

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Bullfinch are resident in the UK and are found in woodland, scrub and orchards. They are sometimes seen in gardens especially those connected to a patch of thick scrub or woodland by thick hedgerows. UK bullfinches tend not to move more than a few kilometres during their lifetime and form strong, lasting pair bonds so they are often seen in pairs throughout the year. Adults feed on berries and seeds such as dock, nettle, ash, birch and bramble. They also eat buds in spring which has led to their persecution in the past. They nest in thick scrub, dense hedgerows and scrubby woodland 1-2 metres above ground. The nest is a loose structure of twigs, lichens and moss, lined with hair and fine roots. 4-5 eggs are laid in April/May, then incubated for 12-14 days by the female who is fed by the male during this time. When the eggs hatch both parents feed the chicks on insects. Young fledge at 12-18 days and the adults often have a second brood. In winter residents can be joined by slightly larger relatives from northern Europe. Records for Bromley borough in 2017 were all from rural areas or near to parks which included areas of woodland and scrub. These included Lilly's Wood, the Cudham and Downe Valleys, Darrick Wood, Keston, Jubilee Country Park, Scadbury Park, adjacent to Walden Recreation Ground, near Crofton Woods/Parkfield Recreation Ground and in South Norwood Country Park. 2018 records were again all from rural areas or near to woodland, or parks and other open spaces with woodland and/or scrub. They included areas where they had been recorded in 2017 such as near Jubilee Country Park, Scadbury Park and High Elms and areas where they had not previously been recorded such as Snag Lane, Spring Park, West Wickham Common, gardens near Elmstead Woods, adjacent to the River Ravensbourne in Queensmead Recreation Ground, a garden near Bromley Civic Centre and another adjacent to Ravensbourne School playing fields and countryside on the opposite side of Hayes Lane.

Threats to bullfinch

Loss of nesting sites: reduction of scrub & hedgerows, over-trimming of hedges, tidying up

Reduction in insects for developing young.

Loss of seeds and berries due to loss of hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland.

Reduction in availability of 'weed' seeds due to herbicide use and 'tidying up' (again).

According to the British Trust for Ornithology breeding bullfinch numbers fell by more than 50% 1970-2000. UK numbers have been slowly improving. The surveys carried out in 2017 and 2018 show bullfinch, though not present in large numbers, is widely distributed within the London Borough of Bromley, so this survey will be discontinued. Efforts to help improve bullfinch numbers must continue, including trying to link areas where they have been reported, including via gardens, especially in the more urban areas. To this end the Partnership is:

- producing posters asking people to plant at least one UK grown native shrub or small tree in their gardens, or ask if they can plant one or more (or possibly a hedge) in their local sports and school grounds, allotments, parks etc., because uk invertebrates are adapted to eat native plants.
- Liaising with LBB's tree team regarding native tree planting.
- Asking for more 'wild areas' in parks and elsewhere, for example allowing grass adjacent to hedgerows to be left to grow long, providing seeds for birds.

Measures to help Bullfinch in Bromley: How you can help

- To increase nesting sites and improve numbers of seeds and insects for adult and young bullfinches, promote wild areas in your local park, school and sports grounds and garden, plant hedgerows of native species and maintain some areas of bramble scrub.
- Link wild areas via thick hedgerows.
- Decrease pesticide and herbicide use and encourage others to do the same.
- Feed birds in your garden.
- If you have a cat, keep it indoors between dusk and dawn and use a collar with a bell or ultrasonic device.