

# Abundant Goldfinch – 2023 Garden Bird Watch

Our 26<sup>th</sup> Garden Birdwatch took place over the weekend of the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The weather over the weekend was not the best for a birdwatch. Although it was mild both days (8°C), Saturday began with drizzle and mist in the afternoon. Sunday was fine with the wind picking up into the afternoon. Participation was disappointingly low this year for various reasons, with only 17 gardens participating, the lowest number we've ever had. 28 species were seen. The low participation will certainly have had an impact on the accuracy of the results shown, nevertheless our results do show similarities to the national picture shown by the RSPB results.

Goldfinch took the number one spot in 2023, up from 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2022. The results show a slight increase of 4% this year, and birds were present in 53% of the gardens surveyed, another increase from 2022. We still maintain strong Goldfinch numbers in the gardens surveyed compared to both the national and local Lancashire surveys. The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch placed Goldfinch at 7<sup>th</sup> this year. These birds have increased 66% over the past 11 years since our survey began in January.

Blackbird took the No2 spot in 2023, up from 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2022, an increase of 19% from 2022. As ever these birds are widespread in our gardens, being recorded in 82% of gardens. Blackbird placed only 5<sup>th</sup> on the national RSPB survey. Blue Tit took 3<sup>rd</sup> this time, up from 4<sup>th</sup> in 2022, with a slight decline of 5%.

Long Tailed Tit jumps up to 4<sup>th</sup> this year (from 6<sup>th</sup> in 2022), these results show a 46% increase this year. The national RSPB survey place these birds 10<sup>th</sup>, jumping 5 places from 2022 and also showing a big increase of 39%. The RSPB notes that these small birds are susceptible to harsh weather, hence numbers have fluctuated since the survey began (RSPB, 2023).

A big surprise is that House Sparrow drops down from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, a 39% drop on last year. Although this sounds severe, results could have been impacted by the small sample of gardens here. The national RSPB survey places House Sparrows 1<sup>st</sup>, but notes that numbers have been stable in the past 20 years, with signs of increase in parts of the UK (RSPB, 2023). Although they may not be as numerous in our area compared to previous years, they are definitely hanging on in various places around our area, I know of several places locally where I can guarantee House Sparrow.

Jackdaw moves up to 6<sup>th</sup> from 9<sup>th</sup> last year and was present in just under half of the gardens in the survey. Great Tit drops down from 5<sup>th</sup> in 2022 to 7<sup>th</sup> this year, showing a slight decline, but in just about the same proportion of gardens as last year. Robin stays 8<sup>th</sup>, this common garden bird is present in 82% of the gardens surveyed, increasing from 72% in 2022 and increasing in number by 23%. Woodpigeon, Dunnock and Magpie jointly occupy 9<sup>th</sup> place.

Outside the top ten Starling creeps up a little, up from 15<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> and Greenfinch drops from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>. The results also show a slight increase for Song Thrush and Jay. Personally I don't find Song Thrushes to be too uncommon in our area, they are quiet birds in winter, easily missed with a subtle contact call, but

	Bird Species	Total Number	Mean/garden	Gardens (%)
1	Goldfinch	44	2.59	53
2	Blackbird	42	2.47	82
3	Blue Tit	33	1.94	59
4	Long tailed tit	30	1.76	41
5	House Sparrow	28	1.65	35
6	Jackdaw	26	1.56	47
7	Great Tit	25	1.47	53
8	Robin	21	1.23	82
9	Woodpigeon	17	1	47
9	Dunnock	17	1	68
9	Magpie	17	1	47
12	Starling	16	0.94	12
13	Coal Tit	15	0.88	41
13	Chaffinch	15	0.88	41
15	Greenfinch	12	0.7	12
16	Nuthatch	8	0.47	29
17	Mallard	7	0.41	6
17	Carrion Crow	7	0.41	24
19	Collared Dove	5	0.29	18
19	Wren	5	0.29	29
21	GS Woodpecker	4	0.23	18
21	Jay	4	0.23	6
23	Song Thrush	3	0.18	18
24	Pheasant	2	0.12	12
24	Feral Pigeon	2	0.12	6
24	Treecreeper	2	0.12	12
27	Kestrel	1	0.06	6
27	Pied Wagtail	1	0.06	6

obviously not as numerous as in previous years.

The RSPB notes that Chaffinch have declined by 34% in the last decade, mainly due to the Trichomonosis disease (RSPB, 2023). Since our survey has been running this way since 2012 we can see this reflected in our results, Chaffinches have declined in our gardens by 40% since 2012.

Thanks to all those who took part this year. If you know anyone who could take part please ask them, but remember to explain the rules please, that's the most number of birds of a particular species seen at one time in the garden. Birds flying over the garden may not be counted, but birds such as Sparrowhawks flying through hunting may be counted. The next birdwatch will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

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Reference – RSPB (2023). Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023 from <https://www.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/bgbw-results-23/>

RSPB (2023). Retrieved on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2023 from <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>