

Notes for Teachers

# Garden Birds

## Learn 12 Birds



Páirceanna Náisiúnta  
National Parks



**Birds are everywhere.**

**They are wonderful creatures, in all shapes and sizes, from the smallest goldcrests and wrens to the largest eagles.**

**Birds are constantly busy and fun to watch.**

**Every child should learn to identify our common birds, and what better place to start than the garden or school yard.**



## What Age Group?

The Powerpoint slideshow can be used for any age group. Older children can investigate each species in more detail. But even infants will appreciate the different birds.

We have different optional activities to follow the slideshow - colouring in sheets, art activities, crosswords, and more.



## Robin - Spideog

*Erithacus rubecula*

## Slide 2



### Identification

- Red breast and face.
- Brown back, wings, and tail.
- White belly

This is Ireland's most well known bird. Everyone loves a robin. Robins often follow people, especially if they are gardening. Some people tame robins, and let them eat food from their hands.

Robins are a symbol of Christmas.

### Diet

Robins eat insects and other invertebrates. Their pointy beak helps them to catch them.

## Feathers

Birds are the only creatures that have feathers. Body feathers (down) are soft and fluffy and keep a bird warm. Wing and tail feathers (flight feathers) are hard and are used to fly. Feathers may also be decorative - brightly coloured and forming crests or long streamers.



Body Feathers are soft, fluffy and downy. The central shaft is weak.



Tail Feathers The stiff central shaft is in the middle.



Wing Feathers The stiff central shaft is off to one side.

## Great Tit - Meantán Mór

*Parus major*

## Slide 3

### Identification

- Yellow belly with a black stripe
- Black head with large white patches
- Green back

Tits are acrobatic birds. Four species readily visit gardens. The Great Tit is the largest. Their true habitat is woodland, where they forage in the branches for small invertebrates.

### Diet

Mainly invertebrates. Also fat and peanuts at bird feeders.



## Song Thrush - Smólach Ceoil

*Turdus philomelos*

## Slide 4



### Identification

- Pale breast with brown spots
- Brown back, wings, and tail.

Song Thrushes have a lovely song. They repeat each phrase of the song two or three times.

Animals that eat invertebrates are called insectivores.

### Diet

Insect, earthworms, snails, berries and fruit.

Thrushes smash snails off a chosen stone called an anvil. You may find an anvil in your garden, with smashed snail shells around it.

## Beaks

Beaks come in an enormous range of shapes and sizes. Different beak shapes are used to eat different diets.

Crows have an unspecialized beak shape, because they eat almost anything.

Here are three common beak shapes, but a quick look in a bird book will show many more.



**For Insects**  
Thin pointy beaks can pick insects out of holes.



**For Seeds**  
Cone shaped beaks can crack seeds.



**For Meat**  
Birds of prey have hooked beaks to rip up meat.

## Chaffinch - Rí Rua

*Fringilla coelebs*

## Slide 5

### Identification

- Red breast and face
- Rear of head is blue
- White flash on the wing.
- Females are duller, without the red and blue, but with the white flash on the wing.

Chaffinches are one of the commonest birds in Ireland. They are found in a wide variety of habitats.

All finches eat seeds.

Seed eaters have conical beaks for cracking seeds.

### Diet

Seeds





## Goldfinch - **Lasair Choille**



*Carduelis carduelis*

## Slide 6

### Identification

- Red face with white and black behind
- Yellow flash on the wing

The Goldfinch is a very colourful and lively finch. It is often seen in gardens.

Male and female goldfinches look the same.

### Diet

Seeds. Goldfinches particularly like thistle seeds. They will eat peanuts and niger seed at birdfeeders.

## Blackbird - **Lon Dubh**

### Identification

- Males are black with a yellow beak.
- Females are brown with a brown beak.

Blackbirds are common birds in gardens.

Males have a sweet song.

### Diet

Worms, insects and fruit.

*Turdus merula*

## Slide 7



## Males



Males are often more brightly coloured than females.

Their colourful plumage helps to attract a mate.

## Females



Females are often less colourful than males.

Females benefit from camouflage when they sit on the nest incubating eggs.

In some birds, males and females are the same colour. The males of less colourful species often use song to attract a mate.

## Why do birds sing?



Birds sing to defend a territory and to attract a mate. Every species has its own song.

Most birds start to sing at dawn. This produces a great orchestra of sound called the Dawn Chorus.

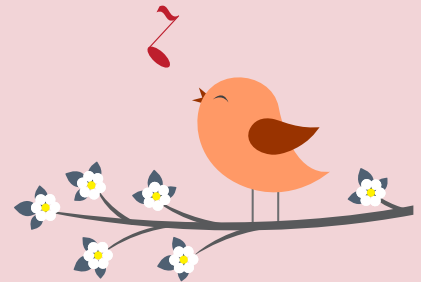
Some birds, like starlings, can mimic other birds and sounds.

Birds also make a variety of calls. Calls are simpler than songs - more like a chirp or a squawk.



