

COMPETITION CORNER

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Win one of FIVE superb Feedsafe feeders worth £24.90 each!

The Feedsafe's heavy steel bars add to an attractive, traditional 'parrot cage' design, and this superb feeder holds over 500g of seed in its strong polycarbonate tube. For full details of this product please see The Garden Bird Feeding Guide.



CLOSING DATE
28th February
2007

If you haven't tried the BirdWord before, here's how it works:

Every letter of the alphabet is used. Each letter has its own number, 1 to 26. Some letters have been given to start you off. The shaded squares give the jumbled letters of the bird pictured in the centre of the puzzle.

A few tips. Usually the letter E is the most frequently used letter. When you discover a Q, remember that a U is often lurking nearby. And, finally, tread carefully – don't jump too quickly to conclusions and you will have a great deal of pleasure solving the puzzle.

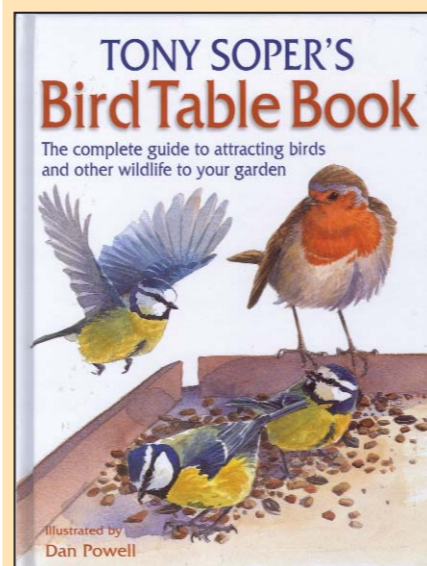
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Name _____ Address _____
Postcode _____

Post your completed puzzle to: GARDEN BIRD NEWS, KELVEDON PARK, LONDON ROAD, RIVENHALL, WITHAM, ESSEX CM8 3HB

RULES: The winners will be the first five correct answers drawn out of the hat following the closing date of 31st January 2007. The winners will be notified by 12 February 2007. Only one entry per household. UK addresses only. The judges' decision will be final. No correspondence will be entered into.

Book Review



Bill Oddie may now be TV's best-known birdwatcher, but the one-time 'Goodie' is a relatively new phenomenon and for years it was Tony Soper who dominated our screens. He was instrumental in founding the BBC's Natural History Unit, and the programmes he presented in the 1970s and 1980s introduced millions to nature in general, and birds in particular.

This book has an equally distinguished history, but this latest edition has been brought right up to date. Subtitled 'The complete guide to attracting birds and other wildlife to your garden', it covers everything about the subject you could possibly want to know in almost 200 beautifully illustrated pages.

The author encourages readers to create a house and garden which take into account the needs of wildlife, as well as those of the human residents. There is plenty of advice on food and feeding, and ideas for enhancing your garden for wildlife in all kinds of way. In fact, from gardening, bird tables, nestboxes and water to species notes, mammals, bugs and slugs and a useful selection of appendices, Tony Soper has compiled an essential manual for every garden bird lover. Highly recommended.

● Tony Soper's Bird Table Book, illustrated by Dan Powell and published by David and Charles at £16.99 (hbk), is available now in bookshops, or by mail order to Garden Bird News readers at the special price of £15.99 (including free UK postage) from the Birdwatch Bookshop – call 020 8881 0550 to order.



Garden Bird NEWS

From Garden Bird Supplies

www.gardenbird.com
JANUARY
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Greenfinches and a Great Tit forage for food in snowy midwinter conditions.

Help birds beat the freeze

For garden birds, the New Year means cold weather and a fight for survival. The stakes are high and the pressures great – can you help them win?

In the garden bird calendar, midwinter is high season. There are more individual birds of more species visiting gardens than at any other time of the year. But it's no coincidence that gardens around the country can be teeming with birdlife right now: they are there for one reason, and that is the search for food.

In many parts of the country, January and February see the coldest temperatures of the year, with the greatest likelihood of ground frosts and snow. Even after an autumn as mild as the one we've just enjoyed, resident birds and winter visitors alike may be forced to travel widely searching for food to survive.

