

SMALL GARDEN BIRDS by Dave and Gill Shearing

Most of us have a garden that might give you an opportunity, when drinking your beverage of choice, to see what birds frequent your outside space.

I would describe House Sparrows as the 'cheeky chappies' of the garden. They are usually in small groups, and they constantly squabble. They emit an irritating 'cheep' with no melody or sweet sound.



Another brown bird that can be seen and heard is the Dunnock. At first glance, although not related, it could be mistaken for a Sparrow, indeed it's common name is Hedge Sparrow, but it's song is delightful, sweet and melodious.

Almost everyone, of all ages, recognises the Robin with its red breast. The male and female are virtually identical and uniquely are the only male and female birds to sing identical songs. They will sometimes sing all night perched near a street light. For centuries this tiny bird has been the symbol of good luck, happiness, rebirth and sometimes even as a messenger for lost loved ones.



They are known to build their domed nest made of grass, dead leaves and moss in the most unlikely places e.g. old shoes, flower pots, watering cans and even post boxes but the usual place would be deep in ivy on a wall.

Blackbirds are reasonably common in gardens as they search the lawns for their favourite food, worms. They often sing from the top of a tree or a rooftop early morning or in the evening and especially after rain. In New Zealand, where they were introduced from the UK in the 19th century they are regarded as pests because they have taken to eating the grapes in the vineyards.



