

Winter Watchlist

#Winterwatchlist #Ashtonhayesprimaryschool

Robin singing – Easy



Robins are one of the few birds that sing over winter, because they defend their territories all year round. They'll even sing after dark under streetlights, long after every other songbird has settled down for the night. Compared to the loud, rich and varied song that they sing in spring, the winter song is much weaker and more melancholy.

Corvid roost – Easy



Corvids, such as jackdaws, rooks and crows can be seen gathering in spectacular numbers at roost sites throughout the country. The roosts are dominated by mainly juvenile and other non-breeding birds. This gathering is thought to act as a way to exchange information about the best feeding sites in the area.

First Snowdrops - Easy



Snowdrops are small white flowers that will start to emerge throughout January to March. Despite the cold weather they are one of the first to bloom showing a sign that Spring is not far round the corner.

Smell of gorse flowers – Easy



In a bid to avoid predation on its seeds during the spring and summer, gorse flowers all year round, even in the depths of winter. Its flowers have a wonderful, distinctive, coconut scent.

Jelly ear/oyster fungus – Easy



Jelly ear fungus is common across the UK and grows on deadwood in damp, shady corners.

Hazel flowers – Medium



Distributed all over the UK, the first hazel flowers of the year typically appear in January, before the leaves. Hazel trees are 'monoecious' which means male and female flowers occur on one tree. Look out for the yellow male catkins glowing in the low winter sunlight, and then get up close and search for the beautiful and tiny pink female flowers.

Great spotted woodpecker drumming – Medium



Great spotted woodpeckers will visit peanut feeders during the winter. You may start to hear them drumming on trees. The thumping sound echoes out across the forest and is the start of the woodpeckers establishing breeding territories and trying to attract a mate.

Foxes screeching at night – Medium



For foxes, winter is all about mating. Their eerie, far carrying sounds pierce through the cold, still air as males defend territories and vixens call for their attention.

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Winter migrant gatherings: fieldfare, redwing, brambling, waxwing – Medium



In winter the UK gets an influx of winter migrants that are often seen together in groups. They come here usually to escape the colder harsher weather of further north. Fieldfare, redwings and waxwings can be seen feeding ferociously on berry trees, while bramblings can be seen in large mixed flocks often with chaffinches as they search the forest floor for seeds. Redwing and fieldfare are both a similar size and shape to song thrushes. You can tell them apart using the bold cream-coloured stripe across the redwing's eyebrow, and it's rusty red underwing. Fieldfares on the other hand, have white underwings and a grey head.

Winter moth – Medium



The winter moth is one of the few moths that can cope with the low temperatures of winter and can be seen as adults from October to January. The males and females look very different though as unlike the male, the females of the species cannot fly, having only stumpy wings. To attract a mate then, the female must crawl up a tree, instead of fly. They then give off pheromones that attract the males to them.

Hair ice – Hard



Hair ice is a rare phenomenon which requires very specific conditions to form, but is instantly recognisable when it does appear. It only materialises in association with a fungus called *Exidiopsis effusa* which grows on moist, rotting, deadwood, and on days when the weather is humid and the temperature dips just below 0 degrees celcius.

Mistle thrush guarding berries – Hard



During the winter, mistle thrushes exhibit an unusual behaviour; guarding berry bushes, including holly, yew and mistletoe. This tactic should hopefully insure they have a larder full of berries ready to eat all through the toughest winter months.

Glue crust fungus – Hard



Widespread across the UK but more common on the damper west coast. Glue crust fungus (*Hymenochaete corrugata*) has a very clever way of travelling - it traverses the canopies of hazel trees by glueing branches together! As well as allowing the fungus to spread, its welding abilities allow it to 'catch' dead branches and other woody material in the canopy, and effectively store it there to feed on.