

## Gardening for Wildlife

Many man-made/human agency habitats enter on a course of evolution (colonisation by fauna and flora) from their construction through to the time of their abandonment.

There is a growing realisation and appreciation of the ecological importance of urban habitats (not least of all domestic gardens, urban green-space and utility areas) for wildlife.

Urban habitats form a mosaic populated and exploited by wildlife including those identified as, *Synathropes* (*Synanthropic* ~ species ecologically associated with human activities and human habitations).

**Townscapes, Cityscapes, and the Urbanside mimic natural habitats including...**

Motorway embankment = downland or scrub

Roof = alpine meadow

Tall building = cliff face

Canal = linear pond

Shrubbery = woodland shrub layer .....

## What Potential does your Garden have for Wildlife

Answer the following questions and then add up the scores, comparing them with the comments at the end.

Score no points for a), one for b) and three for c).

### 1. Do you have a garden pond?

- a) No
- b) Yes, but it is overgrown/polluted/steeply sided with few plants and it is full of goldfish.
- c) Yes, a pond with gently sloping sides, with plants attracting insects, frogs, toads and newts.

### 2. Do you have trees and shrubs or hedges?

- a). No
- b). Yes, but none are native, attracting little wildlife e.g., conifers or sycamore.
- c). Yes, native species or introduced species which attract wildlife e.g., Buddleia.

### 3. Are there climbers on walls and fences?

- a) None
- b) Yes, but exotic species e.g., passion flower and cultivated clematis species.
- c) Yes, native species e.g., Ivy, Honeysuckle and Wild Clematis (Old Man's Beard).

**4. Do you have flowers and herbs?**

- a) None
- b) Yes, but exotic, cultivated species eg Pelargoniums and Begonias.
- c) Yes, native flowers and herbs or those rich in pollen e.g., Lavender, Rosemary, Golden Rod and Sedum. Also, those which provide seeds for birds and mammals e.g., Globe Thistle and Teasel.

**5. Are there nesting boxes in the garden?**

- a) None
- b) Yes, but in an exposed place / poor state of repair / never cleaned out.
- c) Yes, cleaned regularly, placed in a good position in cover of bushes or trees safe and secure (if you have a bat box score 2 extra points).

**6. Do you feed the birds in your garden?**

- a) Never or only with salted peanuts.
- b) Yes, but with bits of old bread now and then.
- c) Yes, using a mixture of seeds and nuts, fats and cheese on a bird table or use a hopper for nuts away from cats and squirrels.

(Score 1 extra point for providing water for birds all year around - especially in summer).7

**8. Does your garden have a lawn or grassy areas?**

- a) No or yes but obsessively sprayed and fertilised to kill every 'weed'
- b) Yes, a weedy lawn regularly cut
- c) Yes, with long grass or managed as a wild flower meadow with meadow grasses and wild flowers.

**9. Have you an area that is a wild patch with tall weeds, nettles, dandelions and brambles?**

- a) No
- b) Yes, but only because I haven't got round to cutting it down yet
- c) Yes, managed to encourage insects and food plants for butterfly larvae.

**10 Do you use pesticides and herbicides in your garden?**

Do you use them: -

- a) Regularly
- b) Occasionally
- c) Never, or if so, only mild treatments such as soapy water on aphids, rather than by commercial, chemical means.

## SCORES

33-35    **Excellent**, you have a very good nature garden or the basis for an important reserve. Hard to improve on but keep up the good work.

10-24    **Not bad**, you have a lot of potential for wildlife but better management or the creation of more habitats could make a lot of difference.

0-9        **You have some work to do** but don't be downhearted, the seemingly worst areas can be transformed with careful planning and advice.

## GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE, SOME POINTS TO PONDER

- How attitudes have changed. What would your great grandparents have thought of you sharing your garden with varmints and vermin?
- In the UK your garden is one of 15 million gardens that make up a mosaic/green matrix of habitats.
- UK Domestic gardens add up to 2million acres of gardens, that's 41 times the size of Salisbury Plain.

- How about being a little less tidy in the garden, in fact try to do a little bit worse!
- Why not create a 'shambolic border'?
- Why not go for some 'wildspace'?
- Aim for some connectivity so that wildlife can more easily access and exit your garden.
- Why do so many wild animals inhabit domestic gardens? Could it be that many domestic gardens provide territory, food, water, shelter, protection from predators?
- The old adage 'Habitat holds' relates as much to the domestic garden as to designated nature reserves.
- There is little conservation through neglect.