel made a real impact.

One of my big passions is the illegal killing of birds of prey or raptors. I've written widely on the subject. I felt that satellite tagging species that were under threat would help this situation. So, I raised £6k to set up a raptor satellite tagging project - it will launch soon. I'm very excited about that and the information the tags will gather for conservation.

You've made a few TV appearances and you've met and hung out with a lot of TV nature personalities. Do you see a future career in nature TV?

Oh I'm not sure! I take opportunities if they're presented to me, such as filming with Chris Packham,



Dara at a protest to save Hen Harriers

and I really enjoy doing all that I do. I get very excited and I love encouraging other kids through my YouTube videos.

If you had the power to do so, what wildlife or environmental crisis would you fix?

That's a hard one because I love all life! I think having a government who listens to conservationists, understands how important nature is and encouraging others to realise this too - that would make all the difference required to make positive change.

Are "kids" doing enough to fight for nature or is it an adult problem to fix do you think?

It's definitely not an adult problem to fix because there's always a generation below you. However, I feel that wildlife organisations should give a bigger voice to young people. To help them with their ideas and support and guide them to make a difference.

Lastly Dara, what advice would you offer to other young nature nuts that want to get more involved in campaigns and awareness raising?

I would say that if you feel passionate about a particular issue, don't be afraid to approach organisations in that field. If that doesn't work - write letters to government/people with the power to change. You could write an online blog like I do. Make YouTube videos and create art projects which reflect your interests. Have your parents promote issues on social media (I do this to great effect) and work hard, study your field, learn everything you can and have passion! Passion and excitement!

Interviewer and photos: Ricky Whelan.



Dara with wildlife television presenter Steve Backshall at the Animal Hero Awards 2018

You can see a short BBC video about Dara here:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05bvt8>

Dara's Blog can be found here:

<https://youngfermanaghnaturalist.com/>

and his YouTube videos here:

<https://youngfermanaghnaturalist.com/>

Where do Swallows go in the winter?

By Stephen Newton

Seasonal bird movements have fascinated us for as long as people have watched birds, including the great naturalist of the 18th century, Gilbert White.



Illustration: Mike Langman, RSPB-images

Swallows gather together in autumn, roosting together in large numbers

White was well known for his keen powers of observation and deduction – without the help of modern binoculars and identification books.

On the question of what happens to Swallows in winter, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, he reluctantly agreed with one of the prevailing views at the time, that some Swallows may hide in crevices in rocks or tree bark, or mud at the bottom of ponds!

With the help of bird ringing, 120 years later, it was shown that a Swallow from the English midlands had been found in Natal, South Africa. Why on earth do Swallows fly so far? The answer to most questions in wildlife ecology is likely to be to do with food. Swallows

leave Ireland around the end of September because the volume of flying insects on which they feed falls below the level they need to survive. Staying would mean they lose weight and starve to death, so they need to find somewhere with the same supply of insects as Ireland in summer.

Launching on an extraordinary journey

So, towards the end of September they head south. Swallows fly during the day, feeding as they fly if the opportunity occurs, and find somewhere safe to roost (=sleep) at sunset. They do this communally (together in large numbers) often in reed beds or similar.

They fly at about 35 km per hour, so cover about 320 km a day, and the trip to South Africa, where insect supply is good in the southern hemisphere summer, takes about six weeks. Swallows from further east

in Europe winter in different parts of Africa, and as Europe gradually warms some birdwatchers have recently found a winter Swallow roost in an urban location in Aveiro, Portugal.

Illustration: Robin Carter, RSPB-images



Young birds (right) are no longer dependent on their parents, and must also migrate

They must all cross 100kms of ocean...



Illustration: Mike Langman, RSPB-images



Swallows will stay in Africa until March, when they start the return journey to Ireland

Illustration: Mike Langman, RSPB-images

Most Irish Swallows fly on over the Congo rainforests to arrive in southern Africa in November, early summer! They then feed over farmland and wetlands until about March, when they head back to Ireland, aiming to arrive sometime in April.



If you ever go to Cape Town and see a Swallow, it might be from Ireland!



Danie van der Merwe, Wiki Commons

...to reach their wintering area - southern Africa!



