

Are you a wildlife spotter? - Ten species to spot in your garden

This is a little activity to get kids (and adults) out in their gardens looking at what is living close to them. How many can you spot?

Please send in your sightings to [\[TTK – Kinsale Nature Watch – facebook\]](#)– people spotting all ten will be listed on the page!

Any other sightings in your garden or on your bird feeder? Send them in (with a picture if possible)!

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

This cheery little brown bird has a black-streaked brown back and a grey tummy. The males look striking with a black bib, white cheeks and chestnut crown, while the females are greyer. Very sociable never seen alone. Can you spot their nest – it might be under your roof tiles or fascia or in a tree/hedge?



Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*)

This is the most common of our finches, a group of seed-eaters with short beaks. The males are more brightly coloured with a rusty-red breast and cheek, while the crown and nape are blue-grey (females grey-green above and pale below for good camouflage). Both sexes have a double white wing stripe. These sparrow-sized birds like to forage on the ground or at your seedfeeder and build their nests in treeforks.



Blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*)

Slightly smaller than a sparrow, blue tits make for a lively colourful presence in our gardens and are star acrobats on birdfeeders! Their head and wings are blue, with a white face and yellow belly. They like to nest in holes, or nest boxes with small entrances.



Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)

A common garden bird, the male is very distinctive with his glossy black plumage and yellow beak, the female is the same size but with dusky brown beak and feathers. The blackbird has a rich repertoire of songs, often sung from a treetop overlooking his territory. Blackbirds occur singly or in family groups – if in a flock, think starling.



Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)

One of our smallest birds, the wren is “King of the Birds” according to legend. Its scolding call (zeck, zeck, zeck) warns other birds of predators. Much smaller than a sparrow with a short upright tail, it loves dense undergrowth.



Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

The other garden/woodland bird with glossy black plumage and a yellow beak, starlings differ from blackbirds by moving in flocks and having shorter tails as well as yellow-white spots in the plumage. The flocks fly together to roost in the evening, forming a “murmuration”, a spectacular thing to watch!



7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*)

There are probably as many as 20 ladybird species in Ireland – there’s currently a national survey happening to find out for sure, so if you see a ladybird with any number of spots, please submit your sighting on www.biology.ie as well as to our facebook page! This is our most common type, the 7-spotted, but there are also orange, cream and 21-spotted ladybirds, so keep your eyes open! More info on the Irish Ladybirds Facebook page.



Bumblebee (*Bombus* sp.)

Bumblebees are large hairy bees, typically black with yellow or red markings. There are several bumblebee species flying at the moment. They will look very big as they are queens emerging from winter hibernation and looking for a nest spot (which could be in your compost heap!). Look out for the white-tailed bumblebee (in pic), the buff-tailed bumblebee and the early bumblebee, which has a red tail.



Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*)

This sunshine yellow flower offers us a glimpse of spring sunshine on even a grey day! It's a very important nectar source for early-flying bees and other insects and a great source of food and medicine for humans – any plant called *officinale/officinalis* has been listed in a pharmacopoeia as a medicine. The leaves picked before flowering are a nice addition to salad, while the root can be roasted to produce dandelion coffee.



Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)

Most of us readily recognise daisies and children still make daisy chains but did you know that the plant is edible and our local version of arnica (which is a mountain daisy from Switzerland)? Its other common name is bruisewort and the flowers can be crushed and applied to bruises to speed healing. How long a daisy chain can you make without it breaking? Remember to leave enough daisies for the bees!

