

# Nature Detectives Investigate..



## *The Craigs Nature Trail*

### LEVEL 2 YELLOW

Using your investigative skills, find the missing clues from information around the site, to complete these mysteries

**Answers to Worksheets 1-10**

# THE CRAIGS NATURE TRAIL

## Level 2. Yellow

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# BUTTERFLIES



The **Red Admiral** (*Vanessa atalanta*) is a well-known colourful butterfly, found in temperate Europe, Asia and North America. The Red Admiral has a 45–50 mm (1.8–2.0 in) wing span.

This large butterfly is identified by its striking dark brown, red, and black wing pattern. The caterpillar feeds on nettles, and the adult drinks from flowering plants and overripe fruit.

In northern Europe, it is one of the last butterflies to be seen before winter sets in, often feeding on the flowers of ivy on sunny days.

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The **Large White** (*Pieris brassicae*), also called **Cabbage Butterfly**, **Cabbage White**,

is common throughout Europe, North Africa, and Asia to the Himalayas; often in agricultural areas, meadows and parkland. Its wingspan is 50mm to 65 mm.

The female lays batches of 20 to 100 yellow eggs on plants in the cabbage family and can be a pest on food crops. The caterpillars are yellowish green with yellow lines and black spots and feed in groups in plain view on the leaf surface.

They gain some protection from predators by possessing distasteful chemicals- But unfortunately, it's not very effective against hungry wasps!

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The **Small White** (*Pieris rapae*) is also known as the **Small Cabbage White**

It is widespread throughout Great Britain, Europe, North Africa & Asia.

It looks like a smaller version of the **Large White** and is sometimes mistaken for a moth due to its plain-looking appearance. The wingspan of adults is roughly 32–47 mm (1.25–2 in).



## Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)



The wood mouse, also known as the long-tailed field mouse- though rarely seen as it is nocturnal- is probably Britain's most numerous mammal.

It spends its life within an area of about 200m in diameter. A male mouse usually forages nightly over an area about half the size of a football pitch. A mouse digs its own system of burrows where it makes an area for storing food and a nesting chamber for the young. Several adults may live together in the same network of tunnels which have two open entrances.

**Food:** seeds, fruits, buds & other vegetation. When these are scarce, it will also eat snails, earthworms and insects. It is a great hoarder of seeds and nuts and packs full its underground chambers with a supply to help it survive the winter.

**Winter.** In very cold weather wood mice sometimes go into a torpid (sleepy) state - almost like hibernation - and in this way they use less energy than usual, enabling them to survive food shortages.

**Predators.** The wood mouse is an important source of food for many nocturnal animals, so it is a wary little creature and prefers dark, moonless nights, using its large eyes and ears for finding its way about. Its main predators are owls, foxes, weasels, stoats, badgers and domestic cats.



**Distribution:** throughout the British Isles and Europe, except for northern Scandinavia, Finland and north-western USSR.

**Habitat:** woodlands, fields, hedgerows, moorlands, mountain-sides, sand-dunes, scrub land, gardens.

**Length:** head & body 80 - 100mm tail 69 - 110mm

**Weight:** 14 - 28g.

**Life-span:** usually up to a year; rarely more than two years.

## ***Crocus*** (plural: crocuses, croci)



Crocus: '*Cultivars*'

The Crocus is a member of the iris family, which comprises about 80 species of perennials. Many are cultivated for their flowers- appearing in autumn, winter, or spring.



Crocuses are native to woodland, scrub and meadows, from sea level to alpine tundra, in central and southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East; on the islands of the Aegean, and across Central Asia to western China.

Their cup-shaped, solitary flowers taper off into a narrow tube. Flower colour varies enormously; although lilac, mauve, yellow and white are predominant. The grass-like leaf shows a white central stripe along its length.



Crocus: '*Vernus*'

The spice saffron is obtained from the *Crocus Sativus*, an autumn-blooming species.