Illustration: M.O'Clery

...but they must then cross the Sahara...

There are other hazards on top of birds of prey in the wintering areas. Recently, some incredible photography has shown that a large freshwater fish, the African Tigerfish, can track Swallows feeding over water and launch itself in to the air and catch one!

So while you are thinking about Christmas as you read this, take a moment to think about what 'our' Swallows are getting up to....

But what about that six week journey of Irish Swallows? First, they cross the Celtic Sea to northwest France, maybe via south Wales or Cornwall in England, then they follow the west France coast, crossing the Pyrenees into Spain and then head down the east, Mediterranean, side of that country to the Gibraltar area.

Into Africa!

On most days the African shoreline (Morocco) can be seen and reached fairly easily, but the biggest barrier lies ahead: the Sahara Desert. Some Swallows, by chance or because of previous experience, take the long way round, following the west African coast, but most probably take a direct route of about 1600 km, perhaps pausing at an oasis to feed on flies attracted to herds of camels and goats, before heading on.

Conditions improve for them when they reach the very broad Niger River in an area called the Sahel. Here there should be plenty of insects and reed beds for roosting. Another roost they use is a big grassy clearing in forest on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. Scientists working there have counted **1.5 million Swallows** roosting at night; this number of birds attracts the attention of watchful birds of prey such as the African Hobby. These look a little like a miniature Peregrine Falcon and in one winter seven Hobbies were seen attacking the Swallows. On 40% of stoops and chases they caught a Swallow! This adds up to 2,500 Swallows over the winter period, which is less than 0.2% of the overall number.

...eventually reaching mainland Europe...



Illustration: Robin Carter, RSPB-images



Kingfisher:
Wikimedia.org
Marek Szczepanek

Go Wild Nature Camps 2018

By John Lusby

This summer we ran special camps in County Galway, called the **Go Wild Nature Camps**, to learn all about wildlife. Have a look at some of the activities we did and some of the things we learned about the wildlife and our environment!

The best thing about the Go Wild Nature Camps is that the kids become nature detectives, they learn about animals which live all around us, and learn how to find them. No matter where you live, you are surrounded by really interesting wildlife: it's down to you to open your eyes and see what's out there!



Some moths and other insects briefly land on the kids as they fly away



J.Lusby

Moth Mad!

The kids learned all about moths. Moths usually only come out at night (like night-flying butterflies!), and they are attracted to light, so we set up a special moth trap with a light overnight and when we checked it the next morning there were loads of amazing moths inside, some with beautiful colours, and other cool insects.



Moth Facts: Moths smell through their antennae! During their short lifetimes moths undergo a complete change, or metamorphosis. They begin life as an egg, hatch into a caterpillar, pupate, often within a silken cocoon, and emerge as adults.

Mother Shipton moth. J.Graham - Wiki Commons



Check out the size of the Golden Eagle's wingspan

Ruth Hanniffy

Hannah, the Golden Eagle

This is a Golden Eagle! Her name is Hannah. She is owned by Rosie and Denis from Animal Magic, who take care of injured and sick birds of prey – like a hospital for raptors. Rosie and Denis came to the nature camps and brought along some of their birds of prey. Check out Hannah's wingspan! The Golden Eagle is the second largest bird of prey in Ireland (after the White-tailed Eagle) and definitely one of the most powerful! They are incredible hunters, with amazing eyesight and sharp talons for catching their food.

Golden Eagle Fact: Over a hundred years ago Golden Eagles were driven to extinction in Ireland – which means there were none left. A project was set up to bring them back to Ireland, and now there are a small number of Golden Eagles in County Donegal, but there should be more: they are one of our most impressive and important birds.



Getting up close and personal with the fastest animal on the planet!

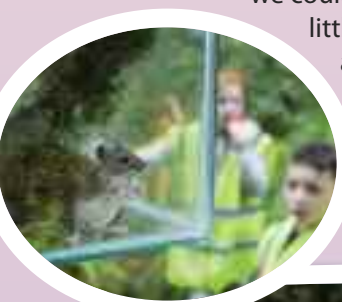
Ruth Hanniffy

The fastest animal on the planet!

