# RSPB reports alarming decline in starling population during Big Garden Birdwatch



The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) has reported a significant decline in the starling population, marking the lowest number recorded in the history of its Big Garden Birdwatch, a long-standing citizen science initiative. The event, which took place during the last weekend of January, saw nearly 600,000 people participate by counting birds in their gardens or local green spaces for one hour. This year's results have raised alarm among conservationists regarding the future of the species.

Notably, starlings, once a staple of British gardens, have fallen from third to fourth place in terms of the most commonly seen species, experiencing an 85 per cent drop in average numbers observed per garden since the initiative's inception in 1979. Beccy Speight, chief executive of the RSPB, expressed concern over these findings, stating that "this year’s Big Garden Birdwatch result is a reason for concern." She highlighted the broader implications for biodiversity, noting that one in six species in Great Britain is at risk of extinction.

Starlings are commonly found across the UK, their numbers typically peaking in winter when additional birds arrive from northern Europe. They are also known for their spectacular aerial displays called “murmurations.” Despite their widespread presence, the species is currently classified as “red-listed” due to ongoing population declines. Research indicates that the UK breeding population of starlings has seen a drastic decrease of 82 per cent from 1970 to 2022.

The RSPB has indicated that more research is needed to ascertain the specific causes behind the starling’s decline. The Big Garden Birdwatch has traditionally identified starlings as one of the most prevalent bird species in gardens; prior to the year 2000, they regularly topped the list.

In light of these concerns, Speight suggested that individuals can contribute positively to the welfare of starlings and other wildlife by making simple changes at home. Among the recommendations from the RSPB are reducing the use of pesticides, maintaining a natural lawn conducive to foraging, and mowing grass occasionally to provide an open environment for the birds. Additionally, the charity encourages installing nest boxes with a specific design to support starling nesting.

This year’s birdwatch identified house sparrows at the top of the list of observed species, though they too have experienced a steep decline of 55 per cent in average numbers since the survey began. Blue tits and wood pigeons followed in second and third place, respectively, with the latter two species showing an increase in garden presence compared to earlier data. In contrast, other common species such as blackbirds and robins have also faced declines since the survey's inception.

Speight further underscored the need for collective efforts to counteract the decline of wildlife, stating, “To halt nature’s decline and turn around the fortunes of our native species, we need to help them return to healthy levels." She called for increased support from both individuals and wider entities, including governments and businesses, to foster a healthier natural environment.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/rspb-europe-b2731342.html> - This article supports the claim about the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch recording the lowest number of starlings and the significant decline in their population. It also mentions the RSPB's concerns and recommendations for supporting starlings.
* <https://www.birdguides.com/articles/conservation/the-decline-of-british-starlings/> - This article corroborates the severe decline of British starlings, highlighting the 51% drop in the breeding population from 1995 to 2016 and the challenges in understanding the causes of this decline.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/rspb-europe-b2731342.html> - This article provides additional details on the position of starlings in the Big Garden Birdwatch rankings and the overall biodiversity concerns in the UK.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source is mentioned as a reference for the initial article about starling declines, though it does not directly provide additional supporting information.
* <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-other-garden-birds/creating-a-starling-friendly-garden/> - Although not directly mentioned in the search results, this RSPB webpage typically provides guidance on supporting starlings, aligning with Speight's recommendations for making homes more starling-friendly.