

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.

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.

Answers

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?

A starling's favourite food is the crane fly.

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

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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?

Migration is when birds leave a country during the winter months to go somewhere warmer.

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

Pupil's own response, such as: 'I think the RSPB was created because there are fewer birds (like house sparrows and starlings) because of pollution and farming and birds are important to the environment so must be protected.'

Garden Birds

Why do Birds Matter?

Birds aren't just there to look pretty; they help the environment too. They help plant life by scattering seeds. They eat insects which helps control insect growth and 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 significant drop in the number of 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.

In this year's **Big Garden Birdwatch**, house sparrows were the most widely spotted bird in the UK. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in house sparrows reported, although their numbers are still much lower than they were in the 1970s. This could be because of cats or air pollution as more cars are being used.

There has also been a rise in some less well-known birds, like fieldfares. One reason for seeing more fieldfares in gardens seems to be that the cold weather has made them leave the countryside and look for food in gardens.

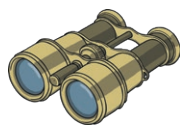
Migration

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.



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.

- They can fly 200 miles every day.
- Many die from starvation, exhaustion and storms.

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

British Birds



Robins:

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

Magpies:

- have a loud, chattering cackle;
- 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.

Questions

1. How do birds help plants? Tick **one**.

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

2. What is the RSPB?

3. Name **three** birds whose numbers have increased in recent years.

4. Where do swifts and swallows go during the winter?

- ☐ America
- ☐ the UK
- ☐ Africa
- ☐ to the countryside

5. **There has been a significant drop in the number of starlings in the last few years.** In this sentence, the word **significant** is closest in meaning to: Tick **one**.

- ☐ slow
- ☐ noticable
- ☐ small
- ☐ unimportant

6. Use the information in the text to match the statements.

Has a loud chattering cackle.	• Magpies
Sing through all of the seasons.	• Blue tits
Have yellow and blue feathers.	Robins

7. What effect could a cold winter have on goldfinches, redwings and fieldfares?

8. Why do you think the big garden birdwatch happens every year?

Answers

1. How do birds help plants? Tick **one**.

- ☐ They build nests.
- ☐ They eat insects.
- ☒ **They spread seeds.**
- ☐ They sing beautifully.

2. What is the RSPB?

The RSPB is the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - it is a charity that helps protect British birds.

3. Name **three** birds whose numbers have increased in recent years.

Accept any three of the following:

- **house sparrows**
- **fieldfares**
- **goldfinches**
- **redwings**

4. Where do swifts and swallows go during the winter?

- ☐ America
- ☐ the UK
- ☒ **Africa**
- ☐ to the countryside

5. **There has been a significant drop in the number of starlings in the last few years.** In this sentence, the word **significant** is closest in meaning to: Tick **one**.

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6. Use the information in the text to match the statements.

Has a loud chattering cackle.	→	Magpies
Sing through all of the seasons.	→	Blue tits
Have yellow and blue feathers.	→	Robins

7. What effect could a cold winter have on goldfinches, redwings and fieldfares?

A cold winter could mean that more fieldfares leave the countryside to find food and that fewer goldfinches and redwings survive.

8. Why do you think the big garden birdwatch happens every year?

Pupil's own response, such as: 'I think the Big Garden Birdwatch happens every year because the RSPB need to know if there have been any changes to the populations of birds in the last year. They can then figure out how to help any birds that need it.'

Garden Birds

Why do Birds Matter?

Birds aren't just there to look pretty; they help the environment too in the following ways:

- They help plant life by scattering seeds. This means that seeds get to travel to different places and grow in other places.
- They control insect growth as many birds eat insects. Without birds eating them, there would be a dangerously high number of 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

The number of starlings has greatly declined in recent years. The reason could be that farming has made it more difficult for them to find their favourite food – the crane fly larvae.

According to the results of the **Big Garden Birdwatch**, house sparrows are the most widely spotted bird in the UK and have been for the past 16 years running. Despite this, the number of house sparrows has dropped massively since the 1970s. This could be because of cats or air pollution due to more cars being used. Fortunately, over the past decade, there has been an increase in house sparrows reported although their numbers are still much lower than they were.



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.

There has also been an increase in less well-known birds, such as fieldfares. One reason for seeing more fieldfares in gardens seems to be that the cold weather has made them leave the countryside and look for food in gardens.

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 migrate from the UK during the winter months and return when the weather becomes warmer. Swifts and swallows migrate to Africa, sometimes flying 200 miles in a day. Many die from starvation, exhaustion and storms.

Migrate - move to live in another area.

British Birds



Robins:

- have a bright red breast;
- are very aggressive and will defend their territory;
- sing all year round;
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Magpies:

- have a loud, chattering cackle;
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- have bright yellow and blue feathers;
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Questions

1. How do birds help the environment? List **three** ways.

2. Which is closest in meaning to the word **declined**? Tick **one**.

- ☐ In partnership
- ☐ below
- ☐ reduced
- ☐ risen

3. What is the Big Garden Birdwatch?

4. Why do you think the RSPB started the Big Garden Birdwatch?

Give **two** reasons for your answer.

5. Read the second paragraph of the **Numbers of Common Garden Birds** section. Why has the author used the word **fortunately**?

6. Why has there been an increase in the number of fieldfares spotted in gardens?

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

Sentence	True	False
Some birds migrate from the UK during the summer months.		
Robins are aggressive birds.		
Magpies eat lots of insects.		
Blue tits lay their eggs at the end of June.		

8. Read the **British Birds** section. Which bird do you like best and why?

Answers

1. How do birds help the environment? List **three** ways.

Birds help the environment by scattering seeds, eating insects and some birds help by eating dead animals, which helps stop diseases spreading.

2. Which is closest in meaning to the word **declined**? Tick **one**.

- ☐ In partnership
- ☐ below
- ☒ **reduced**
- ☐ risen

3. What is the Big Garden Birdwatch?

The Big Garden Birdwatch is an event where people watch for birds and tell the RSPB which birds they have seen. The RSPB then gather the information and look at the number of birds there are.

4. Why do you think the RSPB started the Big Garden Birdwatch?

Give **two** reasons for your answer.

Pupil's own response, such as: 'I think the RSPB started the Big Garden Birdwatch because the RSPB needed to know about the populations of birds. This helps them identify any changes that happen each year and then they can figure out why this is, and how to help any birds that need it.'

5. Read the second paragraph of the **Numbers of Common Garden Birds** section. Why has the author used the word **fortunately**?

The author has used the word 'fortunately' in this paragraph because the sentence before is explaining why numbers of house sparrows have gone down. However, this new sentence is saying how they have increased in recent years. The word 'fortunately' suggests the change in tone and how it is a good thing for the environment.

6. Why has there been an increase in the number of fieldfares spotted in gardens?

There have been more fieldfares spotted in gardens because they are looking for food in gardens instead of fields because of the cold weather.

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

Sentence	True	False
Some birds migrate from the UK during the summer months.		✓
Robins are aggressive birds.	✓	
Magpies eat lots of insects.	✓	
Blue tits lay their eggs at the end of June.		✓

8. Read the **British Birds** section. Which bird do you like best and why?

Pupil's own response.