This is the Peregrine Falcon. They live all around Ireland, nesting on steep cliffs along the coast, in quarries and on large ruined buildings. The Peregrine Falcon is the fastest animal on the planet! They can reach speeds of over 350km per hour when diving to catch their prey... that's faster than a race car!

Small mammals

Small mammals live all around us... even if you don't see them. We set special traps to see which small mammals we could find; the traps don't harm these little beasts and we release them afterwards. We found two types of small mammal, the Wood Mouse,



Ruth Hanniffy, Vincent Wildlife Trust, talks about the features of one of the small mammals before they are released safely back into the woods



Ruth Hanniffy

and the Bank Vole. Both of need good cover and live in places like woodland or in hedgerows which are really important for lots of wildlife.

Bank Vole Fact: Did you know that the Bank Vole came to Ireland by accident! A long time ago, in the 1920's, Bank Voles hitched a ride from Germany to Ireland on a ship. They hopped out in west Limerick when the ship arrived and they have been spreading across the country ever since!

Nature Detectives

We also went exploring to try and find different plants, flowers, trees, berries and mushrooms... like a nature treasure hunt! You can do this wherever you live to see what trees and plants are in your area.



Nature detectives on a bug hunt in the forest

J.Lusby

Oak Fact: Oak trees are native to Ireland and they are known as the 'King of the Forest'. Oaks have a possible life-span of up to 1,000 years and can grow 40 meters high! Native oak woods are important habitats for hundreds of invertebrate species and many birds and mammals. In Ireland, almost 20 species of bird and over 200 species of insect inhabit the oak.

Heather Lally, GMIT, leads the hunt over a karst limestone area and points out the special plants that live there



J.Lusby

Check out a video of the nature camps on YouTube
<https://bit.ly/2AkSMjC>



The Go Wild Nature Camps were funded by Galway County Council and the Heritage Council and were coordinated by BirdWatch Ireland, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, Galway and Mayo Institute of Technology in association with Animal Magic, Moycullen Historical Society and Woodlawn Heritage Group.

What is it?

Why do it?

Where do you do it?

The Garden Bird Survey

By Darren Ellis

Can I do it?

How does it work?

What species?

Every year BirdWatch Ireland organises a national Garden Bird Survey during the winter months. It is aimed at finding out about the birds that live in gardens and schoolyards all over the country.



Goldfinches

Peter Walsh

The reason for doing this is so we can monitor the populations of all the birds. We want to see how many birds we have living in and visiting our gardens. By doing the survey every year we can tell whether the total number of birds is higher or lower than it has been in the past. We can also see which bird species are most common and which species are the rarest. It is important to do this survey so we can make sure our birds are doing ok! If we notice that the number of a particular bird has fallen, we may be able to take measures to help that species. This is called **species conservation**.



Robin

Dick Coombes

The more records we get, the better evidence we will have on the well-being of our garden birds. Remember also that birds tell us a lot about the health of the environment. If an area has a lot of birds and a variety of different species it is often a sign that it is a good place for wildlife and for people.

However, we have to remember that birds might not be present in an area for a number of reasons and to be aware that it is still very important for us to know if your garden or schoolyard has few or no birds.

Different bird species prefer different types of trees and shrubs to live in and find food in. These places are called their **habitats**. This might explain why they are in one place and not another. Birds are also very mobile, so they may be in your garden one day and gone the next. However, if you provide a good variety of different bird foods during the winter months, you will most likely get a range of different birds visiting you regularly.

What we have learned from the Garden Bird Survey over the last number of years is that the three most commonly-encountered garden birds have remained unchanged: in 3rd place the **Blue Tit**, in 2nd place the **Blackbird** and (drumroll please) in 1st place (did you guess it?)... yes, it's the... **Robin!**



The average number of bird species recorded in the survey over the past few years was 30. The number of species counted in a survey is called **species richness** and the number of individual birds counted is called **abundance**. Using these terms we can describe what we see. There were two Robins, a Blackbird and three Blue Tits in my garden this morning! The species richness was three (Robin, Blackbird, Blue Tit), the

abundance was six (i.e., the total number of birds). This is especially useful if you are quickly trying to describe a lot of bird activity!