Crocus '*Sativus*'



# ROBIN



## Overview

The UK's favourite bird - with its bright red breast it is familiar throughout the year and especially at Christmas! Males and females look identical, and young birds have no red breast and are spotted with golden brown. Robins sing nearly all year round and despite their cute appearance, they are aggressively territorial and are quick to drive away intruders. They will sing at night next to street lights.

## Where to see them

Across the UK in woodland, hedgerows, parks and gardens.

## When to see them

All year round.

## What they eat

Worms, seeds, fruits and insects.

## Estimated numbers

Europe	UK breeding*	UK wintering*	UK passage*
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5,895,000

\* UK breeding is the number of pairs breeding annually. UK wintering is the number of individuals present from October to March. UK passage is the number of individuals passing through on migration in spring and/or autumn.

# BLACKBIRD



## Overview

The males live up to their name but, confusingly, females are brown often with spots and streaks on their breasts. The bright orange-yellow beak and eye-ring make adult male blackbirds one of the most striking garden birds. One of the commonest UK birds, its mellow song is also a favourite.

## Where to see them

Found everywhere in gardens and countryside and from coasts to hills, although not on the highest peaks.

## When to see them

All year round.

## What they eat

Insects, worms and berries.

## Estimated numbers

Europe	UK breeding*	UK wintering*	UK passage*
-	4,935,000 pairs	10-15 million birds	-

\* UK breeding is the number of pairs breeding annually. UK wintering is the number of individuals present from October to March. UK passage is the number of individuals passing through on migration in spring and/or autumn.

# HOUSE SPARROW



## Overview

Noisy and gregarious, these cheerful exploiters of man's rubbish and wastefulness, have managed to colonise most of the world. The ultimate avian opportunist perhaps. Monitoring suggests a severe decline in the UK house sparrow population, recently estimated as dropping by 71 per cent between 1977 and 2008 with substantial declines in both rural and urban populations. Whilst the decline in England continues, Breeding Bird Survey data indicate recent population increases in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## Where to see them

Found from the centre of cities to the farmland of the countryside, it feeds and breeds near to people. Vanishing from the centre of many cities, but not uncommon in most towns and villages. It is absent from parts of the Scottish Highlands and is thinly distributed in most upland areas.

## When to see them

All year-round.

## What they eat

Seeds and scraps

## Estimated numbers

Europe	UK breeding*	UK wintering*	UK passage*
-	2.1-3.7 million pairs	-	-

\* UK breeding is the number of pairs breeding annually. UK wintering is the number of individuals present from October to March. UK passage is the number of individuals passing through on migration in spring and/or autumn

# PIED WAGTAIL



## Overview

A delightful small, long-tailed and rather sprightly black and white bird. When not standing and frantically wagging its tail up and down it can be seen dashing about over lawns or car parks in search of food. It frequently calls when in its undulating flight and often gathers at dusk to form large roosts in city centres.

## Where to see them

They can be found across the UK, leaving some of the highland and northern areas of Scotland in winter. Best looked for near water and can be found in most habitats, even town centres. They gather together in large roosts, sometimes in towns, often assembling on roofs beforehand.

## When to see them

All year round.