There are many dangers facing birds at this time of year. They struggle to keep warm in freezing conditions, and they should be conserving energy rather than expending it looking for their next meal. But in winter food is in short supply, with insects and grubs much harder to come by, and in a freeze-up ground-feeding birds like thrushes and Robins can find earthworms and other invertebrates impossible to dig up.

The best way to help birds at this time is to make an important New Year resolution – to ensure they always have a steady supply of food when they need it. If you haven't already started your winter feeding programme there's still time to make a real difference, and the sooner you can provide your avian visitors with the nourishment and shelter they deserve, the better. Here are some winter feeding pointers to help your birds:

● Tailor the foods you put out to the species most likely to benefit. If using only

one food, a good seed mix such as Ultiva (R) will benefit the widest range of birds.

● Energy-packed fat foods offering suet and treats are also ideal for winter feeding. ● Once you've started feeding, don't stop – the birds will quickly come to depend on your feeding station.

● In snowy conditions, keep bird tables snow-free and clear a patch of lawn so that ground foods will be easily visible.

● Birds still need water in winter – top it up regularly and keep it ice-free.

National Nest Box Week

The depths of winter may seem too early to be thinking about the breeding season, but garden birds will already be keeping an eye open for suitable nesting sites.

You can help your birds on this front too by providing a secure home built especially for their needs. Underlining the popularity of artificial nest sites, it is claimed that more than 60 bird species have now been recorded using nest boxes.

They are straightforward to make, with conservation organisations and many

garden bird books providing simple instructions, but you can make life even easier by letting Garden Bird Supplies help – we've done the hard work for you and offer a range of ready-made nest boxes. From the Schwegler 1-Hole Box, adopted as the official box of National Nest Box Week, to Open Boxes, Swallow Nests and Wren Roundhouses, our avian homes come in many shapes and sizes suitable for a wide range of species.

● Turn to the Nest Box pages in your Garden Bird Feeding Guide and order yours in time for National Nest Box Week, which starts on 14 February.



Murrelet madness!

Birdwatchers gathered in record numbers in Devon during November to get a glimpse of the first-ever Long-billed Murrelet to be seen alive in Europe. The tiny auk, which is no bigger than a Blackbird, originates from the Pacific coast of Russia and Japan but instead made Dawlish its home for a week-long stay.



Dominic Mitchell

Gardens help Goldfinches

Goldfinches are feeding in more of Britain's gardens than ever before, according to the British Trust for Ornithology. Research has revealed that this colourful species is now being reported from 55 per cent of gardens, up from 23 per cent when the study began in 1995. In fact, the species is doing so well that its status on the list of birds of concern has been downgraded from amber to green.

The species' improving fortunes may be linked to its increasing use of gardens for winter feeding. Goldfinches are specialists, seeking out the small seeds of plants such as dandelions and ragwort, and with their long slender bills they are the only finch able to extract seeds from teasels. During the early winter these seeds become harder

to find, and results show that this is when Goldfinches begin to appear in our gardens. But why are they doing this in ever increasing numbers?

Paul Stancliffe, Promotions Officer at the British Trust for Ornithology, explained, "Over the last 10 years wild bird food suppliers have been developing an increasingly wide variety of seed mixes and specialist foods, and Goldfinches have been quick to take advantage of these. Sunflower hearts and niger seed are particularly favoured. So now when seeds in the countryside become scarce Goldfinches are able to exploit garden feeding stations. This just wasn't possible before these new seed mixes became available."

Here are the BTO's top tips for attracting this delightful species to your garden:

- Goldfinches prefer hanging seed feeders containing sunflower hearts or niger seed.
- Keep putting out suitable food after the snow and ice have gone. April is a good month for Goldfinches, and at this time their natural food is hard to find.
- Provide a supply of fresh water, as seedeaters get very thirsty.
- Buy your food from a reputable source, as this will ensure that the birds get the highest quality seed available.
- Use a specially designed niger seed feeder that suits Goldfinches' slender bills.
- Keep your feeding station clean and sweep the ground beneath feeders daily to help prevent the spread of disease.
- Bird feed should be stored in a clean, dry and cool environment to minimise the risk of fungal or bacterial contamination.



Sieve Young

Studies show that Great Spotted Woodpeckers prefer peanuts.

