

Nature Notes in February

What to See and Hear

1. At this time of year it is easier to see the small and secretive mosses and liverworts, collectively called bryophytes growing on soil, walls and trees. You might see a slight green sheen on undisturbed soil. This is a web of interlacing threads called a moss protonema.



Moss protonema



Two mosses in my border

This grows into the moss we all know. Keep a look out for flower-like growths in the damp spring weather. These produce eggs and surprisingly do not grow into another moss but grow on the moss to produce a capsule on a long stem. These release spores which finally grow into a moss protonema and the cycle is complete. Can you spot the 2 mosses I found in a 2cm square area of my border?

There are over 700 different species in Britain and a staggering 12,000 plus worldwide!

2. Listen out for increasing birdsong but to catch the best you'll have to be an early riser as bird activity is at its peak early in the morning. I heard the beautiful song thrush in a tree on Breachfield Road recently; sadly its numbers have declined by over 50% since the 1970s. Saint Valentines was thought to be the day birds chose their mates. Many birds begin to sing much earlier to defend their territory and attract a mate.
3. Look out for early flowers such as primroses, celandine and wood violet.

What to do

1. Provide hanging bird feeder as many garden birds like these. Blackbirds, starlings and thrushes are ground feeders so scattering food is good for them as long as there are no feline visitors!
2. Don't tidy up gardens as many insects and spiders over winter under fallen leave and they also provide food for birds such as blackbirds.
3. Clear away a patch of snow, if it has fallen, so that birds such as thrushes can find bugs in your lawn.
4. Learn some birdsongs and a few key facts at the RSPB site: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-songs/what-bird-is-that/>