



# House Sparrow



Did you know House Sparrows like to feed and breed near people? They can be found from the centre of cities, towns and villages to the farmland of the countryside.



UK house sparrow populations dropped by 71 per cent between 1977 and 2008, but the population has recently been increasing in Northern Ireland – great news!



You can help birds in your garden during the winter months by leaving out fresh water and a food supply, such as seeds and nuts.



Find out more about our feathered friends at the Big Garden Bird Watch at Legg Park, Carrickfergus on Saturday 27 January, from 11am to 1pm. See what birds you can find and learn how to make bird feeders from recycled materials!



You can also complete the Big Garden Birdwatch in your own garden and record your sightings at:  
[www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch](http://www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch)

# January



February

# Hedgehog



Hedgehogs will be coming out of hibernation soon!  
Hedgehogs usually hibernate from November to March.



Hedgehogs eat mainly beetles, caterpillars, earthworms and slugs.



Did you know there are approximately 5-7000 spines on an average adult hedgehog?



Did you know baby hedgehogs are called hoglets.



Hedgehogs travel around one mile every night through our parks and gardens to find enough food, and a mate. If you have an enclosed garden you might be getting in the way of their plans. You can help by creating a hedgehog hole in your garden fence to create one big hedgehog highway! Please garden organically, pesticides such as slug pellets can poison hedgehogs.



For more information visit: [www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)

# Harbour Porpoise



The harbour porpoise is the smallest and most common cetacean found in the coastal waters of Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the population is decreasing due to accidents with commercial fishing nets and equipment, climate change and ocean pollution.



You can help by making sure your plastic waste gets properly disposed of and doesn't end up in our sea, and by using recycled materials as much as you can.



Sightings off the coast of Northern Ireland are common at all times of the year. Come along to one of our Whale Watches this Spring and see for yourself!



## Whale Watch

Portmuck, Sunday 25 March, 2pm to 5pm

## Whale Watch

Garron Point, Sunday 29 April, 2pm to 5pm

# March



April

# Barn Owl



The barn owl is one of Northern Ireland's most iconic species, but unfortunately one of the most endangered with less than 50 breeding pairs estimated to be left in Northern Ireland. One of the reasons is lack of suitable nesting sites. So, with the help of local schools we have installed three custom built barn owl boxes across the Borough for these beautiful birds, and continue to monitor them.



Did you know barn owls often swallow their food whole and bits of fur and bone are then coughed up as an owl pellet?



Barn owls don't actually hoot, they screech!



If you see a barn owl please report it, this will add to valuable Northern Ireland wide research.



For more information visit:  
[www.ulsterwildlife.org/barnowl](http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/barnowl)



May

# Bees



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is one of eight local authorities involved in the 'Bee-licious' project, which is funded by Heritage Lottery Funding. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is working to raise awareness of bees and improve their habitat.



Did you know there are hundreds of bees in Northern Ireland including bumblebees, honeybees and solitary bees?



Did you see the Bee-licious wildflower meadow at Ecos Nature Park? This meadow was sown with wildflower seeds including corn poppy, oxeye daisy and field scabious, by volunteers and local school children, and will be in bloom again this summer.



Did you know pollinators are essential for the production of food and contribute an estimated £1.8bn to the UK's farming economy every year?



Find out more about how you can help bees in your own garden at Eden Allotment Gardens, Thurs 14 June, 6 to 8pm



## Beelicious Bees

Learn about 'beelicious' gardening from a local expert. Give your bees a home and provide food for them by choosing the right plants. Sample some 'beelicious' products!

[www.midandeantrim.gov.uk](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk)

# Common Swift



June



These migrant birds return from their wintering grounds in Africa to the same spot in Northern Ireland each year to breed.



Swifts nest in holes - old buildings, in gaps under roof tiles and eaves, or in specially designed swift boxes - so you'll never see them building a nest outside.



The swift is a superb flier. They even sleep on the wing! The best time to look for swifts is dusk or dawn in June and July.

Did you know swifts have tiny feet and legs and can hardly walk?



We completed a swift survey across the Borough and found them at many locations including Carnlough, Glenarm, Larne, Whitehead, Ballymena, Cullybackey, Ahoghill, Portglenone and Kells – great news!



You can report any swift sightings at: [www.rspb.org.uk/swift](http://www.rspb.org.uk/swift)



# Common Lizard



The Common Lizard is Northern Ireland's only native reptile.



