

MAKE SPACE FOR **WILDLIFE**

'Wildlife habitat creation in small open spaces and gardens' – a series of leaflets to help manage, enhance and create areas for wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan

Leaflet
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Birds

This leaflet acts as a basic guide to help you create, enhance and manage wildlife habitats for birds. Birds are a strong indication of a successful wildlife area, as they need a range of habitats and lots of food available. The information presented focuses upon a few simple ideas that will attract a wide range of birds.



Wren - Kevin Lewis



Greenfinch - Kevin Lewis

In the last 40 years farming has become more intensive, woodland has declined and built up areas have expanded. This all means that small open spaces and gardens have an increasingly important role in supporting bird life.

In Wales, many birds are under threat and have become scarcer over recent years. Even familiar birds like starlings, bullfinch, swift and song thrush are disappearing. It's really important that wildlife areas provide the things that birds need: suitable habitat, shelter, food and water.



Bullfinch - Kevin Lewis

Habitat

Grassland is common in built-up areas and can be really important for birds if managed correctly. Leaving some areas uncut increases the seeds and insects available. Other birds such as wagtails and thrushes prefer short grass. The best idea is to leave a margin of long grass or meadow around a mown area.

Trees are important to most of the birds in your wildlife area providing shelter, nesting sites, places to feed and singing posts. Native trees are best for wildlife but conifers can provide a warm place to roost. Mature woodland with some dead wood will attract more insects, which attracts birds like nuthatches and treecreepers. Trees such as rowan produce fruit and attract blackbirds; nut-bearing trees such as beech will attract finches and tits.

Bushes and hedgerows provide good ground cover, allowing birds to move around an area without feeling exposed and are excellent for nesting. Climbing plants such as ivy and honeysuckle can be planted against walls and provide dense cover for birds to roost and nest.

Starling - Kevin Lewis



Take part in the BTO's garden birdwatch and see the changes in the garden birdlife around you during the year



Great Tit - Richard Smith



Nuthatch - Kevin Lewis



Treecreeper - John Larkin



Wheatear - Paul Roberts

KEEP A RECORD
Try to keep a diary of the birds you see in the area, especially those that breed. Records like this are really important for getting an idea of which birds are about and how successful they are.

Home sweet home

Placing bird boxes around your wildlife area will increase the chances of birds breeding there and also make it easier for you to watch and study them.

In the winter birds need somewhere dry and warm to roost so leave your bird box up.

Different birds like different size nest boxes with different size entrance holes so make sure you choose the right one for the birds you want to attract. They should be located at least 1.8m from

the ground (out of the reach of cats) and preferably be east or north facing and sheltered from the wind and rain. House martins, swallows and swifts can also be encouraged by special nest structures.



Wiggly Wigglers

NEST BOX HOLES

Bird	Hole size
Blue tit; coal tit	25mm
Great tit; house sparrow; nuthatch	32mm
Starling	45mm
Robin; wren; wagtails; blackbirds; spotted flycatcher	Open fronted

MAKE A FAT BALL

You can make your own fat ball by melting down lard or suet and mixing in seeds, nuts and fruit (about 1/3 fat to 2/3 mix). This can be put in a half coconut shell or a wide plastic cup with a string to hang from.



Dunnock - Kevin Lewis

Big Garden Birdwatch Top 15 Food Preferences

	Seed	Sunflower seed	Peanuts	Live foods	Fat
House sparrow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black bird				✓	✓
Blue tit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chaffinch	✓	✓		✓	✓
Starling				✓	✓
Greenfinch	✓	✓	✓		
Robin				✓	✓
Great tit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Magpie				✓	✓
Collared dove	✓				
Jackdaw			✓	✓	✓
Dunnock				✓	✓
Coal tit	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Long-tailed tit	✓				
Carrion crow			✓	✓	✓

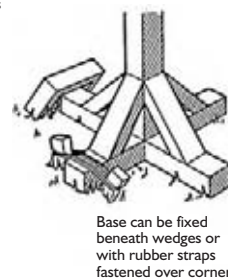
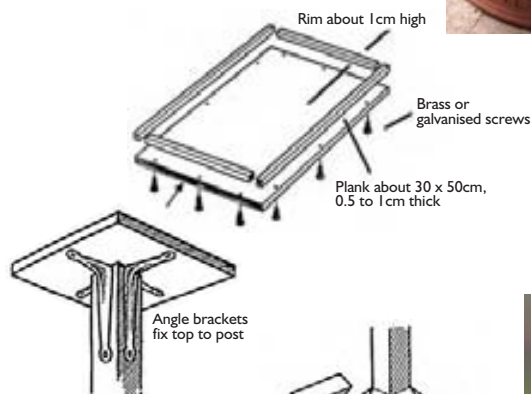


Dunnock - Richard Smith

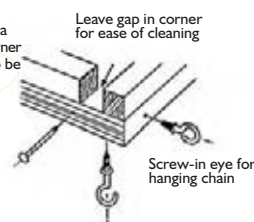
As well as providing food at a feeding station you could grow lots of plants that produce seed such as sunflower and teasel or even millet and sorghum.

