

NATUREWATCH



With Kate Humble

Hopefully you saw lots of interesting birds for the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch. The coldest December on record meant that lots of unusual birds were spotted, as less common birds had already had three to four weeks to find food left out by concerned householders.

If you did take part, thank you very much, and don't forget to submit your results when you have a moment.

Despite the early cold snap, garden birds aren't out of the woods yet. There will be very little natural food around for birds for a while and it's even more important now to keep up your feeding as there is the constant threat of another dip in temperatures and many birds will barely have survived the first one. The old apples I started leaving out were a godsend for the starlings, blackbirds and other thrushes in my garden.

Some birds have also been reported eating bananas on RSPB nature reserves so you could try them too if you have some spares in your fruit bowl!

Keep an eye out for siskins and look closely at any chaffinches feeding on the ground as you may be lucky enough to see a brambling among them this month too.

If you have birch or alder trees in or near your garden, these also attract siskins, as well as redpolls and goldfinches which come to feed on the seeds. Birds are starting to sing and establish breeding territories now. It's not too late to put up a nest box this month and if you do, try to target birds such as house sparrows and starlings, which really need help. February is also a good time to trim and mulch your hedges and finish digging your vegetable patches. The elbow grease will help blow off any leftover winter cobwebs and get you ready to enjoy the onset of spring.

THEWALK

If you can overcome the logistics of getting back to your car, a point to point linear route is psychologically a satisfying arrangement – every step takes you nearer your destination. This route connects two of Lancashire's loveliest villages with a challenging chunk of moorland in between.

Start: Waddington Village Centre. From junction 31 M6 take the A59 to Clitheroe. Follow signs for the town centre and then the B for Waddington.

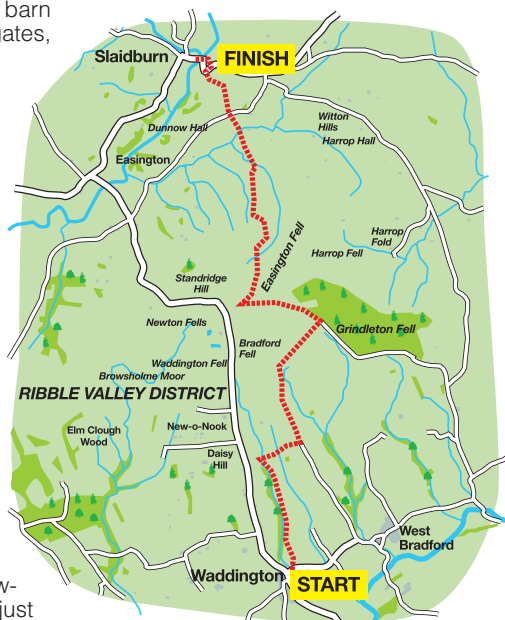
Directions: From the village centre walk up the main street and take the right fork when the road divides. Keep right on reaching the lane. This will take you past the Hospital (a 18th century almshouse). Just beyond the Hospital turn left onto a footpath.

This takes you past the almshouses and onto a stony farm track beyond them. When the track bends to the left, keep ahead between two trees and a gate. The path follows the edge of a wooded clough. As you approach Feazer Farm, the path crosses a stone stile and then turns right onto the farm road. The way is up, but that will not be immediately obvious. Just before the farm house turn left through a yard towards a reservoir. Bear left of the reservoir to arrive at a stile. Once again the wooded clough is on your left. Follow it upwards. Where the wood begins to curve to the left, the path will drop to a footbridge in the very corner of the field. The path will bring you, between houses, onto a lane. Bear right, crossing a "weak bridge" to arrive at Cuttock Clough Farm and Barn. Keep straight on this track, past the white farmhouse of Seedals on left.

At the point where the tarmac track turns right downwards, turn left onto a rough bridleway. This is Moor Lane and will take you close to the top of the moors. Beyond a small barn and a pair of wooden gates, the bridleway follows a wall of the left. 500m beyond the barn the track turns slightly to the right and then 300m further on, through a wooden gate, turns sharply right towards an extensive conifer plantation on the skyline. 15-20 minutes later you will reach the edge of this plantation. Here turn left and continue the ascent. 300m further on, a prominent pile of stones will be seen on a rise. Take the path through heather to reach it. This is a fine viewpoint for reviewing the route you have just climbed as well as admiring Pendle Hill across the Ribble Valley. Follow the path through a pair of redundant gateposts towards the aerial mast on the crest of Waddington Fell. On this upland section of the route the Bowland Fells will come into view to the north. As you near the road turn sharply right onto another track that crests the hill and begins a long descent towards the green pastures of the Upper Hodder



Moorland challenge



Valley. The moor is featureless apart from evidence of grouse husbandry. By degrees the track improves to bring you to the farm house at Fellside with its noisy dogs. Turn right through the yard and continue on the farm road. As you reach the near farm (Skelshaw) turn right towards a green barn with its prominent clock and then left past a small pond. Cross a stile and

FACTFILE

Distance: 11k 7m

Time: 3 – 4 hours

Map: OS OL 41 The Forest of Bowland

Summary: Be well equipped and confident in route finding

keep ahead with a stream on your left. After crossing two fields bear right in the third aiming towards Broadhead Farm. Pass through a metal gate marked with an upturned bucket to reach a second gate leading to a farm track. Turn left and then right to reach the drive. Turn left and in 250m reach the lane. Cross the lane to a footpath and continue at first with the wall on your left. At the field corner go through a metal gate and continue with the wall on your right. The path will take you down to step stile over a wall. Cross this and bear left on a path leading to the B 6478 just outside Slaidburn, now in view. Turn right and then left onto a path leading steeply downhill to reach the Hodder Bridge. Turn right and walk into the village. *Walk devised David Johnstone and described by John Griffiths and Bob Clare. Visit www.lancashirewalks.com for an illustrated version of this walk.*