Fast food for woodpeckers

Peanuts used to be the staple food provided at garden birdfeeding stations, but these days they are sometimes less favoured by those avian visitors which have acquired a taste for some of the more innovative and nutritious seed mixes.

But peanuts remain the food of choice for at least one popular garden visitor, the Great Spotted Woodpecker. The findings of a survey conducted by British Trust for Ornithology in association with BBC Radio 4 reveal that 83 per cent of all Great Spotted Woodpeckers visiting gardens come to feed on peanuts.

Some 6,000 reports from almost 2,000 listeners provided fascinating facts on the feeding habits of these distinctive black-and-white birds. It was discovered, for example, that adult birds frequently locate supplies of peanuts first and then bring

their young back to feed on them. Peanut cake was found to be another favourite. Peanuts have a high fat content and are literally fast food for the young birds, at a time when they need to put on weight quickly. By mid-September, these young birds are fully grown and begin to use gardens less and less, presumably returning to their natural woodland habitat and exploiting other foods.

Britons put out 16,000 tonnes of peanuts every year with which to feed the birds, which is good news for woodpeckers and their young. A British Trust for Ornithology spokesman said: "By bringing their young to garden birdfeeding stations and taking advantage of the peanut supplies, adult woodpeckers are saving valuable foraging time; these are literally fast food outlets for these birds."

Please send your contributions to 'News from readers' to: GARDEN BIRD NEWS, KELVEDON PARK, LONDON ROAD, RIVENHALL, WITHAM, ESSEX CM8 3HB or email them to customerservice@gardenbird.com (photos welcome!)



News from readers

Dear Garden Bird News

I thought you might like to see my oil painting of our cheeky Robin – he is a real character, and talks away to us. He has been coming into our dining room for his mealworms for nearly 18 months now. He had a family last spring, and the female built her nest in the tail of a large model swan which we use as a plant-holder in the garden. The chicks hatched and were doing well, and the parents were fantastic in looking after them, but one morning we found a Sparrowhawk had raided the nest and eaten the chicks.

I was so afraid that the female had been caught as well but fortunately, to our delight, she soon reappeared. The very next day, we saw her busily building another nest in the ivy on the side of our bungalow, a much safer site. The next brood of chicks hatched and finally flew away, but the parents are still together. She doesn't come into the house, instead



having her feeding box with mealworms on the window.

I shall miss our Robbie when he goes – I understand they only live for 18 months, but he is older than that. It must be all the mealworms he is having – he visits us many times each day.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your swift and friendly service.

Mrs Christine Allen, Honiton

- Many Robins live to be several years old, a few survive for more than 10 years and one reached its 17th birthday!



Back in October we were contacted by Shirley Ottaway at Sure Start Children's Centre in Stoke-on-Trent. Her class were undertaking a project to promote the importance of caring for garden birds and wildlife. We are always keen to hear about these projects and were only too delighted to donate some bird food and feeders to help their cause. We recently heard from Shirley that they have had a number of wildlife visitors to their feeding station,

and the children had great fun setting it up!

"The children and staff have really enjoyed spending time outdoors. We have attracted lots of wildlife with our beautiful bird feeders.

The outdoors and environment are very important to the foundation stage curriculum and the way in which children learn. There are six different curriculum areas and all of them have been linked to our outdoor activities. They are: PSED Successful Personal, Social and Emotional Development is a critical factor for very young children. By working together we have been able to interact and communicate well, learning the importance of taking turns and sharing.

CLL Communication, Language and Literacy depend on the individual, However, working as a group has proved successful, and the children have developed their vocabulary, talking about new things such as birds and wildlife.

KUW In this area children are acquiring the Knowledge, skills and Understanding that help them make sense of the World. The children have begun to appreciate the meaning of wildlife and how important it is to look after the creatures around them. This area is continually developing by daily observation of the feeders and by looking for wildlife.

PD Physical Development is about improving skills of co-ordination, control, movement and manipulation. The children

have gained confidence and support to promote the way they feel about themselves.

MD Mathematical Development is about being confident with counting, sorting, matching and patterns. The children were able to become more familiar with maths by counting the bird feeders and the birds.

CD Creative Development is fundamental to successful learning; being creative enables children to make connections with each other. The children were very creative in deciding where to place the feeders.

Thank you for helping us to learn to work together. We all love it outdoors, and with your help we have made it a better place."