There are also a few other tips and tricks that might help to make your Garden Bird Survey a success, so read on and get all the important info on how to be an expert *Bird Detective*.



Sometimes the best way to get familiar with a large number of different bird species is to put them into their family groups.

One of the most important common garden bird families to get to grips with is the **finch family**,

which includes (amongst others) Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Bullfinch. These birds really love seeds and nuts, which makes your birdfeeder the ideal place for them to hang out during the winter when there are no wildflower seeds available across the land.

Corvids (crows)



The **corvid family**, also known as the crows (probably because of the loud *craaaaa* noise made by most of them) include Hooded Crow, Rook, Magpie and Jackdaw. This bird family is sometimes disliked by people because they are noisy and go through the bins for food. It is important to remember, though, that the crows play an important part in nature by cleaning up other unwanted and natural messes. They are amongst the most intelligent animals in the world too and have been shown to be able to solve complex puzzles in order to get food!



The **tit family** contains some of Ireland's smallest birds, including Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and Long-Tailed Tit. Throughout the summer this family is largely insectivorous, but when the winter arrives and the insects disappear, tits will be quite happy to eat the peanuts from your birdfeeder. The winter is the best time to see these birds too, as during the summer they spend a lot of their time in the canopy at the tops of trees searching about for bugs and caterpillars.

The **thrush family** is a large group of birds, most of which are well known for singing loud and melodic songs. The three most common members of the thrush family in Ireland are Song Thrush, Blackbird and Mistle Thrush. Two other members of the Thrush family sometimes join these birds in Ireland in winter, namely Fieldfare and Redwing, which migrate from countries like Norway, Sweden and Iceland to escape the even colder weather there.



Blackbird

Daragh Owens

Song Thrush



Hannah Keogh

Thrushes

Mistle Thrush



Peter Walsh

Small birds



Wren

Vittorio Casfiera

The smallest birds in Ireland, the Wren and the Goldcrest, are quite easy to miss whilst looking for birds in the Garden Bird Survey. This is not only because they are so small (Wren 9 - 10.5 cm, Goldcrest 8.5 - 9.5cm) but also because of their secretive nature. It is important to know where to look for them to have any chance of adding them to our lists. Wrens are hedge specialists, preferring to be close to the ground and hiding among the brambles. Goldcrests are quite the opposite, spending most of their time high up in trees, especially in conifers. Both species only eat insects, so we call them obligate insectivores. This makes it very difficult for them to find food in the winter when the cold weather means that there are fewer insects around.

Carl Morrow



Goldcrest

Another interesting fact about our garden birds, and one that can sometimes lead to confusion, is that some of them appear to have been named just after the males of their species. This is true for the Blackbird which we saw earlier. The male bird is black but the female is not black at all, she is brown! The Blackcap is another species named after the male,

Birds named after the boys

Shay Connolly

Terry Flanagan



Male

Blackbird

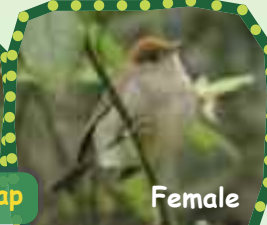


Female



Male

Blackcap



Female

Dick Coombes

John Fox

who does indeed have a black cap. The female has a cap too, but it is a rusty brown colour! Look at the picture of **Birds named after the boys** to make a comparison between the males and females of these species.

Moving on, we'll have a look at a few more common garden birds which you might be likely to see during your Garden Bird Survey. House Sparrows are so called because very often they could be found nesting in roof gaps of older houses. They will often arrive to your garden in large groups. They will like the nuts and seeds which you put out for them in bird feeders.

The Dunnock, sometimes called the Hedge Sparrow (but not really a sparrow at all), uses similar habitat to the Wren, in hedges and low garden bushes. Dunnocks will be happy to peck at fatballs if they are placed on your bird table. This will give you a great chance to see the tiger-like stripes that make up this bird's plumage. And not forgetting the Robin, our most common garden bird. They are sometimes called the gardener's best friend because they seem to have become fearless of humans and are often very close by when we are digging in the garden. No doubt, this is so that they can grab any worms that might get

Sparrows & Robin

Stephen Sheridan



Robin



House Sparrow



Dunnock

Eric Dempsey

turned up by the spade. During the winter, Robins prefer if nuts and seeds are placed on a flat surface (such as a bird table), but make sure that no cats can get to it!

