

Help wildlife this winter

Winter can be a challenging season for wildlife with harsh weather, low temperatures and much less food around.

Scottish Natural Heritage's Biodiversity Manager Debbie Bassett shares a range of ways to give nature a helping hand this winter:

Be a lazy gardener. Leaving some areas overgrown or filled with leaves and twigs gives insects, frogs, toads and small animals a quiet and cosy place to hide during the colder months.



A male Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) eating seed from a bird feeder. ©Lorne Gill/SNH

Use your food scraps. Keep a food scraps tub by your cooker – any bits suitable to feed birds and other wildlife can go straight into it. Bruised or overly-soft fruit that may otherwise go to waste – or in the compost bin – can also be

left out for badgers, foxes and birds. Cut it in half and leave it on the grass or spike it on a tree branch. The blackbirds will love you for it.

Most people are aware white bread is a no-no for ducks – polluting the water and making them ill. But healthy snacks including corn – tinned, frozen, dried or fresh – lettuce and other greens cut into pieces will make you popular at your local duck pond this winter.

Garden ponds can be a great water source for passing wildlife but, when temperatures drop, ice can be tricky. A prolonged freeze can mean problems for fish and hibernating frogs and newts. Gently crack the ice to make a hole or float a ball in the water to help stop it freezing.

Debbie said: “Our winter wildlife loves lazy gardeners at this time of year, and these quick and easy tips are great ways you can help our animals and birds.

“Putting out extra food can help birds and mammals up their energy reserves when food sources are scarce and get them through the winter.

“Winter is a great time to get out into nature and even though these tips help our wildlife, they are also fun too!”

#HelpNatureThisWinter.



Goldfinch perching on cherry tree branch, Wolfhill, Tayside.
©Lorne Gill/SNH