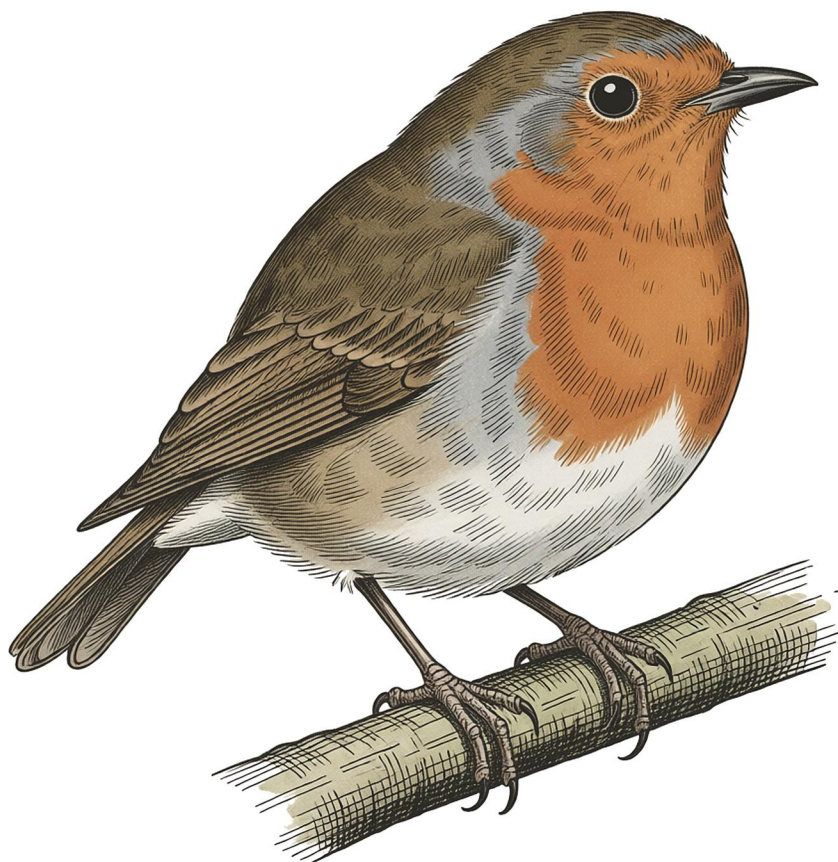


GARDEN LIST CLUB

The Garden List

A pocket guide to British garden birds



Where to look · What to listen for · How to tell them apart

Edition one · Autumn 2026

Before you start

START WHERE YOU ARE

A window, a garden, a balcony or the local park will do. The best spot is the one you will actually use.

BINOCULARS CAN WAIT

Buy a pair once you are hooked. They need not cost a fortune.

LOOK, THEN LOOK AGAIN

Note what the bird looked like and what it was doing. Comparing similar species side by side helps more than any app.

KEEP STILL

Sit quietly and be patient. Many birds are shy, or simply well hidden.

WRITE IT DOWN

A notebook of what you saw, and when, is how your knowledge grows.

Time of Day

DAWN

The dawn chorus starts about an hour before sunrise and is strongest in the half hour either side of it. Still, windless mornings carry song furthest.

WHO SINGS FIRST

Robins, blackbirds and thrushes open the chorus. Wrens and warblers follow. Tits, sparrows and finches join once it is light.

EVENING

The blackbird often starts the evening song. A warm summer evening is best.

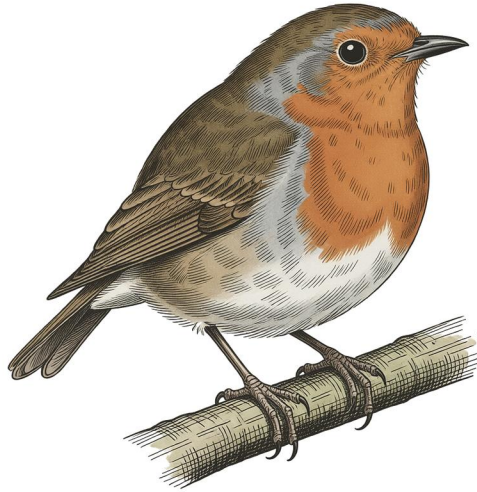
NIGHT

From October, listen for the thin 'tseep' of redwings passing overhead in the dark.

