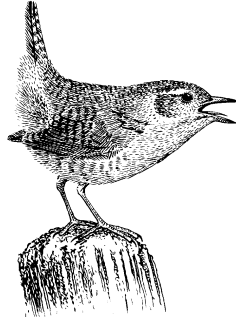


BIRDS IN THE CHURCHYARD

Birds require a habitat that will provide food, shelter and a place to breed. Not all churchyards will provide all these requirements and some will only be available at certain times of the year e.g. berries and fruit.

Birds enhance any churchyard and will change according to season and time of day adding a huge amount of interest and delight for visitors.

Space prevents a full list of the birds that might be seen in a churchyard at some time during the year but a British Trust for Ornithology Survey of Churchyards (1972-1978) found the following species during the breeding season.



Rank	Species	No. of churches
1	Blackbird	15
2	Robin	15
3	Blue Tit	15
4	Greenfinch	12
5	Song Thrush*	14
6	Wren	12
7	Starling	15
8	Dunnock	12
9	House Sparrow	12
10	Great Tit	14
11	Chaffinch	12
12	Woodpigeon	9
13	Goldfinch	9
14	Spotted Flycatcher*	7
15	Bullfinch*	9
16	Carrion Crow	8
17	Willow Warbler	8
18	Linnet*	7
19	Swift	6
20	Blackcap	5
21	Stock Dove	2
22	Coat Tit	10
23	Goldcrest	9
24	Mistle Thrush	8
25	Collared Dove	8

* Biodiversity Action Plan Species

In the winter species from further north like Redwing, Fieldfare and Siskin will appear especially if there are berry-bearing trees in the churchyard.



Attracting birds to Churchyards

Before you consider what you can do to attract birds to the area you need to find out what birds are already using the churchyard in both summer and winter.

Encourage people to list the birds that they see in the churchyard – a blank survey form (see below) will help.

Date: 12 May 2009	Time: 9am to 11am	
Name: Mrs P Clarke (tel: 235678)		
Weather: Fine and sunny, light breeze		
Species	No.	Activity noted (eg song, feeding, nest building etc)
Blackbird	5	Song, food to nest
Swift	3	Entering nest site in eaves of church
Chiffchaff	1	Singing
Buzzard	1	Flew over

At the very least make a list of the birds seen in the churchyard at different times of the year.

It may be possible to provide a blank map of the churchyard for observers to mark the locations of birds they have seen – this can help to indicate the important areas of the churchyard for birds. Some birds may not breed in the churchyard but will use it as a food source.

Make sure that the information is collated and occasional reports prepared for publication in the Parish Magazine or on the church notice board. Remember to pass a copy of the information to the County Bird Recorder who may be able to suggest a local bird watcher who could help with a survey.

Practical tasks

To encourage birds to visit the area provide as much natural food and cover in the form of trees, shrubs long grass as possible. The addition of nest boxes will encourage some species. Erect a variety of nest box types high enough to discourage disturbance.

Sympathetic management of churchyards for birds

- Manage hedges/trees for wildlife (see relevant section)
- If planting a tree or shrub, select native species, especially those that are berry bearing

- Leave some 'rough patches' e.g. compost heaps, nettles, elder and bramble scrub if space permits. They will support insects and provide food in the autumn
- Refrain from the removal of ivy clinging to trees (except Yews) and on the ground
- Create a mosaic of grassland. Short grass provides earthworms, ants and flies for ground feeding species. Uncut grassland will encourage wild flowers, more insects and seeds (see Grassland section)
- Leave anthills wherever possible
- Try to leave 1-2 metre grassland strips uncut, especially adjacent to hedges and walls, to support small mammals and butterflies.
- Leave the odd corner to 'go wild' and refrain from being excessively tidy!
- Leave stones, headstones and walls uncleaned or scrubbed
- Provide a range of nest and roosting boxes for a variety of species. Further information on bird boxes is available from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) or CJ Wildbird Foods

Solving problems

Jackdaws and Feral Pigeons can be a nuisance if they gain access to the tower or roof space where a build up of nesting material and droppings can be a hazard. Blocking likely entrance holes and grilles with fine wire mesh (not netting) will keep them out. Swallows and Spotted Flycatchers will occasionally nest on a ledge inside a porch – a small shelf on a bracket below the nest will catch any droppings thus preventing damage or slip hazards. Keeps doors shut to prevent small birds getting into the church as once inside getting them out again may be a difficult task. If you have problems with birds then contact your local Wildlife Trust, bird group or the RSPB who will be able to give both legal and practical advice.

Publications

Collins Bird Guide The ultimate guide to birds providing all the information needed to identify any species of any sex of any age & at any time of year.

Guide to the top 50 Garden Birds Edward Jackson and Andy Simms - A laminated fold out colour identification chart of the majority of species

likely to be found in the garden throughout the year. Illustrations by Peter Hayman.

The Garden Bird Handbook Stephen Moss – packed with practical advice

The above and many other titles are available from **Subbutteo Books** www.wildlifebooks.com a subdivision of **CJ Wildbird Foods**. Both can be found at The Rea, Upton Magna, Shrewsbury, SY4 4UR. A good source for nest boxes, feeders, foods and other accessories www.birdfood.co.uk

Useful contacts

BTO (British Trust for Ornithology)
 The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU
www.bto.org Plenty of advice or surveys including two-letter codes for mapping species, also information on making, using and buying nestboxes and much more.

RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds),
 The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL
www.rspb.org.uk packed with information including nestboxes, habitat management etc

The Hawk and Owl Trust PO Box 400, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton TA4 3WH. www.hawkandowl.org
 Lots of information on owls and birds of prey.

JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) is the statutory adviser to Government on UK and international nature conservation. **Natural England** Local office will be in the telephone directory or on the website at www.naturalengland.org.uk

County Wildlife Trusts The local office will be in the telephone directory or on the national website at www.wildlifetrusts.org

