

## Get involved with Bird Watching

As anybody who is a fan of Kelling will know we are passionate about nature!

*As you cannot currently come and experience all the nature that we have to offer we are supporting the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) and asking that you support and sign up to their [Garden Birdwatch](#), (it's free to do and will help with the Biology lessons when home-schooling too!).*



One of our team is a keen birdwatcher and below he shares his top tips to assist you in feeding our feathered friends. He tells us that it used to be the case that we were only advised to feed our feathered friends through the harsh winter months when natural food sources were scarce but now we are advised to feed all year round. The birds are reliant on the food we provide throughout the breeding season to assist with feeding their hungry brood. The advice is to only stop feeding for a brief period when their natural food is still bountiful and the chicks have fledged the nest, Mark usually does this in early October.

### ***Why might you ask should you stop topping up the feeders?***

The reason for the rest is important, believe it or not, birds on feeders are territorial so it can be quite stressful for them to have lots of birds in one area! And, if its anything like my feeders then it resembles planes at Gatwick in their holding patterns waiting for their slot to come in and land. This mayhem can stress them and with bird's stress can lower their immunity to fight off pests and diseases. By not feeding them for a few weeks, it allows for the parasitic cycle to be broken as they do not have any hosts to attach themselves to. Additionally, if it is done when there is lots of natural food for them to go and forage it offers the perfect chance to rest the area before you need to start feeding them again before winter.

### ***Cleanliness is next to godliness.....***

Additionally, it is really important throughout the time you are feeding the birds to rotate your feeders. When not being used give them a thorough soaking in a sterilising solution like Milton to kill off any parasites on the feeders. Ensure that you scrub them thoroughly and rinse them off before allowing them to dry; I tend rotate my feeders every three weeks.

### ***The way to a bird's heart!***

I used to feed my birds peanuts and sunflower hearts but stopped a few years ago for two reasons; one was because the price of both of these just kept going up and two because there is an argument to say that with peanuts especially, they aren't a British birds natural food source. I find that I can attract exactly the same species of bird as I used to attract when feeding peanuts and sunflower hearts by using fat balls and a seed mix which contains no wheat. Wheat in bird feed is added as a filler but I find that the birds toss it aside which the pheasants and Wood pigeons love, but it represents a significant waste of money. I pay slightly more for the mix but there is far less wastage and the ground feeders still pick up the scraps and everyone still gets fed!

### ***Water is life.....***

As well as feeding the birds, the other important thing to provide them year-round is a fresh supply of water. In the summer, puddles can dry up, and in the winter, water can freeze. Making sure that they have fresh water every day is not only important but, also allows you from the comfort of your sofa the delight of watching them having a little bathe and thoroughly enjoying themselves whilst they do so!



### ***Fur and Feather!***

If you've got dogs, we have four, then this is a great time of year to provide birds with nesting material but also for me at least, reduces the amount of loose fur shed indoors meaning I get less earache as there is noticeably less hoovering to do! Brush the dogs outside and collect all the hair and pop it into a feeder (I use an old peanut feeder for mine). You will soon find the birds pulling it out of the feeder and taking it away to help them build a cosy new nest for their brood once they hatch.

*Even once the breeding season is over, you can still pop the hair into your compost bin as it is a natural material and will rot down with all your other compost to go on next year's vegetable patch.*

***Sit back and watch the show.....***

With your feeders full and fresh water in plentiful supply, it will not take the birds long to find them and start visiting regularly. All you have to do then is simply sit back with a warm cup of coffee or tea and watch them busily fill their little tummies. I find it so relaxing to just sit and watch them and both my partner and I strongly believe that it is not only good for the birds but also good for us and our mental health; ***I think it is a form of mindfulness.***



If you have a pair of binoculars, then take the time to look through them at the birds on the feeders. Though they might be close enough to see them with your naked eye, you get a whole new dimension when you look at them through binoculars. Birds like House Sparrows, Dunnocks and little Jenny Wrens are just stunning and their plumage so ornate and striking. Why not try keeping a list of how many different species of birds you can spot in your garden or from your garden not just on your bird feeders; we are up to 75 from ours! If you sign up to the [BTO Garden Birdwatch](#) you will be helping the scientists understand how we can improve our cities, towns, villages and individual gardens for wildlife.

Having a bird book to hand will greatly aid your identification but also build your knowledge. If you do not have one, do not worry as there are plenty of online resources available if you look.

Finally, sit back and relax and enjoy the theatre going on right outside your front window; we certainly do!

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