No. 1

Robin

Erithacus rubecula



WHERE TO LOOK

Fence posts, low branches, the spade handle

LISTEN FOR

Short, sweet phrases with abrupt pauses

SHY OR BOLD

Bold. Follows the spade.

BEST TIME

All year; sings through autumn and winter

TELL IT APART

Young robins have no red breast

WORTH KNOWING

Males and females look identical. Young robins have no red breast at all, just speckled brown.

Some sing at night next to streetlights.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 2

House Sparrow

Passer domesticus



WHERE TO LOOK

Hedges and house walls, in groups

LISTEN FOR

Loud, repeated 'cheep cheep'

SHY OR BOLD

Bold near people, never far from cover

BEST TIME

All year; noisiest in spring

TELL IT APART

Tree sparrow: chestnut cap, black cheek spot

WORTH KNOWING

The male has a grey cap and a black bib, which varies in size. Females and young birds are plain brown, with no bib.

They bathe in groups, in birdbaths or in dust.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 3

Blackbird

Turdus merula



WHERE TO LOOK

On the lawn, turning over leaves

LISTEN FOR

Mellow song from a rooftop or treetop

SHY OR BOLD

Bold on lawns, loud alarm at cats

BEST TIME

Dawn and dusk, March to June

TELL IT APART

Song thrush: smaller, creamy, spotted breast

WORTH KNOWING

The blackbird is a thrush itself; the brown female is the one people mistake for a song thrush.

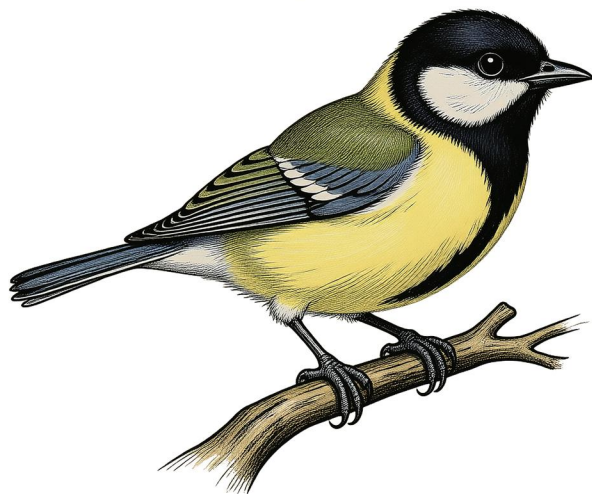
A leading voice in the dawn chorus, and often the one that starts the evening shift too.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 4

Great Tit

Parus major



WHERE TO LOOK

Feeders, woods and garden nest boxes

LISTEN FOR

A two-note 'teacher-teacher'

SHY OR BOLD

Bold; pushes smaller tits off feeders

BEST TIME

Winter flocks; spring 'teacher' song

TELL IT APART

Blue tit is smaller, with a blue cap

WORTH KNOWING

The largest tit in the UK.

They time their broods to the spring peak in caterpillars, and now lay earlier than they used to as springs warm.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 5

Goldfinch

Carduelis carduelis



WHERE TO LOOK

Seed feeders, thistles and teasels

LISTEN FOR

Fast, tinkling twitter, often in flight

SHY OR BOLD

Sociable, arrives in small flocks

BEST TIME

All year; winter flocks at feeders

TELL IT APART

Red face, gold flash on the wing

WORTH KNOWING

A group of goldfinches is a charm.