Don't forget to look up to the skies! Depending on where you are in Ireland you may well glance one of our amazing birds of prey. We are lucky nowadays to be able to see Buzzards and Kestrels across most of the country. If you are in the east of Ireland then the chance of seeing a Red Kite is much higher. If you are in the West then you may be lucky enough to get a glimpse of a White-tailed Eagle. Be sure also to keep an eye out for the stunning Peregrine Falcon, the fastest animal in the world!

Peregrine

Birds of prey



Shay Connolly



Shay Connolly

Red Kite



Buzzard



Kestrel

Shay Connolly



White-tailed Eagle

Mike Brown



The Sparrowhawk is the bird of prey you are most likely to see in your garden

Peter Lamb

These are just a few of the fantastic birds that we hope you see will during the Garden Bird Survey. There are many more species which make up the wide diversity of garden birds in Ireland. It is a good idea to keep a bird identification guide handy, so when its not one of the species mentioned above you'll be all set to find out what species you have found.



Blue Tit

Terry Flanagan

I have one final piece of advice for you. During the winter, the food that our garden birds eat every day is essential to seeing them through the icy cold nights. The calories they gain from feeding throughout the day are burned off at night to give them heat and enough energy to begin looking for food again the next day. If you start feeding garden birds, remember that they might then rely on you to keep providing food all the way through winter, and if you stop unexpectedly the birds may not be able to find another food source in time to prevent them perishing during the cold nights.

...and finally

So, why not give our Garden Bird Survey a go this winter? It is great fun and a really good way to learn more about the birds around your home or school, and the information that you send us will do a lot to help us to protect your birds too.

Darren Ellis



Mistle Thrush: M.O'Clery

Schools' Garden Bird Survey



Shelduck Holmes says, "Join up your class or school to take part in Ireland's largest bird survey!"

Why don't you take part in the Schools' Garden Bird Survey 2017/2018?*

You can, simply by setting up a feeding station for birds at your school. Choose a place in the school grounds that is clearly visible from a window in the school building. Try and pick a safe space for birds where feeders can be hung from a branch of a tree and where birds have a safe area to approach and to retreat to. Then watch, and record what you see. Easy!

*The survey is designed for primary schools. You may also continue to take part in the original Garden Bird Survey, designed for private gardens (full details in *Wings* magazine).

School Garden details

Tell us some information about your school

The school grounds, are they... (tick 'yes' or 'no')

Urban (in a town or city centre)? ☐ yes ☐ no

Suburban (on the outskirts of a town or city)? ☐ yes ☐ no

Rural (in or beside open country or farm land)? ☐ yes ☐ no

What size are they?

Half the size of a tennis court, or smaller ☐ yes ☐ no

Approx. tennis court size ☐ yes ☐ no

Larger than a tennis court ☐ yes ☐ no

An acre or larger ☐ yes ☐ no

Food available for birds...

Are berry bushes present? ☐ yes ☐ no

Do you provide...

Peanuts in feeders? ☐ yes ☐ no

Seeds in feeders? ☐ yes ☐ no

Scraps? ☐ yes ☐ no

Fruit? ☐ yes ☐ no

Fat / bird cake? ☐ yes ☐ no



Free poster!

Fill out online, or return form to: BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, A63 RW83.

Food for Birds: Some do's and don'ts

- Peanuts, sunflowers and mixed seed in mesh and plastic feeders are ideal for many small birds;
- Over-ripe or slightly spoilt fruit is ideal for Blackcaps and thrushes, either left on the ground or speared onto a branch.
- Some crumbs and stale cake will be mopped up by sparrows and larger birds. Bird cake recipe is available from BirdWatch Ireland. Check out our web pages at www.birdwatchireland.ie and go to 'Birdwatching' pages.
- Don't put out too much at a time as you may encourage some less welcome furry visitors. Loose food shouldn't be left out overnight.
- Try and provide some clean water. An upturned bin lid will do, as will any shallow container.
- Make sure the birds have a regular food supply. Fill the feeders on Fridays and top up during the following week as they empty.
- Try and continue feeding and watching birds right through the winter season, especially when it is cold.

