

A Blue Tit & Sparrow tie – 2021 Garden Bird Watch

Our 24th Garden Bird Watch took place on the weekend of the 30th and 31st January 2021. This year we had more members participating, with 33 gardens included. 35 species were recorded, this time with the omission of Redwing, Fieldfare and Tree Sparrow, but with the addition of a Red Legged Partridge and a Reed Bunting.

The overall trend this year seems to be one of little change. Some species have increased a little in number, others decreased a little, but not really much significant change. This time the top position was shared between Blue Tits and House Sparrows. Each species had an average of around 3 birds per garden. Blue Tits showed no change in number this year, but were of course very widespread, in 85% of gardens. Since we began this survey in January 2012 we have amassed quite a lot of data, this data shows that Blue Tits have increased on average by 34% in the last 10 years. House Sparrows on the other hand showed a very slight decline of 6%, but surprisingly given this small decline were found in more gardens than in 2020.

Goldfinch remains in 3rd spot in 2021, but showed a slight increase of 10% this time. They were located in 39% of gardens. Since birds like Goldfinches and House Sparrows tend to flock together more than say Blue Tits it makes sense that they are found in larger numbers in certain gardens, contributing to the relatively low percentage of gardens in which they are found. Since 2012 Goldfinches have increased by 69% on average, and we seem to consistently have more than the Lancashire RSPB results show, although their survey is much more accurate given their much larger sample size.

Blackbird jumps up to 4th from 5th in 2020 with a 27% increase. They were present in 91% of gardens. Starlings took 5th spot, up from 8th last year with a 68% increase. They were however in only 24% of gardens, the same figure as in 2020, indicating maybe just a few more birds occurred in the same gardens.

Great Tits dropped to 6th this time, with a slight decline of 3%. Long Tailed Tits also dropped a place, but actually increased in number by 9%. They occurred in 27% of gardens, down from 34% in 2020, but given the transitory nature of a flock of Long Tailed Tits this is hardly surprising. Robins though also increased, moving up to 8th position with 82% of gardens having at least 1 Robin, an 11% increase on 2020. Woodpigeon slipped to 9th from 7th, showing a 16% drop, but in roughly the same number of gardens. Rounding off the top ten is the Magpie, jumping from 12th last year.

The RSPB country wide results show that Blackbirds and Robins have done well this year, but that Greenfinch and Chaffinch numbers continue to fall (RSPB, 2021). We have seen both these observations ourselves, but our Greenfinches have stayed stable this year. Chaffinches however have shown a decline of 12% this year and have exhibited a general trend of a 37% decline since 2012. The RSPB Lancashire results reflect this, they show a 17% decline compared to last year. The BTO reports a 30% decline in

	Bird Species	Total Number	Mean/garden	Gardens (%)
1	Blue Tit	100	3.03	85
1	House Sparrow	100	3.03	45
3	Goldfinch	89	2.7	39
4	Blackbird	74	2.24	91
5	Starling	67	2.03	24
6	Great Tit	58	1.76	61
7	Long tailed tit	53	1.61	27
8	Robin	42	1.3	82
9	Woodpigeon	39	1.18	67
10	Magpie	34	1.03	52
11	Dunnock	33	1	67
11	Coal Tit	33	1	55
13	Chaffinch	30	0.91	36
14	Jackdaw	20	0.61	18
15	Collared Dove	16	0.48	21
15	Greenfinch	16	0.48	18
17	Carrion Crow	15	0.45	24
18	Wren	13	0.39	30
19	Nuthatch	11	0.33	18
20	Feral Pigeon	7	0.21	3
20	G S Woodpecker	7	0.21	21
20	Jay	7	0.21	15
23	Siskin	5	0.15	6
24	Mistle Thrush	4	0.12	9
24	Treecreeper	4	0.12	12
26	Bullfinch	4	0.12	6
27	Pheasant	3	0.09	9
27	Song Thrush	3	0.09	9
29	Rook	2	0.06	6
30	Sparrowhawk	1	0.03	3
30	Kestrel	1	0.03	3
30	R L Partridge	1	0.03	3
30	Pied Wagtail	1	0.03	3
30	Goldcrest	1	0.03	3
30	Reed Bunting	1	0.03	3

Chaffinches countrywide from 2011 to 2018. It's thought this could be due to the Trichomonosis disease, however scientists want to know why Chaffinches started decreasing dramatically in 2012 and not when the outbreak occurred in Greenfinches (BTO, 2021). Thanks to all those who participated this year. The next birdwatch will take place on 29th and 30th January 2022.

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Reference – BTO (2021). Retrieved on 20th August 2021 from <https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/help-fund-our-work/appeals/chaffinch-appeal>

RSPB (2021). Retrieved on 20th August 2021 from <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/results/>