

Top tips for birdwatching

Use these ideas to help you get the most from your class' birdwatch

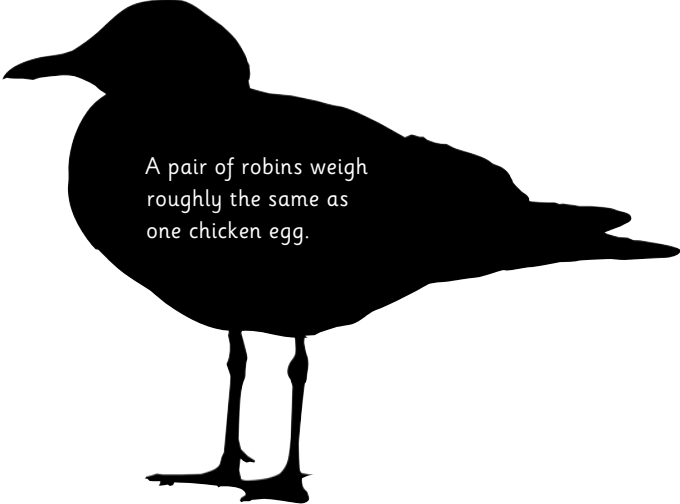


- Watching in the morning might get better results than later in the day. Children will be more alert, and birds can be more obviously seen at feeding stations.
- Do the birdwatch twice, perhaps in a morning and afternoon, then compare the results and make graphs from them.
- Invite a local birdwatcher (a grandparent or member of an RSPB local group) who can come and talk to the children to fire their enthusiasm for birds. Visit www.rspb.org.uk for links to RSPB local groups who may be able to help in your area.
- Think about having a special 'Bird breakfast day' or 'Bird breaktime' where the children can eat fresh and dried fruits, seeds and perhaps cheese (which robins are very partial to!).
- Put out different sorts of food in different feeders and see which birds prefer what. How are their beaks, body shapes, feet and ways of feeding suited to the different foods they like to eat?
- Make bird feeders from recycled bottles. For instructions visit www.rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch
- Make a 'hide' using large sheets of paper stuck to the inside of your classroom windows, with eye slits to peep through. Decorate and make it into a comfortable and colourful birdwatching area.
- An official school birdwatching record sheet is available on our website at www.scholastic.co.uk/childedplus Simply fill it in and send in your results to: RSPB, BSBW, Freepost NAT 15594, Bedford MK42 OBR by 22 February.




Did you know...?


Impress your friends and family with these amazing bird facts




A pair of robins weigh roughly the same as one chicken egg.




A great tit's beak slightly changes shape over the year as food changes from insects to nuts and seeds.



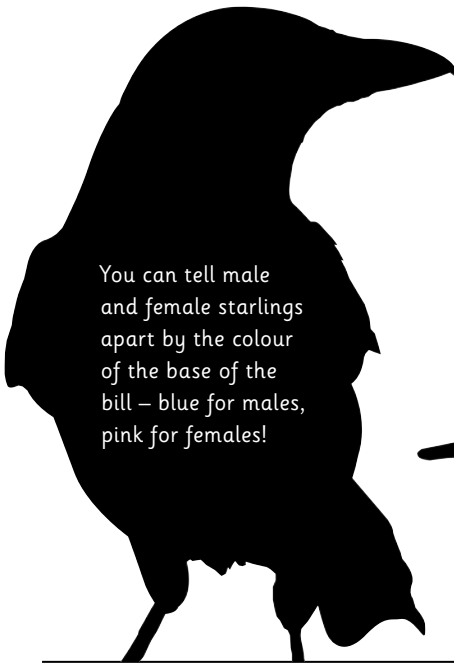
The oldest known blue tit survived an amazing 21 years.



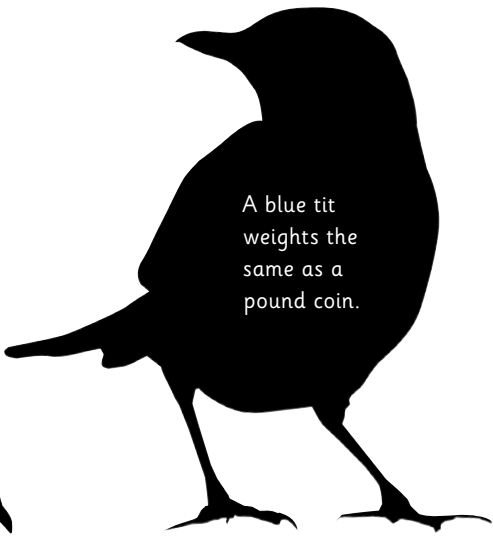
The oldest wild blackbird survived over 20 years.




Robins often choose unusual nest sites – kettles, coat pockets and even the skeleton of a dead cat!



You can tell male and female starlings apart by the colour of the base of the bill – blue for males, pink for females!



A blue tit weights the same as a pound coin.



Blue tit flocks travel among gardens in winter. You may see 200 birds visiting a single garden in one day!



