

I know that most of you are run off your feet at this time of year, but please try to remember to feed your local birds.

The weather has taken a chilly turn recently, and the combination of cold winds and driving rain has caused many birds to return to gardens for sustenance. Gardens are an invaluable source of food for British birds; Nearly half of UK households put food out for birds, who rely on this help to survive the winter and enter the spring in a fit condition to breed.

I often get asked what food is suitable for birds. My response is normally quite longwinded as different birds have different tastes, and this often changes during the year. However, I've just come across a very good guide on the RSPB website [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) and will refer people there in future.

Basically, there are lots of things you can feed birds (and some you shouldn't) ranging from specially bought food to kitchen scraps. Loads of places sell bird food nowadays and there is lots of choice. Peanuts, fatballs and birdcake are all well received, but take care when you buy seed mixes. Many include large seeds such as wheat, rice, peas and lentils which are only suitable for large birds. Try to pick a mix that includes plenty of small seeds such as millet, flaked maize, peanut granules and sunflower seeds.

As for kitchen scraps; bread, biscuits, cooked rice, suet, lard, fruit (including dried fruit), uncooked oats, baked potatoes, grated mild cheese and pastry are all fine, along with leftover cake (Me and the rest of the Stevens household love a bit of cake - so you aren't likely to find much leftover at our house)! Birds will also tuck into tinned dog and cat food as well.

Foods to avoid include anything with salt in it, desiccated coconut, milk and mouldy food. A good rule of thumb is if you aren't sure about something - don't give it!



## Things to do in 2012

Gwent Ornithological Society have drawn together another great set of indoor and outdoor events for next year. Two talks are lined up for January; the first is on Saturday 14th, when local birder John Coleman presents 'Birding in Costa Rica': This small Central American nation has an astonishing 600 native bird species – plus almost 300 winter migrants!

Blimey

, the UK has less than a third of this number.....and I'm still struggling to recognise half of them!

The second talk is on Saturday 28th January when Stephen Moss will be taking us 'Behind the Scenes at the BBC'. Stephen is a renowned birder and writer, but best known for producing TV nature programmes such as Springwatch (I hope he dishes the dirt on some celebs

). Make a note in your diary - this promises to be a fascinating and very entertaining talk.

Talks are held at Goytre Village Hall (just off the A4042 by the Goytre Arms) and start at 7.30pm. Entrance fee is £2

and includes tea and biscuits. New faces, especially Argus

readers are very welcome – there is no need to book, just turn up.

For more information visit [www.gwentbirds.org.uk](http://www.gwentbirds.org.uk) or give me a call on the number below. Likewise, if you want me to send you a copy of GOS's programme of walks and talks, just let me know.

## Merry Christmas

I would like to wish a very Merry Christmas to all Argus readers and thank all of you who have taken the time to get in touch during the past year. I always enjoy hearing from you and can be contacted at [m.stevens@webster.uk.net](mailto:m.stevens@webster.uk.net) or on 01633 866470.