

## Encouraging birds, bats and butterflies in your garden

### Key habitats

Provide as many habitats as possible, but avoid cramming too much in and focus on what can be done well in the space you have. A lawn, trees and shrubs, flowers and water are key habitats. Look to create smaller microhabitats within these. Here are a few examples:

Long grass provides habitat for egg laying and over wintering of caterpillars and leather jackets. Blackbirds and starlings search for leather jackets (cranefly grubs) in short grass.

Different species of tree and shrub and flowering plants provide nectar and other food sources through the year.

Rotational shrub cutting creates different structures and ages of growth, benefiting different wildlife at different times.

A water feature with different depths is great for wildlife. Shallow areas are used by bathing and drinking birds, emerging dragonflies and somewhere for amphibians to lay eggs. Deeper areas help aquatic insects survive cold spells and are good places to watch newts swimming.



**Birds bathing**



**Leather jackets  
(cranefly grubs)**



**Blackbird feeding on  
winter berries**

## **Somewhere to breed and shelter**

Wildlife requires two fundamental things: somewhere safe to breed and shelter and somewhere to forage throughout the year.

Grow climbers against walls to provide shelter and roosting and breeding sites for birds.

A thick, well-developed, thorny shrub bed or hedge provides nest sites and shelter for wildlife.

A bat box provides roosting sites for bats, a pile of leaves may be used by a hibernating hedgehog and a bird box provides somewhere for house sparrows to raise their broods.

Leave tidying of borders and shrubs until late winter or early spring to provide shelter for insects through winter.

Honesty and hedge garlic provides somewhere for orange tip butterflies to breed. Brimstone butterflies breed on buckthorn bushes.

Short lengths of drinking straws, hollow canes or plant stems, tied in bundles are excellent nesting sites for beneficial lacewings and ladybirds.

Dead wood is good for beetles and other specialist beneficial insects, fungi and mosses.



**Bat box**



**Robin in a bird box**



**Brimstone butterfly**

## **Somewhere to forage and feed**

Creating a range of habitat niches provides different areas and opportunities for wildlife to feed at different times of year.

Early and late flowering plants provide nectar for insects at critical times - just after emergence or prior to hibernation.

Tidy borders and cut shrubs in late winter and early spring to help retain seeds and fruit for birds and small mammals throughout winter.

Ivy is a late source of autumn nectar for insects and late winter fruit for birds.

Fruiting bushes are a good source of food for birds and mammals during the autumn and part of the winter.

Annual plants that produce many seeds in late summer are a good source of seed for birds through autumn into winter.

Many baby birds need insects - a good source of protein - if they are to grow strong and healthy and survive the winter. A variety of garden plants encourages these insects. Ivy is a late source of autumn nectar for insects and late winter fruit for birds.

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For more advice on attracting birds, bees, butterflies and bats to your garden visit

**[http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly\\_garden.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/wildlife-friendly_garden.asp)**

**<http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profiles0506/wildlife.asp>**

**<http://www.bats.org.uk/helpline/documents/EncouragingBats.pdf>**