Birdwatching record sheet 1

These are the 20 most common British birds found in schools.
How many can you spot?

Name of bird: Starling

Profile: Starlings are noisy characters usually seen foraging in small flocks. They look black, but close up you can see they have green and purple glossy feathers, covered in white and buff spots. Their flight is fast and they walk and run confidently.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Blackbird

Profile: The male blackbird is black with a bright yellow bill. The female is brown with spots and streaks on its breast. Blackbirds have a long tail and often hop along the ground with their tail up. They feed on berries, scraps and apples, and search for worms.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Black-headed gull

Profile: For most of the year this bird actually has a white head. It only gets its black head in summer. It is not a 'seagull' and is found almost anywhere inland. Black-headed gulls are sociable, quarrelsome, noisy birds, usually seen in small groups or flocks.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Woodpigeon

Profile: Woodpigeons are the UK's commonest pigeon. They have a small, round, grey head, greyish back, tail and wings, a pink breast and white neck patch. Woodpigeons feed on grain, seeds and scraps, and on berries and buds.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: House sparrow

Profile: House sparrows are often seen in small flocks. Males have a grey crown, black bib, reddish-brown back streaked with black, and a grey breast and belly. Females have brown, streaky backs and are beige below. They feed on seeds, grains and scraps.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Blue tit

Profile: Its colourful mix of blue, yellow, white and green make the blue tit one of the most attractive garden birds. Blue tits will feed on seeds and scraps from bird tables and feeders. In winter, the flocks are joined by other tits as they search for food.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Carrion crow

Profile: The carrion crow is one of the cleverest, most adaptable birds. It is often quite fearless, although it can be wary of humans. However, once they realise that a place is safe they will return to eat. They are solitary birds, usually found alone or in pairs.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Magpie

Profile: From a distance, the magpie appears black and white, although close up a blue and green colour can be seen. It is often spotted in pairs or small groups. It is a noisy bird with a harsh, chattering call. Magpies are rogues and scavengers.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Chaffinch

Profile: The chaffinch's patterned plumage helps it to blend in when feeding on the ground. It becomes most obvious when it flies, revealing a flash of white on the wings and white outer tail feathers. It does not feed openly – it prefers to hop about under a hedge.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Robin

Profile: With its bright red breast, the robin is familiar throughout the year – and especially at Christmas! Robins sing nearly all year round. Despite their cute appearance, they are aggressively territorial and are quick to drive away intruders.

Amount seen
in our school:



Birdwatching record sheet 2

These are the 20 most common British birds found in schools.
How many can you spot?

Name of bird: Great tit

Profile: This is the largest UK tit. It has a black and white head, bright yellow breast with a bold, black stripe running down it, and a green back. The black breast stripe is wider on the male. Great tits feed on seeds and scraps on bird tables and in nut feeders.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Collared dove

Profile: Collared doves originally came from southern Asia. The species was first recorded in Britain in 1953 and has since become a common garden bird. Collared doves feed on seeds and scraps, both on the ground and on bird tables.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Greenfinch

Profile: The male is a green bird with yellow patches on the wings, a forked tail and a stout beak. The female is browner and looks like a female house sparrow – until she shows the yellow in her tail and wings. Greenfinches often squabble with each other.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Pied wagtail

Profile: This is a small, long-tailed and rather sprightly black and white bird. When not standing and wagging its tail up and down, it can be seen dashing about over lawns or car parks in search of food. It often gathers in cities at dusk to form large roosts.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Dunnock

Profile: The dunnock is a small, easily-overlooked bird. It creeps around under bushes in a mouse-like way, often flicking its wings as it goes. When two rival males come together, they become animated with lots of wing-flicking and loud calling.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Coal tit

Profile: This is an active and agile bird. Not as colourful as some of its relatives, the coal tit has a distinctive grey back, black cap, and white patch at the back of its neck. A regular visitor to most peanut feeders, they will take and store food for eating later.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Jackdaw

Profile: This is a small black crow with a grey neck and pale eyes. It is sociable and usually seen in pairs or larger groups. It is quite an acrobatic flier and flocks will often chase and tumble together in flight. On the ground the jackdaw walks and hops.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Song thrush

Profile: This is a popular garden songbird whose numbers are declining. It has a brown head, back and tail, and pale under-parts with brown spots. It likes to eat snails, which it breaks into by smashing them against a stone with a flick of the head.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Wren

Profile: Wrens are dumpy, with a fine bill, quite long legs and toes, very short round wings and a short, narrow tail, which is sometimes cocked up vertically. For such a small bird it has a very loud voice. It is the commonest UK breeding bird.

Amount seen
in our school:

Name of bird: Long-tailed tit

Profile: The long-tailed tit is easily recognisable with its tail that is bigger than its body. Long-tailed tits are noisy birds, most usually noticed in small, excitable flocks of about 20. They rove the woods and hedgerows but are also seen on heaths.

Amount seen
in our school:

