



Feeding the birds

Jason Waine

Many people enjoy feeding the birds both to help them through the harsher weather and also for the pleasure of watching them (and this can sometimes include unusual species that we otherwise wouldn't see in a garden environment). A



Goldfinches are a common sight at garden feeders

variety of foods can be used including sunflower seed (or the less messy but more expensive sunflower hearts), wild bird seed, fat in various forms, peanuts (including in the shell - as a boy I used to enjoy stringing them together with needle and thread and then hanging them from the clothes line; this was not popular with my mum on washing days in spring), dried or live mealworms, bacon rind cut into small lengths and cheese rind (also chopped up).



Chaffinch & brambling are both susceptible to *Trichomonosis*

However, a note of caution. In the last few years it has become increasingly apparent that bird feeders and bird baths have been involved in the spread of a deadly avian disease called *Trichomonosis*. This is caused by a microscopic parasite and results in an inflammatory swelling in the bird's gullet, eventually causing a blockage and starvation. This disease does not affect humans but has caused serious declines in

numbers of various finch species, which now includes chaffinch, brambling, hawfinch, greenfinch and bullfinch. Pigeons and doves are also affected and raptors can contract the disease by eating infected birds. The main means of spread are bird tables, feeders and bird baths. To prevent this I would suggest soaking bird baths in boiling water (do take care) once a week or using a bird-friendly disinfectant such as Ark-klense (obtainable from the internet). Bird tables and feeders should also be washed once weekly, again using Ark-klense. This problem is now so serious that the RSPB have stopped selling bird table feeders so it's worth taking a little care. A few minutes a week cleaning your feeders can give you many hours of enjoyment watching the birds in the knowledge that you are not killing with kindness. Don't be put off - continue enjoying your garden birds at the feeders but please feed responsibly.

Garden birdwatching

Ellen Cooper

Did you take part in the RSPB Garden Birdwatch in January? This annual event is a great way to be a citizen scientist and contribute to the RSPB's knowledge on how garden birds are faring across the UK.

If you regularly watch the birds in your garden then you might like to join the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) weekly Garden BirdWatch. Once a week you can submit what wildlife you have seen in your garden, not just birds, and once a year you receive a summary from the BTO about what you saw throughout the previous year. The data you submit contributes to the BTO's scientific research. One member of the Redditch group who took part this year had a couple of highlights: two marsh tits and twelve stock doves!

For more information on the BTO Garden BirdWatch and how to join for free please see: www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw

Indoor Meetings - spring 2025

Winyates Green Community Centre,
Furze Lane, Winyates Green, Redditch, B98 0SE
Talks start at 7:30pm
£3 entry, members non-members welcome

March 12th

Heart of England Forest

Ros Anscombe

Learn more about the Heart of England Forest; history, wildlife and aspirations.

April 9th

Borneo - Land Below the Wind

John Medlock

Explore the wildlife paradise of Borneo.

Quick winter wildlife quiz

1) What UK winter visitor is this (below)?



2) Other than bats, which UK mammals typically hibernate over winter?

3) What name is given to a large gathering of starlings, typically seen in winter?

4) Which British mammals turn white in winter?

5) What is a hibernaculum?

(Answers in the next newsletter)

Winter walk at Arrow Valley Lake

Ellen Cooper



Male Goosander. This handsome waterbird is often seen on Arrow Valley Lake in winter

Arrow Valley lake in Redditch is well worth a walk around at any time of year. There is plenty of wildlife to spot, even in winter.

On a January walk this year I spotted the following species on and around the lake: goosanders, great crested grebes, little egrets, grey herons, cormorants, mute swans, Canada geese, greylag geese, mallards, black-headed gulls, magpies, wood pigeons, robins, great tits, blue tits, long-tailed tits and wrens.

More information about walking trails at Arrow Valley Park and café can be found at www.arrowvalley.co.uk

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Redditch woodlands

Redditch has some wonderful woodlands worth exploring this spring. Carpets of bluebells, wood anemones and even a few orchids can be found around the Borough's woodlands.

Get out early morning and enjoy the wonders of woodland bird song early in the spring. And, as the year progresses, there's a whole host of insects from bumblebees to hoverflies to butterflies to discover.

You don't need a dog to get out and enjoy the countryside around us. Step out and make the most of Redditch's wild spaces to recharge your batteries after a long, dull, wet winter.

Ideas for walks and talks

Hopefully you've been able to come along to one or more of our fascinating evening talks. If you have any ideas for speakers or wild themes you would like to hear about, let us know and we'll see if we can arrange it for our next programme.

Committee

We're looking for more committee members to keep your local group going. If you can spare a little bit of time and want to get more involved in promoting wildlife in Redditch, let us know.

[garyla@outlook.com](mailto:garyl@outlook.com)