

Mí na Nollag – Gairdín éan na scoile

Paddy Madden continues his series of SESE tips

December

Hands-on: the school bird garden

What is it?

An area or areas in the school grounds devoted to trees, shrubs, climbers, grasses and other herbaceous plants, feeders and nesting sites for the welfare of birds.

Background information

Some bird species are in serious decline mainly because of loss of habitat. Schools can remedy this by making the school grounds bird-friendly.

Did you know?

In the survey, Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2008-2013 conducted by BirdWatch Ireland and the RSPB (Northern Ireland), alarming declines in a number of bird populations across the island were identified. Those that had declined by over 70% were placed on a 'Red List'. Some of these included the barn owl, corncrake, yellowhammer (90% decline), and yellow wagtail. 25 in total have been allocated to this list. In

1999 there were 18 on the list.

The Countryside Bird Survey 1998-2010 identified an increase in Goldfinches and Stonechats but a decline in skylarks, kestrels, greenfinches, swifts and grey wagtails. The most notable decline was in the goldcrest species.

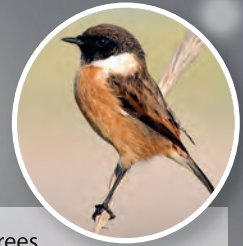
Very few children recognise the chaffinch, one of our commonest birds!

A sample of some feeders:

- ✶ Tits love caterpillars, spiders and greenflies which they

find on trees, bushes, annuals and herbaceous plants.

- ✶ Finches love the seeds found in a wildflower meadow and a sunflower forest.
- ✶ Starlings and blackbirds love a lawn area where they find leatherjackets and worms.
- ✶ Dunnocks and robins love leaf litter where they find a great variety of invertebrates such as slugs and worms.
- ✶ Thrushes love snails, worms and berries.



Stonechat. Pic: Mary Twomey.

A bird survey**Are the school grounds bird friendly?****Food****Shrubs with berries?**

Pyracantha Cotoneaster
Honeysuckle Ivy

Holly □

Privet

Viburnum opulus

Native shrubs with berries?

Holly Wild privet

Honeysuckle

Bramble

Trees with fruit and seed?

Hawthorn Elder

Bird cherry

Crab apple

Shrubs with insects?

Hawthorn-149*

Blackthorn-109*

Dog-rose-100*

Hazel-73*

Holly-7*

Trees with insects?

Oak-284*

Willow-266*

Birch-229*

Crab-93*

Scots Pine-91*

Alder-90*

Elm-82*

Ash-41*

Lime-31*

Sycamore-15*

Flowers with seed?

Sunflowers

Teasel

Snapdragon

Asters

Wild grasses

Other food sources

Rotting logs

Heap of leaf mould

Leaf litter

Nuts in a feeder

Bird table with food

Health

Bird bath

Hollow place with sand

Muddy place

Shelter

Thick hedge

Evergreen shrubs

Wooded area

Nesting

Honeysuckle

Hole in tree trunk

Native hedgerow

Stone wall with crevices

Trees of different heights

Evergreen shrubs & trees

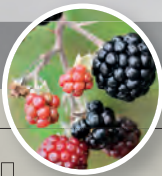
Nesting boxes (facing north east, east or south east)

Wide eaves for swifts, starlings & sparrows

String bags with feathers, wool, hair & moss for nest

*The figure refers to the number of insect species found on the tree.

Paddy Madden & Marian Rollins



Blackberries. Pic: Mary Twomey.



Mistle thrush on a Yew tree. Pic: Mary Twomey.

**Literacy/Litearthacht**

- ✶ **Bird habitat/Gnáthóg Éan:** A place that has food and shelter for birds. Áit a bhfuil bia agus dídean ann d'éin.

- ✶ **Bird-feeder/Beathadán Éan:** A hanging container which has food such as nuts and seeds for birds. Soitheach ar crochadh a bhfuil bia (cnónna agus síolta, mar shampla) ann d'éin.

- ✶ **Bird-table/Bord Éan:** A moveable table

on which food is placed daily for birds to eat. Bord inaistrithe ar a gcuirtear, go laethúil, bia d'éin.

- ✶ **Bird-box/Bosca Éan:** Wooden box with suitable openings to attract different species of birds to nest. Bosca déanta as adhmaid le hoscailtí oiriúnacha ann chun speicis dhifriúla d'éin a mhealladh chuige chun nead a thógáil ann.