BUILD A BIRDTABLE

- Use wood that won't split in wet weather such as exterior plywood.
- Make the top about 30x50cm.
- A rim around the edge will stop food being knocked off – make sure there are a few gaps for drainage.
- A roof will help deter predators.
- Put some hooks along the edge to hang fat balls from.



A nail, or better, a hook beneath corner allows feeders to be hung from table.



Diagrams provided by RSPB

Feed the birds

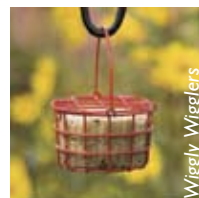
Providing food for birds in a wildlife area is a great way to encourage them to visit. It has been shown that for blue tits and great tits, bird tables provide 1/6th of the food for their chicks

There are many different foods that can be put at a feeding station. Different birds like different foods, some of which you might not expect: blackbirds and dunnocks like cheese and grapes; starlings like pastry made with real fats. Lots of birds also like live food such as mealworms.

The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch found the 15 most common visitors to parks, gardens and wildlife areas in the Vale of Glamorgan. Take a look at the table showing which foods to put out for them; all of which can be provided in feeders or on a bird table.



Blue Tit - Richard Trimsley



Wiggly Wigglers

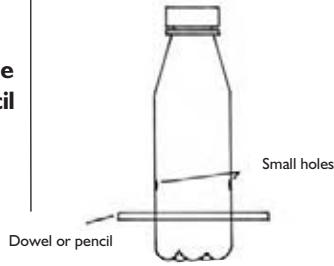


Wiggly Wigglers



MAKE A SEED FEEDER

- Clean out a plastic bottle and push a dowel or pencil through the bottom for a perch.
- Cut a couple of little holes for the birds to feed through.
- Fix securely to a branch or bracket by a piece of string.



Splish splash

It's really important to provide water for birds throughout the year. They need it to keep themselves clean and make sure their feathers insulate them well. They also need water for drinking – especially those that eat lots of dry seeds.



Bargain Bird Food

You can also put out kitchen scraps such as bacon rind, cheese, fruit and cake crumbs. Make sure that none of the food contains salt.



Richard Smith



SPICK AND SPAN

When birds gather in large numbers there is an increased chance of disease. It's really important to keep any feeding area clean.

- Don't put out more food than the birds will eat in 2 days.
- Minimise the food on the ground to discourage rats.
- Clean and wash the bird table and feeders regularly.
- Always wash your hands afterwards.



Kevin Lewis

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY
It's always best to try to minimise the use of chemical pesticides in a wildlife area to prevent poisons entering the food chain. Use biological control and slug traps and make sure you encourage beneficial insects such as ladybirds. Birds are great at pest control anyway: blue tits eat aphids and caterpillars and thrushes love slugs and snails.

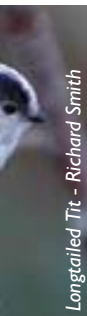


House Sparrow - David Friel



Blackbird - David Friel

Richard Smith



Longtailed Tit - Richard Smith



Starlings - Brian Valentine



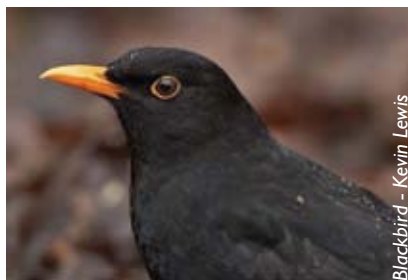
GENERAL TIPS

- Make sure there's plenty of cover in the area – birds like to feel protected from predators.
- Provide a variety of vegetation to attract a wide variety of species.
- Put up nest boxes to encourage birds to breed and make it easier to see them.
- Build a feeding station with lots of different food types and make sure it's kept clean.
- Provide a bird bath or a pond with a shallow end to let the birds wash and drink.
- Minimise the use of chemicals to help protect wildlife.
- Make sure a cat has a bell or sonic alarm on its collar, is well fed and only let out during the day.



House Sparrows - David Friel

Birds prefer a bath where they can see all around them just in case any predators are nearby. You could use a dish on the lawn or buy a raised birdbath or one to hang from a tree. The most important things are to keep it topped up with fresh water; clean it frequently to stop any illnesses spreading and to break any ice in the winter.



Blackbird - Kevin Lewis

Don't forget that a pond with a shallow area also makes a great birdbath as well as attracting lots of other wildlife.



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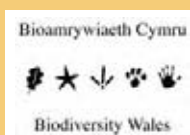
Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
 Government's adviser on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and outdoor enjoyment in Wales. The national wildlife conservation authority.
 Tel: 02920 772400



The Welsh Assembly Government
 A devolved government for Wales. Responsible for health, education, economic development, culture, transport and the environment.
 Tel: 0845 010 5500



Biodiversity and Sustainability in the Vale



Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP)
 WBP brings together organisations involved in biodiversity conservation in Wales and provides advice.
 Tel: 01248 385743



British Trust for Ornithology
 Promoting and encouraging the wider understanding, appreciation and conservation of birds (registered charity no. 216652).
www.bto.org
 Tel. 01842 750050



RSPB
 Registered charity no. 207076.
www.rspb.org.uk
 Tel. 02920 353000