

How to: Look out for garden wildlife through the year



The orange-tip butterfly is a clear marker that winter is over and spring is sprung.

Photo: Charles J. Sharp, via Wikimedia Commons

This is a guide to what wildlife species are active (and visible) at different times of the year. if you want to see as many species as possible, it helps to know when to look out for them!

Target species: You – and all the insects, birds and other creatures in your garden!

How easy is it to do?

Very easy.

How to do it

Look at the list at the end of this leaflet and check what species to look out for each month.

How much will it cost?

Nothing!

Golden rules – what the science tells us

- The monthly activities below are only a guide, based around south-central England. In the south-west timings can be a week or so earlier, while in the north of Britain spring and summer arrive later, and autumn and winter may be earlier.
- No two year's weather are the same. Look on the list of species as a guideline and be prepared allow for the weather

Things to be aware of

- The list is strongly biased to animals easily visible and recognised in daytime, hence the details of butterflies and birds
- In general, there are more species in gardens in the southern parts of Great Britain and Ireland, but this list should be helpful everywhere.

Calendar for wildlife to see in the garden

	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
Jan	The winter moth (females are wingless)	Few insects are flying, many are larvae or pupae in the ground or sheltered sites or hidden eggs or are overwintering as adults. Winter gnats are dancing in sunlit areas – they don't bite Winter-active bumblebees such as the buff-tailed and early bumblebees are visiting flowers like snowdrops on sunny days	Redwings and fieldfares feeding on windfall apples in cold spells Good month to see wrens hunting for food Look out for birds like goldcrest and great spotted woodpeckers often not seen in the rest of the year as they come in to gardens for food Listen out for the first bird song	Look for tracks in the snow
Feb	Winter moth First brimstone, comma, red admiral and peacock butterflies on warm sunny days	Early bumblebees now more common	Blue tits looking for nest sites Long-tailed tits	Frogs and newts emerge from hibernation and migrate to ponds. First frogspawn later in the month
March	Brimstone Peacock butterfly main emergence Small tortoiseshell late March Comma mid-March Winter moth caterpillars hanging on threads from trees Moth traps start to be visited by early spring species such as Common Quaker and Hebrew Character	Newly emerged mining bees active over bare ground and short lawns into May Hairy-footed flower bee Bee flies First drone flies	Territories are forming, and nest boxes taken over. First eggs by end of the month First migrants return such as chiffchaff Birds sunbathing in warm spring sunshine	Male frogs start calling in ponds Hedgehogs come out of hibernation Toads emerge from hibernation

	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
April	<p>Brimstone Speckled wood Peacock Small tortoiseshell Comma Painted lady migrants mid-April Orange-tip Brimstone Large white 1st brood Small white 1st brood Green-veined white 1st brood Holly blue first brood mid-April Winter moth and spindle ermine moth caterpillars hanging on silk threads under trees The spring moths are at their peak</p>	<p>More solitary bees Bee flies Ladybirds emerge</p>	<p>Get up early for the dawn chorus which is now well under way. Most birds are actively breeding Willow warblers return First swallows in early April and swifts later in the month Wood pigeons and collared doves are calling – learn to distinguish their coos</p>	<p>Frog spawn Lizards are now active, look out for them sunbathing Bats come out of hibernation and actively hunting Hedgehogs</p>
May	<p>Brimstone Orange-tip Large white Small white Speckled wood 1st brood Peacock butterfly to mid-month Comma Painted lady Red Admiral mid-May Small copper 1st brood mid-May Common blue 1st brood</p>	<p>Hoverflies including drone flies Solitary bees: other mason bees Aphids and their ladybird predators Lacewings Hoverfly adults and larvae First cockchafers (maybugs) to July First rose chafers flying Stag beetles flying Harvestmen</p>	<p>Peak of the dawn chorus All summer migrants now in Nesting activity on webcams</p>	<p>Tadpoles in the pond Hedgehogs Watch out for bats after dusk between now and September</p>

	<p>Holly blue adults Holly blue caterpillars on holly flowers Small tortoiseshell caterpillars on nettles In the moth trap, the number of species starts to grow rapidly as the month draws to an end</p>	<p>Garden snails actively breeding on damp nights</p>		
	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
June	<p>Small white Painted lady to mid-month Meadow brown Gatekeeper end June to end August Ringlet Speckled wood 2nd brood mid-June Small copper Holly blue to mid-month Common blue Comma 1st brood mid-month Large skipper Scarlet tiger moths flying in daytime Daytime cinnabar moths are on the wing around ragworts Cabbage white caterpillars Mullein moth caterpillars Common moths in traps include the elephant hawkmoth and the very common heart-and dart.</p>	<p>Aphids and their ladybird predators Lacewings, Hoverfly adults and larvae Cockchafer beetles fly in the evening Longhorn beetles Leaf-cutter bees Dragonflies damselflies Stag beetles flying Harvestmen</p>	<p>See parent birds feeding fledglings Swifts screaming above</p>	<p>Frogllets emerging from ponds Baby hedgehogs born</p>