## What they eat

Insects

## Estimated numbers

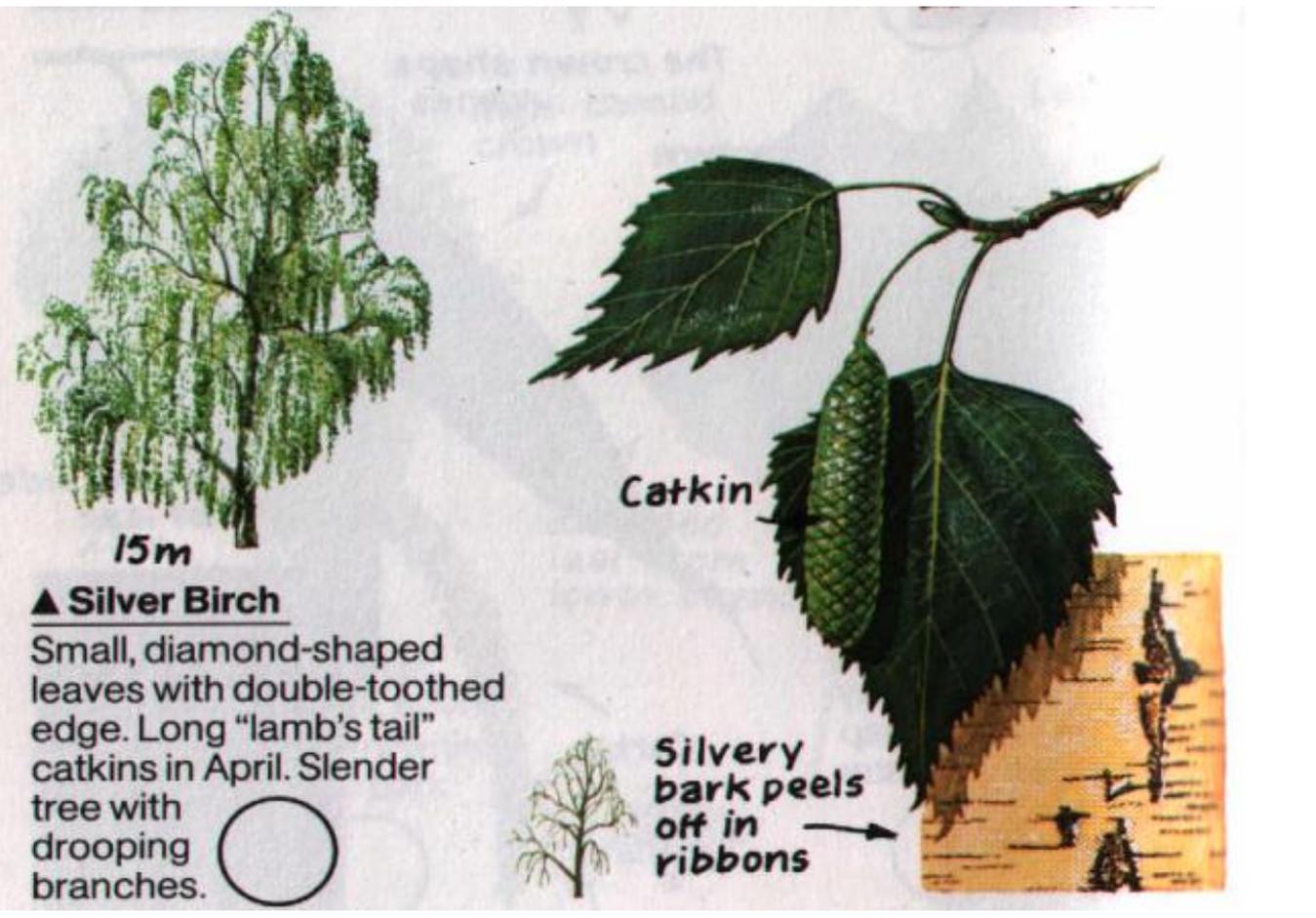
Europe	UK breeding*	UK wintering*	UK passage*
-	272,000-352,000 territories	-	-

\* UK breeding is the number of pairs breeding annually. UK wintering is the number of individuals present from October to March. UK passage is the number of individuals passing through on migration in spring and/or autumn.



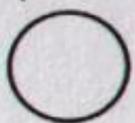
**▲ Common Beech**

Light green, oval leaves turn copper-brown in autumn. Triangular nuts in hairy husks. Tall tree with spreading crown. Smooth grey bark.



**▲ Silver Birch**

Small, diamond-shaped leaves with double-toothed edge. Long "lamb's tail" catkins in April. Slender tree with drooping branches.



