

Garden Birds

Why do Birds Matter?

Birds are really useful creatures. They help the environment in the following ways:

- They help plant life by scattering seeds.
- They help control insect populations by eating insects.
- Some birds, like magpies and crows, eat dead animals. This gets rid of the rotting animals which could cause diseases.



Numbers of Common Garden Birds

There has been a big drop in starlings in the last few years. Some people think this is because farming has made it more difficult for them to find crane fly larvae - their favourite food.

Since the 1970s, the number of house sparrows has also dropped. This could be because of cats or air pollution as more cars are being used. However, in the last 10 years the number of house sparrows has improved.



RSPB

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - a charity that protects British birds.



Big Garden Birdwatch

- A yearly event where people tell the RSPB which birds they see. The information is gathered to see if there are any changes in bird populations.

At the beginning of 2019, there were more sightings of goldfinches and redwings. A warmer winter meant more of these tiny birds survived.

Migration

Some birds leave the UK during the winter months because it is too cold for them. They go somewhere where it is warmer. When it starts to get warmer in the UK, they come back. This is called migration.

- Swifts and swallows migrate to Africa.
- They can fly 200 miles every day.
- Many die from starvation, exhaustion and storms.

British Birds



Robins:

- have a bright red breast;
- are very aggressive and will fight birds who come to their territory;
- sing all year round;
- can be seen in British gardens all year round.

Magpies:

- have a loud, chattering call;
- can be easily seen with their black and white feathers;
- hunt for leftover food and dead animals;
- are important insect controllers.



Blue Tits:

- have bright yellow and blue feathers;
- lay eggs between the end of April and May;
- male and female blue tits look the same;
- in winter, family flocks join up with other blue tits to find food together.

Reading Questions

1. How do birds help the environment? Tick **two**.

- ☐ They scatter seeds.
- ☐ They sing beautifully.
- ☐ They eat insects.
- ☐ They build nests.

2. What is a starling's favourite food?

3. Which two birds were there more sightings of in early 2019? Tick **one**.

- ☐ magpies and redwings
- ☐ goldfinches and redwings
- ☐ crows and goldfinches
- ☐ swifts and swallows

4. When do swifts and swallows **return** to the UK? Tick **one**.

- ☐ When the weather gets cold.
- ☐ When the weather gets warmer.
- ☐ When they are tired.
- ☐ When it is too stormy.

5. Tick the boxes to say whether the sentences are true or false.

Sentence	True	False
Robins only sing in the winter.		
Magpies have black and white feathers.		
Blue tits lay eggs at the end of May.		
Robins are peaceful birds.		

6. What is migration?

7. Why do you think the RSPB was created? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
