



SPECIES

Photos: Norman Crowson, Norman Crowson

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)

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All about the bullfinch

- In Britain and Ireland bullfinch pairs stay together, usually in the same area all year, and mostly for life. Their distinctive fluted contact call is often heard before the birds are seen, however they do not sing as much as most other finches, as they are fairly relaxed about defending territory.
- Bullfinches eat buds, and years ago were considered a major problem by fruit growers. Sadly, their populations are dramatically reduced and they pose no threat. Their beaks and unusually long digestive system helps them handle and process buds. They also eat a wide range of seeds.
- While many finches like open country, bullfinches much prefer well-grown scrub and woodland. Here they can feed unseen and nest in undergrowth or less-trimmed hedges.

Why do bullfinches need our help?

Loss of suitable breeding habitat and reduction in the availability of food. Loss of food-rich farmland (fruit and seeds). Loss of scrub, woodland and hedgerows as nesting and wintering sites.

How can we help?

- Bullfinches can feed in gardens where there are trees and large shrubs, but they are quiet, shy and often go unnoticed. They rarely use nest boxes and are not readily attracted to bird feeders.
- Traditional field hedges have helpful food plants and if they are allowed to gain height and thickness can be a great help, especially if there is nearby woodland.
- Such hedgerows are also a great source of insects needed by the growing young.
- Plant fruiting trees and bushes, as well as maple and sycamore, which are some of their favourites. These are especially important as replacement species when dealing with Ash Die Back.

DID YOU KNOW? The bullfinch's call is a soft piping note that carries surprisingly far, you often hear the call but don't see the caller!

How do I monitor and record?

- The best way of monitoring the species is through recording in spring at suitable nest site habitats, such as hedgerows. This can only be achieved through familiarising yourself with the song and call. Watch carefully for nesting pairs but please remember not to disturb the nests themselves. In winter populations can be monitored by feeding birds seed or fruit at bird tables in suitable habitat.
- Enter records into iRecord.

Learn more

- bto.org/understanding-birds/species-focus/bullfinch/
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at naturalist@arocha.org