Resources BirdWatch Ireland can provide your class with our new Garden Bird Poster, showing the top 30 species in gardens and schools. There are lots of useful tips too. Check out our website for downloadable Bird Profiles, www.birdwatchireland.ie. Get your teacher to e-mail info@birdwatchireland.ie for a free copy of the Garden Bird Poster.

We can also provide your class with a super **free gift** if your school joins BirdWatch Ireland. School membership includes 4 issues of *Wings*, 2 issues of *Bird Detectives*, specially for 7 to 12 year-old children, and a Welcome Pack that includes a copy of the best-selling book, *Ireland's Garden Birds*.

Join online or telephone
BirdWatch Ireland
on 01-2819878.



Collared Dove: M.O'Clery

What did you see?

Students should jot down any counts during the week in a jotter or notebook. Some birds you will see every day, some less frequently, or maybe just once in a flock.

At the end of the school week, go through the list with your teacher and take the largest single count for each bird species and enter it on the recording sheet below. If you have no count for a species or no counts at all, leave the boxes or column blank!

Example On Monday you count 3 Blue Tits on a peanut feeder and notice 1 waiting in a nearby bush, total = 4 birds. On Wednesday, just 2 on the feeder = 2 birds.

On Friday, 1 was seen all day which was joined by 2 first thing in the morning = 3 birds. So, record 4 Blue Tits on the form, the highest count of the week. If you see a bird that is not on the list below, just add it to the end of the form.

Top Ten garden birds

How many of our 10 most common garden birds did you see?

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. Robin | 6. Great Tit |
| 2. Blackbird | 7. Coal Tit |
| 3. Blue Tit | 8. Goldfinch |
| 4. Chaffinch | 9. House Sparrow |
| 5. Magpie | 10. Wren |

Schools Garden Bird recording form

Participating school name

Address

Class

Teacher

E-mail address

Week beginning	3 Dec	10 Dec	17 Dec	24 Dec	31 Dec	7 Jan	14 Jan	21 Jan	28 Jan	4 Feb	11 Feb	18 Feb	25 Feb
Sparrowhawk				School Holidays!									
Feral Pigeon													
Woodpigeon													
Collared Dove													
Grey Wagtail													
Pied Wagtail													
Wren													
Dunnock													
Robin													
Blackbird													
Fieldfare													
Song Thrush													
Redwing													
Mistle Thrush													
Goldcrest													
Long-tailed Tit													
Coal Tit													
Blue Tit													
Great Tit													
Magpie													
Jackdaw													
Rook													
Hooded Crow													
Starling													
House Sparrow													
Chaffinch													
Greenfinch													
Goldfinch													
Siskin													
Bullfinch													
Redpoll													
Other species													
Other species													



Get busy with some
exciting projects

Winter Activities

By Barbara Sullivan



All photos: Barbara Sullivan

Barbara Sullivan shows us some winter activities

It's November and the winter is on our doorstep - shorts and T-shirts are a distant memory now!

Our summer migrant birds have left, and others have arrived from colder climates to spend the next months on our shores. Many of our familiar garden birds, however, stay with us throughout the winter and will be searching for high energy

foods to help them get through the cold, dark winter nights.

Wouldn't it be nice to support them in their search for food and make a nice decoration for our garden? That's exactly what the activities in this issue of *Bird Detectives* are all about.

So let's get started!

You will need:

- Pine cone (dried)
- Bird seed
- Selection of apple, rosehips, berries, grapes, monkey nuts (whatever is available)
- Gardening wire
- Bamboo skewer (if needed, to make holes for threading)
- Fat (solid) or nut butter

Project 1

Funky Bird Feeder decorations

You probably have most of these things in your home. Left-over monkey nuts from Halloween? Some apples that have sat there a little too long? Here's a great use for them.

Use your gardening wire to thread a selection of cut apple, monkey nuts and berries. You can make some nice patterns.

What a
treat for
the birds!!



Prepare the bird seed by putting it into a bowl.

Wrap the end of the wire around the pine cone to attach it.

Spread the nut butter on to the pine cone; or if you're using animal fat, melt the fat and dip the pine cone into it.

