



ENGLEFIELD ESTATE

Bird Watching from your Window

Find that old pair of binoculars and pull up a chair to the window. Once you're settled and looking out, chances are you'll soon begin to spot flashes of movement outside. 620 species of bird have been identified in the UK, and some of those live and breed near you. By studying size, shape, colour and habits you'll be able to figure out what they are and how many you can see.

If the weather is warm enough you can open your window and hone the skill of bird identification by call. This can be tricky but is hugely rewarding. There are shy birds hidden in thick trees and hedges you wouldn't know were there without hearing them. It's also easier to tell what the small brown blur in the distance is if you recognise its song or alarm call!



How Long to Watch?

We often get stiff and uncomfortable if we sit still for too long, but birdwatching does reward patience. Try starting off with a 20-minute spell of turning off the telly, putting the phone on silent and just watching the world outside. After this you can add a little longer if you want to (the RSPB's annual Big Garden Bird Watch lasts for one hour).

Another thing to try is birdwatching at different times of the day. Do you see different species from the same vantage point? Most birds are very active during the early morning, and this is a good time to practice your identification by call (wrap up warm!). Hawks and falcons can be spotted in the early afternoon. Late afternoon, evening, and night time are best for nocturnal species like owls.

Bird Identification



Bear in mind the main facets of bird identification: size and shape, colour, behaviour and habitat. Judge the size of new birds against birds you already know and look at their outline. Long tail or short? Broad or slender beak? After you've identified the size and shape, observe how it flies.

The RSPB online bird identifier is a handy tool listing 408 species of birds found in the UK: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/>

For kids the RSPB provide a great survey sheet to fill in, complete with pictures of species they might see in the garden: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/kids--schools/big-schools-birdwatch-downloads/ages-7-11--counting-sheet.pdf>

You can find free resources for identifying bird calls on the internet, such as British-birdsongs.uk: <https://www.british-birdsongs.uk/alphabetical/> and nowadays you can even experiment with free phone Apps that use the phone's microphone to listen to a call and attempt identification for you.

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