

# ENCOURAGING BIRDS



LAND

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## LAND

# Encouraging birds

### WHY?

'Let birds multiply on the earth' (God's blessing in Genesis 1:22). Birds are a dynamic and visible sign of God's intention for life on earth to thrive. That alone gives us a great reason to encourage birds in our church grounds: it is an act of worship to their Creator whilst encouraging others to enjoy creation along with God and us. It is also an easy and fun way to demonstrate our commitment to restoring a troubled planet.

The basic needs of birds – like ours – are simple: safety, food, water and shelter. With a little planning to cover the basics, you will discover that even the smallest patch has potential.

### HOW?

#### SAFETY

Birds need safe places to roost, to give time to their all-important feather care, to socialise, to be protected from danger and reduce food needs by resting. Bushes, trees and ledges give these places: where can you allow them this opportunity? Can you provide areas with such resting places in less disturbed areas of your grounds?

#### FOOD

If the church grounds are generally wildlife-friendly, they will provide food for birds. Wildflowers, bushes and trees are home to the insects, seeds, berries etc. that birds eat. Can you provide such planting in your outdoor space?

<https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/providing-birds/wildlife-gardening/plants-fruits-and-seeds>

Well-maintained feeding stations can be a huge asset all year round. In winter, birds need to find enough food in the short days to survive the long cold nights by generating heat from the calories they eat and using their feathers as insulation. In spring and summer, when parent birds work hard finding natural foods, they can top up their own needs from the food you supply.



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To ensure your bird feeder or table is effective, visit the RSPB for advice. A good feeding station, visible from a window, enables people to enjoy watching the birds:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/feeding-birds/>

### **WATER**

Safe access to clean, fresh water is important both for drinking and cleaning their feathers. Regular washing of feathers in all weather is important to keep them weather-proof and the bird flying! A bird-bath that is raised off the ground near a bush or tree helps them to be safe. Be sure to change the water and clean the bath often to reduce the spread of disease and parasites.

### **SHELTER**

Well-sited and well-designed nest boxes increase the options for nesting. The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) gives advice on nest boxes, how to build them, where to place them and the birds that use them. Not all birds use nest boxes, so bushes, hedges and thick ground cover can help others. The Wildlife Trusts have advice on suitable plants which make good nest places even in small areas – and if the birds don't nest there, other creatures will use them! Avoid quick-grow options such as leylandii or laurel, which are toxic to much of our wildlife.

By providing as much choice of habitat as possible, you are supporting the birds all year round, from chick rearing, to winter roosting and resting places for daytime inactivity.

Why not consider a nest-box camera too? People will enjoy seeing what is going on from the comfort of a screen:

<https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/providing-birds/putting-nest-boxes-birds>

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-provide-bushes-nesting-birds>



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### LONGER READS & OTHER RESOURCES

Both the RSPB and BTO offer lots of advice on planting, providing water, food, nest sites and ideas of projects you can participate in:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/>

<https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help>

Swifts, like house martins and swallows, favour the conditions provided by many churches for their nesting spaces – there is a lot we can do to encourage them:

<https://www.swift-conservation.org/>

<http://actionforswifts.blogspot.com/>