Roll the pine cone in bird seed to cover every side of it.

If you don't like the mess, you can skip the pine cone bit and just make longer threaded feeders!

Threading the
bird food

When you're done, you can hang your feeder outside. It may take the birds a few days to work out how to open the monkey nuts, but be patient!



Natural Ivy Wreaths

This activity can be done in the woods, or you can bring the materials indoors if you prefer.

You will need:

- Secateurs (plus an adult to use them for you!)
- Ivy
- Natural materials (e.g. other evergreen species)
- optional: seasonal decorations

How to: You can find ivy climbing on trees in woodland, in hedgerows and in gardens. New growth of long, thin, bendy strands are best for this activity. Please don't remove the ivy with berries as they provide valuable

Doesn't that look nice and festive?

Project 2

food for our wildlife (and the branches will be too tough for this activity anyway). Ask an adult to cut a few long strands.

Make the base for the wreath by making a hoop of ivy the size you would like your wreath to be and then wrapping the length around itself continuously. When your strand of ivy is used up, just add another one by wrapping it around the hoop. Continue until wreath has a thickness you're happy with. You can now add other natural materials to decorate, or use seasonal decorations to finish it off. Attach a ribbon to hang it up. Looks great, and couldn't be easier!

Ivy, like Holly, is an evergreen plant, so it's great for winter colour!

Engaging Your Senses in Nature

Take a few minutes in nature and observe yourself how the seasons change. Find a spot outdoors that appeals to you, sit down for a few minutes. Close your eyes, take a deep breath. Can you smell the air? What can you hear? Is there bird song? Rustling of leaves in the wind? Open your eyes, and look around you, up and down. What do you see?

Project 3

If you take time to just observe and be nature for a few minutes a day or even a week, you will become more in tune with your surroundings, you will feel the changes throughout the year with all your senses. It will also help you relax, and focus, and benefit your health in general. It's free and takes zero effort! Enjoy!

Birdsong can be very relaxing

Your birds will be well fed, even in the snow

Barbara Sullivan delivers forest school and nature connection programmes for children, families and adults through her company "Reconnect with Nature". Barbara is a member of the Heritage in Schools specialist panel and also available for school visits. Contact Barbara on reconnectwithnatureirl@gmail.com or visit www.reconnectwithnatureirl.com for more details.

Shelduck Holmes Competition Page

BIRD WORD SEARCH

Find the bird words hidden below!

Robin
Chaffinch
Greenfinch
Siskin
BlueTit

Dunnock
Blackbird
Song Thrush
Redwing

Wren
Magpie
Rook
Goldcrest
Jackdaw



Complete the Word Search and be in with a chance to win!

1st Prize The Great Big Book of Irish Wildlife: Through the Seasons by Juanita Browne. Value €20.00.

A beautiful picture book tracking nature through the seasons in Ireland. It explores nature in your back garden as well as weird and wonderful natural phenomena, such as the metamorphosis from tadpole to frog, the Red Deer rut in autumn, or a Starling flock in winter.



To enter

- Fill out your age, name and address on a blank sheet of paper.
- Find all the Birdwords in the Word Search (you can photocopy this page if you prefer).
- Post it to: Bird Detectives Competitions, BirdWatch Ireland, Unit 20, Block D, Bullford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Greystones, Co. Wicklow A63 RW83.

Closing date is 31st March 2018.

Here are the answers to the "True and False" competition in the Summer 2018 issue of **Bird Detectives**:

- Q1. Blackcaps winter in Irish gardens - true
Q2. Choughs nest in trees - false
Q3. Robins sing in winter - true
Q4. Buzzards are vegetarian - false
Q5. Goldcrests weight just 6 grams, less than a 20 cent piece - true

- Q6. Cuckoos build a nest - false
Q7. Willow Warblers are summer visitors to Ireland - true
Q8. Redwings are members of the Starling family - false
Q9. Dippers can nest in nest boxes - true
Q10. Swifts nest in bushes - false

The winner of the Spring 2018 Bird Word Search competition was Alyssa Ferguson, age 6, from Cappoquin, Co. Waterford.

Why not check out the Kids' Zone on www.birdwatchireland.ie for lots more fun activities?