	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
July	<p>Peacock butterfly new hatch Painted lady new UK hatch Red Admiral Large white 2nd brood Green-veined white 2nd brood Small white 2nd brood Small skipper Large skipper Small copper 2nd brood Common blue 2nd brood Holly blue 2nd brood Meadow brown Gatekeeper Ringlet Speckled wood Comma Small tortoiseshell Day-flying hummingbird hawk moths until late summer Day-flying burnet moths on mini-meadows. Large caterpillars eg elephant hawk A busy month in the moth trap, with dark arches numerous, and the best month for buff-tip and poplar hawkmoth.</p>	<p>Aphids and their ladybird predators Dragonflies damselflies Soldier beetles Leaf-cutter bees Digger wasps Garden snails may hide and seal their shells in hot dry weather</p>	<p>Swallows and house martins catching insects Dawn chorus falls quiet Song thrush smashing snails for food ‘Odd-looking’ baby birds such as spot-free starling fledglings and spotty blackbird and robin fledglings Many birds onto a second brood</p>	<p>Baby hedgehogs</p>
August	<p>Red Admiral Peacock Painted lady Large white</p>	<p>Shieldbugs Slugs reappear when dry conditions end Crane flies</p>	<p>If dry, look out for birds dust-bathing on bare soil. Garden birds may go quiet while having their summer moult.</p>	<p>Hedgehogs</p>

	<p>Small white Green-veined white Comma 2nd brood Small skipper to mid-month Large skipper to mid-month Small copper Common blue Holly blue Meadow brown Gatekeeper Speckled wood Small tortoiseshell 2nd brood Brimstone New hatch Butterflies and moths including migrants such Cabbage white caterpillars Small tortoiseshell caterpillars on nettles Large caterpillars e.g. Buff tip Migrant hummingbird hawk Large yellow underwing moths can be very abundant in traps, and disturbed from the garden by day</p>		<p>Song thrush smashing snails for food</p>	
	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
Sept	<p>Red Admiral Peacock butterfly Brimstone Small white to mid-month Small copper to mid-month Holly blue to mid-month Meadow brown to mid-month</p>	<p>Late dragonflies eg common darter Wasps on fruit Crane flies Look out for bedewed spider webs catching morning light over long grass into October</p>	<p>Garden birds may seem scarce – they are feeding on abundant natural food outside gardens. Migrant birds may pass through gardens such as chiffchaffs and willow warblers</p>	<p>Hedgehogs Young newts leave ponds</p>

	Speckled wood Small tortoiseshell Migrant hummingbird hawk Moth traps are still busy, with autumn specialists such as the lunar underwing. In southerly winds, migrant moths from Europe.		Swifts, swallows and other summer visitors fly south Robin song starts again as they establish winter territories	
	Butterflies and moths	Insects/ Invertebrates	Birds	Other vertebrates
Oct	Red Admiral to mid-month Peacock to mid-month Small tortoiseshell Brimstone Caterpillars of holly blue on ivy flowers Some specialist autumn moths are about, such as the merveille du jour	Cluster flies appearing indoors Ivy bees flying over ivy flowers Spiders become obvious indoors	Garden bird visibility increasing Starlings gather in groups on trees before flying off to roost Jays very visible on the hunt for acorns, often burying them in lawns	Hedgehogs feeding in preparation for hibernation Newts start to hibernate under cover of rocks or logs Slow worms start to hibernate under cover of rocks or in undisturbed compost heaps Last bats in flight before they hibernate
Nov	The winter moth (females wingless)	Harlequin and other ladybirds in winter aggregations Winter moth and allies as adults Garden snails hibernate often in groups	Absent garden bird species come back to feed with first frosts. Wintering blackcaps arrive from the Continent Feeders and bird tables become busier Migrant geese flying over the garden	Foxes make their triple bark to attract a mate
Dec	Winter moth	Green spruce aphid active on Christmas trees Winter gnats are dancing in sunlit areas – they don't bite	Sunset flights of starling flocks Activity on bird feeders Look out for redwings and fieldfares feeding on holly berries or apples left under the tree Male robins start territory squabbling	