

Birdwatching for Beginners

Birds and wildlife are all around us. Wherever you are, be it at school, in the countryside, or in your own back garden, there is always something to see.

The UK has some of the most amazing wildlife and you don't have to be an expert to appreciate and enjoy it.

There are nearly 200 different types of birds regularly seen in the UK and many can be seen on your own doorstep. From the powerful peregrine falcon to the tiny goldcrest, the variety of bird life is amazing.

A puffin can dive deep under the ocean and is one of the UK's favourite birds along with the robin with its bright red breast. The great thing about birdwatching is that anyone can do it.



photo: RSPB-images.com

Where do I look?

Watching birds can be exciting, challenging, relaxing and rewarding. Find somewhere to do your birdwatching. This might be in your school grounds or garden. It could be a local park or nature reserve.

Birds are all around us, so just by stopping and looking for a little while you should be able to see something interesting. Stand or sit where you can see the birds. Try to be quiet and avoid moving suddenly. By doing this you'll probably see lots of other wildlife too, such as butterflies, dragonflies and maybe even mammals.

Not only can you use your eyes to birdwatch, you can use your ears. You can often hear birds before you see them.

Some people watch birds on their own or with friends. You can watch birds however you like, it's up to you! You're likely to meet other bird watchers when you're out - so you might make some new friends! But remember, the most important thing is to have fun.

If you're going out looking for birds, make sure an adult goes with you, or knows where you're going.

Do I need special equipment?

You can enjoy birds without any equipment, but a few things come in handy. A good bird book will help you to identify the birds you see. You can use a notebook to keep a list of the birds you spot. If you like writing, make notes about the birds you are seeing and even do a sketch or drawing to help you work out what bird it is you have seen later on. Look at the size and shape of the bird. Some birds are easy to identify; some are not. But don't give up, it gets easier.

Can I encourage more birds into my garden or school?



photo: Paul Tomlin

There are many things you can do to attract birds. School grounds are very important for birds as safe places to feed and nest.

You can buy foods for birds such as peanuts, wild bird seed and black sunflower seeds. You can also use kitchen scraps like uncooked porridge oats, mild grated cheese, cooked potatoes, over-ripe fruit and cake crumbs.

Don't forget the water

Water is just as important to birds as food. They need it to drink of course, but they also have to bathe regularly – even on cold winter days – to keep their feathers in good condition.

Check out our website www.rspb.org.uk/youth where you can find all the RSPB's latest news and lots of fun things to do and make.