Lizards hibernate in winter. They are active only during the day because they need heat from the sun or their surroundings to raise their temperature. Then they can start actively moving. They eat spiders, small insects, worms, caterpillars and other invertebrates.



Did you know that if a lizard is caught by a predator the tail can break off allowing the lizard to escape? The lizard will grow a new tail, often shorter and blunter than the original.



You can help by looking out for lizards on sunny days, basking on rocks or stone walls and reporting any sightings.

July

# Common Pipistrelle



August



The common pipistrelle is the smallest of our bat species weighing in at only 3 to 6gm. They hibernate during winter. From March through to October they emerge at dusk to feed on insects including moths, midges, mosquitoes and lacewings.



Did you know the common pipistrelle can eat 3,500 insects a night?



Did you know bats have full legal protection and it is an offence to harm or disturb bats as well as the places where they live?



We celebrate International Bat Night each year. Come along and discover more about beautiful bats!



Bat Walk: Saturday 25 August, 8pm to 10pm  
Galgorm Wood, Cullybackey  
(Meeting at Old Mill Park entrance)



You can help by being tolerant of bats should they roost on your property, by installing a bat box, and by recording any sightings via the Northern Ireland Bat Group [www.bats-ni.org.uk](http://www.bats-ni.org.uk)

# Red Squirrel



**Red squirrels eat a variety of seeds, nuts, fungi, bark, buds and berries**



Red squirrels do not hibernate; in very cold weather they will stay in their nests for a day or two, but they cannot survive for longer periods without food.



The red squirrel is believed to have been present in Ireland since the end of the last Ice Age but unfortunately they are currently in decline.



Did you know grey squirrels are a major threat to the survival of the red squirrel population? Greys are larger than reds and can out-compete them for food, greys also carry a viral disease (Parapox virus) which can be fatal to reds.



Baby squirrels are called kittens. North-east Antrim has the largest number of red squirrel only areas in Northern Ireland.



Find out more about what you can do to help during Red Squirrel Awareness Day Walk and Talks on 23 September 2018 (locations TBC)

# September



# Common Frog



Common frogs have no tail and mostly jump rather than walk. They can range from olive-green to brown in colour and can have spots or stripes on their smooth skin.



Frog spawn is laid in clumps in Spring and the lifecycle of a frog includes the tadpole and froglet stages. Frogs will return to the same pond each year.



Did you know frogs can make a high pitched scream if they feel threatened?



Frogs can overwinter at the bottom of ponds, they bury themselves down in the silt and take in oxygen through their skin. But some like to overwinter in compost heaps, under decking and under sheds.



You can create frog friendly features in your own garden such as a small wildlife pond, log piles or compost heaps which provide good shelter. Please garden organically, chemicals are bad news for frogs, insects and all other wildlife.

# October



# Black Guillemot



The black guillemot is one of our most charismatic birds with important populations breeding along the coastline. The black guillemot's striking black and white plumage and bright red feet make it easy to identify.



They feed on small fish and crustaceans like gobies, blenny, stickleback, butterfish, shrimps and prawns.



Black guillemots like to nest in rock crevices and under boulders but many nest in man-made structures like harbour walls.



Did you know we built 10 guillemot boxes to install along the coast, with volunteers and schools, as part of the 'Give a Guillemot a home' project?



Look out for black guillemots next time you visit Glenarm Harbour, Larne Lough or Carrickfergus Marina.

November



# Mute Swan



The mute swan is a very large white waterbird. These birds feed mainly on water plants but occasionally feed on small amphibians, snails and insects.



Despite the name, mute swans are not mute! Adults make a snorting or rumbling sound. Juveniles beg with high-pitched whistle.



Did you know mute swans hiss when they are alarmed?



Did you know bread is bad for swans, and in fact, all birds? You can help by feeding swans good foods such as wheat, barley, oats, rice birdseed mix, grapes (cut in half), frozen peas or corn (defrosted, no need to cook), chopped lettuce and chopped vegetable (trimmings or peels).



You can observe these beautiful birds at Ecos Nature Park, Ballymena and Carrickfergus Mill Ponds Local Nature Reserve.

December



# More Information



For more information on the wonderful wildlife in the Borough you can download the Local Biodiversity Action Plan below.



[www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/biodiversity)



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