Birds that feed in flocks may call to keep the flock together.

An alarm call warns other birds of danger.



## Greenfinch - Glasán Darach

*Chloris chloris*

Slide 8

### Identification

- Green
- Yellow stripe on the wing.

Greenfinches often visit garden birdfeeders. However, they are prone to a deadly fungal infection called trichomoniasis. As a result greenfinch numbers have declined.

Other birds can also catch this disease. We can stop birds from getting ill by keeping birdfeeders clean.

### Diet

Seeds. Peanuts at birdfeeders.





## Blue Tit - Meantán Gorm

*Cyanistes caeruleus*

Slide 9

### Identification

- Yellow belly
- Blue cap above a white and black face
- Green back

Blue tits are one of the commonest birds to use a nestbox. They naturally nest in holes in trees, but these are not as common as they once were. So we can help them by hanging a nestbox.

### Diet

Mainly invertebrates.

Also fat and peanuts at bird feeders.



## Coal Tit - Meantán Dubh

*Periparus ater*

Slide 10



### Identification

- A small grey bird.
- White cheeks with a black cap and chin.

Coal tits are birds of evergreen woodland. But they like gardens too, especially if there are peanuts on offer.

### Diet

Mainly invertebrates.

Also fat and peanuts at bird feeders.

## House Sparrow - Gealbhan Binne

*Passer domesticus*

Slide 11

### Identification

- Males have a black bib, grey cheeks and a brown head.
- Females are plainer, with no black bib.

House sparrows like to live and nest around our houses and farms. Their numbers have declined in recent years. Perhaps our modern houses have fewer holes to nest in.

### Diet

Seeds.



## Dunnock - Donnóg

### Identification

- A brown bird
- Grey head

Dunnocks are small brown birds that are easily overlooked in the garden. They eat invertebrates and are unlikely to visit birdfeeders.

### Diet

Invertebrates.

*Prunella modularis*

## Slide 12



## Collared Dove - Fearán Baicdhubh

*Streptopelia decaocto*

## Slide 13



### Identification

- A grey-brown bird.
- Small black collar at the back of the neck.

Doves are smaller and daintier than pigeons, although scientifically- there are no differences between pigeons and doves.

Collared doves only arrived in Ireland in 1959. They spread here from Europe. Now they are common throughout Ireland. They like to live near people in towns and farms.

### Diet

Grain and seeds.

## Feeding Birds

## Slide 14

Feeding birds can help many small birds to survive through a cold winter. It will also bring more birds to your garden, and makes them easier to watch.

Peanuts are the commonest food offered and are loved by many species.

Niger seed attracts goldfinches, siskins and others, but needs a special feeder.

Mixed seed can be cheap, but can be wasteful if the birds don't like it all.

Many birds like fat balls, but don't offer them in a net bag. Birds can get entangled in them.

Don't forget water, especially in icy weather.





# Glossary - Gluais

## Forage

To search for food.

Birds spend much of their day foraging for food in their habitat.



## Habitat

A habitat is a place where an animal or plant lives,.

Typical Irish habitats include woodland, grassland, bogs, farmland and gardens.

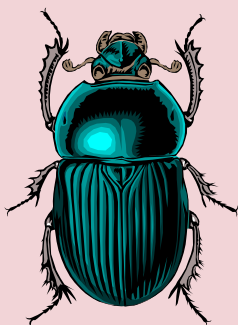


## Insectivore

An insectivore is a bird or animal that eats insects and other invertebrates.



## Invertebrate



An invertebrate is a creature without a backbone.

The term encompasses true insects (with six legs), snails, millipedes, centipedes, spiders, crabs and lobsters, and many, many more creatures. Most are small and are food for a wide variety of other creatures.

You may prefer to use the term 'bug', although be aware that there is a scientific group within the insects that are officially called bugs.

So all insects and bugs are invertebrates, but not all invertebrates are insects or bugs!

Many teachers call them all 'Mini Beasts'

## Protect Nature

We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to learn, love and protect Nature.



### Learn

Learning to recognize our native plants and animals



### Love

Growing to love Nature.  
We love what we know.



### Protect

Protecting our Nature.  
We protect what we love.

## Follow On Activities

Each of our lessons have a toolkit of other activities, designed for various ages.

These include colouring-in sheets for the younger children, crosswords, quizzes and other activities for the older ones.

Why not take your children out into nature? We have notes to help you lead a nature walk.

## What Next?

If you and your children enjoyed 'Garden Birds - Learn 12 Birds', you may also enjoy our next lesson:

### Garden Birds - Learn 12 More Birds

It features:

- Siskin
- Long-Tailed Tit
- Wren
- Pied Wagtail
- Sparrowhawk
- Starling
- Woodpigeon
- Woodpecker
- Jackdaw
- Magpie
- House Martin
- Swallow

## We would love to hear from you

We hope your class enjoyed this lesson, and that you found the resources easy to use.

If you have any suggestions on this lesson, or ideas for future lessons, please email us.