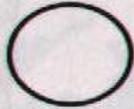
# Conifers



35m

## ▲ Scots Pine

Short, blue-green, paired needles. Small pointed buds. Upper bark red, but grey and furrowed below. Young tree pointed, becoming flat-topped with age.



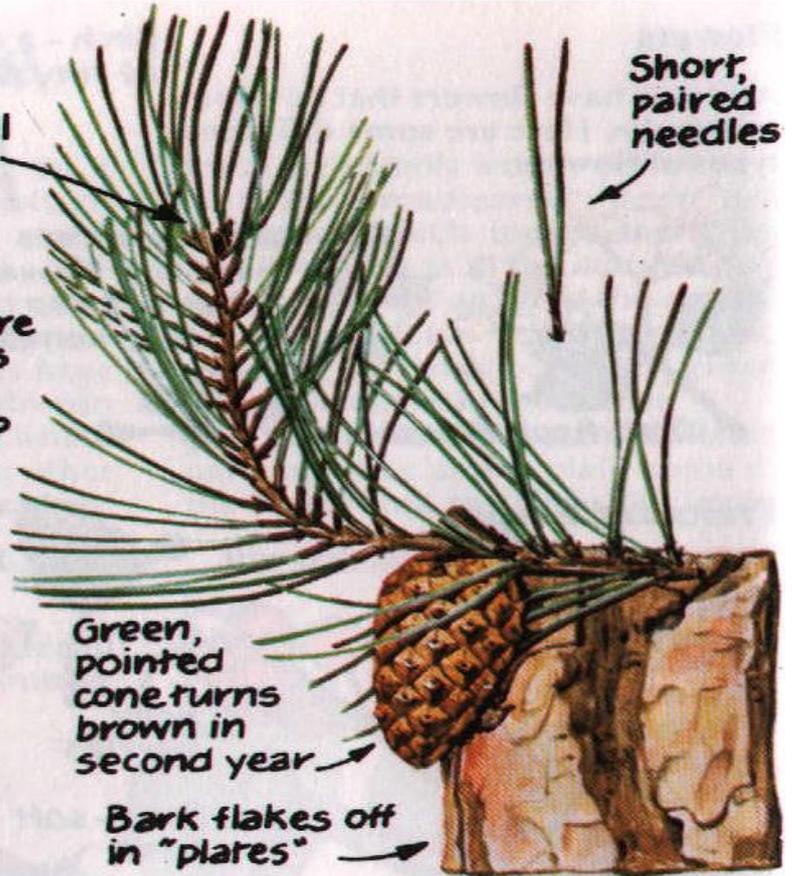
Small bud

Long, bare trunk is red near top of tree

Short, paired needles

Green, pointed cone turns brown in second year

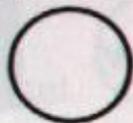
Bark flakes off in "plates"



40m

## ▲ Douglas Fir

Soft fragrant needles. Long-pointed, copper-brown buds. Light brown, hanging cones with three-pointed bracts. Old bark is thick and corky.



Beech-like bud

Needles are parted on twig

Bracts



# Larch *Larix deciduas*



Larches are conifers, growing from 20 to 45m tall.

They are native to much of the cooler temperate northern hemisphere- on lowlands in the north- and high on mountains further south.

Larch trees are among the dominant plants in the immense forests of Russia and Canada.

Larch is a wood valued for its tough, waterproof and durable qualities; top quality knot-free timber is in great demand for building yachts and other small boats, for exterior cladding of buildings and interior panelling. The timber is resistant to rot when in contact with the ground, and is suitable for use as posts and in fencing.

Although a conifer, the larch is a deciduous tree and loses its needles in the autumn.

The needles turn yellow and fall in the late autumn, leaving the trees leafless through the winter.



Larch cones are small, up to 10 cm long, green or purple; ripening brown 5–8 months after pollination.