- ✶ **Bird-hide/Falachán Éanbhreathnóireachta:** A camouflaged viewing shelter to spot birds.

Dídean a bhfuil duaithníocht curtha air ionas gur féidir breathnú ar éin uaidh.

- ✶ **Leaf-litter/Easair Dhuilli:** Rotting leaves under trees which attract many species of vertebrates and invertebrates for feeding and shelter. Duilleoga lofa faoi chrainn a mheallann chun beathaithe agus chun dídine go leor speiceas de veirteabraigh agus d'inveirteabraigh.

Buíochas do Marie Whelton (MIE) don aistriúchán.



Suitable plants to attract birds to the garden

Trees		Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>), Crab Apple (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>), Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), Oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i> and <i>robur</i>) and Willow (<i>Salix</i> spp)
Shrubs	Native	Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>), Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), Bird Cherry (<i>Prunus padus</i>)
	Non-native	Herring-bone plant (<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>), Firethorn (<i>Pyracantha</i> 'Orange Glow'), June Berry (<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>), Butterfly Bush (<i>Buddleia</i> spp), Quince (<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i>).
Climbers	Native	Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>), Dogrose (<i>Rosa canina</i>), Sweet Briar (<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>), Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>), Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>)
Herbaceous plants	Native	Teazel (<i>Dipsacus sylvestris</i>), Common Knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>), Meadowsweet (<i>Filipendula ulmaris</i>), Lesser Burdock (<i>Arctium minus</i>), Common Bird's-Foot-Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>).
	Non native	Sunflower (<i>Helianthus annuus</i>), Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhium</i> spp), Michaelmas Daisies (<i>Aster</i> spp), Honesty (<i>Lunaria biennis</i>), Common Evening Primrose (<i>Oenothera biennis</i>)



Holly

Planting

- Plant bare-rooted trees and shrubs to make a mini-wood or hedgerow in any month with an 'r' except September and April. Include a log-habitat in the wood.
- Sow a wildflower meadow in

April or September.

Strategies

- Place bird-boxes with different sizes of entrance holes and gaps in place in mid-winter.
- From November to March (earlier if weather is very cold)

provide birds with food on a bird table or hanging feeder. Clean bird-table regularly with boiling water and move regularly as well.

- Supply fresh water daily.
- Ensure that feeding continues over the school breaks.

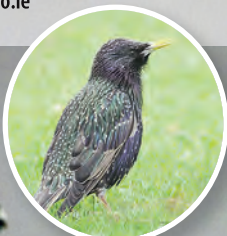
Resources Websites mentioned plus:

- www.futureforests.net Good source for native trees and shrubs. They will send these to schools bare rooted.
- www.birdwatchireland.ie Good site relating to birds in Ireland.
- www.rspb.co.uk Good site for identifying birds and listening to their calls.
- www.naturedetectives.org.uk Good site for activities on studying birds in school.
- www.learnnc.org/lp/media/articles/wildnb0701/birddiagram.pdf Parts of a bird.
- www.biology.ie Submission of bird sightings.
- www.enfo.ie

General information on birds.

- www.birdsireland.com/ Website of bird expert, Eric Dempsey.
- www.fatbirdier.com/links_geo/europe/ireland.html Interesting facts on birds in different counties.
- The complete field-guide to Ireland's birds*, by Eric Dempsey and Michael O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan, 2010)
- Pocket guide to the common birds of Ireland*, by Eric Dempsey and Michael O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan, 1995)
- Birdwatching in Ireland with Eric Dempsey* (Gill & Macmillan, 1995)
- Go Wild at School*, Chapter 5 A Bird Sanctuary.

Haws


Starling.
Pic: Mary Twomey.


Cotoneaster

Robin on bird table.
Pic: Cormac Madden.

Bullfinch.
Pic: Mary Twomey.

Robin on bird table.
Pic: Cormac Madden.

Bullfinch.
Pic: Mary Twomey.


PADDY MADDEN lectures on SESE in the Marino Institute of Education. He also gives short courses to whole staffs on school gardening. His book *Go Wild At School*, has recently been reprinted. Available for €18 from paddy.madden@mie.ie (Includes p&p). More info on school gardens on www.schoolearthead.ie

Tits on a home made bird feeder. Pic: Cormac Madden.