Its fine, pointed bill reaches seeds in thistles and teasels that other birds cannot get at.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 6

Bullfinch

Pyrrhula pyrrhula



WHERE TO LOOK

Woodland edges, hedges and orchards

LISTEN FOR

A soft, piping 'pew'

SHY OR BOLD

Very shy. Stand still and wait.

BEST TIME

Spring, at the tree buds

TELL IT APART

Black cap, white rump; chaffinch has wing flashes

WORTH KNOWING

Nearly always seen as a couple; pairs are thought to stay together for life.

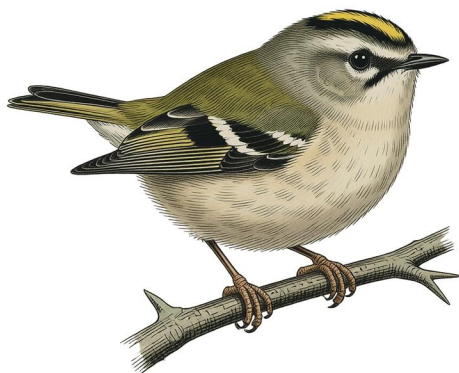
In spring it eats tree buds, which once had Kent orchards paying people to scare bullfinches off.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 7

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus



WHERE TO LOOK

High in conifers and big garden trees

LISTEN FOR

A very high, thin 'zee'

SHY OR BOLD

Never still, often hangs upside down

BEST TIME

Winter, often with roaming tit flocks

TELL IT APART

No white eyebrow – the firecrest has one

WORTH KNOWING

The UK's smallest bird, a title it shares with the firecrest.

It weighs about the same as a 20p coin.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

No. 8

Wren

Troglodytes troglodytes



WHERE TO LOOK

Low in hedges and dense undergrowth

LISTEN FOR

Loud trilling song, sharp 'tic-tic-tic'

SHY OR BOLD

Secretive, heard more than seen

BEST TIME

Spring song, March to May

TELL IT APART

Cocked tail; dunnock is grey-headed, streaky

WORTH KNOWING

More than sixty wrens were once found packed into a single nest box to keep warm.

Remarkably loud for its size.

☐ Seen it. Date _____ Where _____

The Year in the Garden

JANUARY

A good month to count your garden birds for an hour.

MARCH

The dawn chorus gets going. The first sand martins arrive.

APRIL AND MAY

Swallows, house martins and swifts return. Redwings and fieldfares leave.

MAY AND JUNE

The dawn chorus at its peak.

JULY AND AUGUST

Moulting season. Birds go quiet and keep out of sight.

OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER

Winter visitors arrive: redwings and fieldfares on the berries, goldcrests from Scandinavia, blackbirds from northern Europe.

Good Manners

Current UK guidance, 2026

THE BIRD COMES FIRST

If it flies off or keeps calling in alarm, you are too close.

NO RECORDINGS

Never play recorded calls in the breeding season.

LEAVE NESTS ALONE

Disturbing some species at the nest is against the law in Britain.

FEEDING

Seeds and nuts from November to April. From May to October, only small amounts of mealworms, fat balls or suet.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Skip bird tables and tray feeders. Wash feeders and birdbaths every week, and change the water daily.

My Garden List

Tick each bird the first time you see it

NO.	BIRD	DATE	WHERE
☐ 1	Robin		
☐ 2	House Sparrow		
☐ 3	Blackbird		
☐ 4	Great Tit		
☐ 5	Goldfinch		
☐ 6	Bullfinch		
☐ 7	Goldcrest		
☐ 8	Wren		
☐ 9			
☐ 10			
☐ 11			
☐ 12			
☐ 13			
☐ 14			
☐ 15			
☐ 16			



Garden List Club

@gardenlistclub

More birds will join the list in later editions.

Facts checked against the species pages of the RSPB, BTO, Woodland Trust and The Wildlife Trusts, October 2026.

To print: A4, double-sided, flip on the short edge. Fold the stack in half and staple the fold.

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