



Winter Bird feeding

For the next few months the big challenge facing our garden birds is a combination of falling temperatures and long nights that will increase their demand for food, and very short days in which to forage for dwindling supplies of natural food. Add in bad weather and the increased competition from birds that have moved in from much further north or east and it's easy to understand how winter survival is so difficult.

Although we can't alter the weather or the day length, we can help by providing foods that are high in energy and offering a reliable source of clean water for drinking and bathing. It's also important to minimise disturbance of feeding areas during the all-important first and last hours of the day, when the birds are busily preparing for the night to come, or recovering from the night just gone. If possible keep pets indoors at this time and think about putting out extra feeders during cold snaps to reduce queues.

Foods rich in calories, such as sunflower hearts, energy rich seed mixes, peanuts and fat nut cake tubes, are vital for a range of garden wildlife, most noticeably birds, but in late autumn and early spring hedgehogs will be very hungry and readily take to good quality bird food or a specially produced hedgehog food. Mixes that contain lots of cereals such as wheat or barley have their uses, but are primarily of benefit to House Sparrows, pigeons and doves. The more acrobatic garden birds all need to feed on energy rich foods. John Lewis stock the Kew Wildlife Care range of foods to give you the ideal mix of quality and value for money.

The easiest way to feed birds and hedgehogs is to scatter food on the ground, ideally moving the feeding area regularly to keep the food clean, but bird tables or good quality bird feeders such as the Kew Wakehurst or Kensington ranges are more convenient, easier to keep clean and will give you better views of the birds.

A garden with a well-stocked feeding area and shrubs to shelter in can easily attract more than 20 species of birds, but even an open garden with no shelter can attract birds such as Goldfinches and Greenfinches, two of our most attractive species.

Some of the birds that visit during the winter will be residents that are present throughout the year, but alongside them may be individuals from hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Birds such as Bramblings and Siskins may have been in the forests of Scandinavia or Northern Russia just a few weeks ago, as may some of the more familiar Blackbirds and Starlings that visit, foraging side by side with birds that possibly breed within a very short distance of your garden.

By providing good quality foods that contain the energy rich ingredients most garden birds require, we can encourage some of our most colourful and engaging wildlife to share our gardens with us, and they positively benefit from the experience. Have a browse of the Kew Wildlife Care Collection the next time you're in store to find out more.

bring more wildlife to your garden