

## Toosey Tails No. 4

### Bird Spotting With The Tooseys

(Tell the Tooseys about the birds you have seen today)

Hello girls & boys, Trudy Scrumpy is my lovely name, Bird Spotting is my favourite game!

**TRUDY  
SCRUMPY**



I love birdwatching 

Yes, Bird Spotting is a great game. You can play 'Spot the Bird' every time you look out a window, go into a garden or on a walk outside. In actual fact I find it is quite often the noise of their call or song that first alerts me to the bird's presence, well before I even spot them!

Shall we play 'Spot the Bird' together? I will tell you all about the birds I see on my early walk this morning and you can draw the most interesting bird you spot today and send it with a letter telling the Tooseys all about how you identified your bird. This going to be great fun!

First come with me on my 'Spot the Bird' walk. Are you ready for we are going outside to look for birds in the woods and fields nearby? Let's go out through the garage side gate for I know there might be a special bird roosting there.

	There he is, this magnificent Great Tit who is so easy to spot for he is guarding his nest. I can tell you he is a male Great Tit for he has a very glossy black cap on his head, white
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cheeks, bright yellow breasts with a black bib and a black beak.

His partner will be sitting tight on her eggs while he keeps close guard nearby. Great Tits are easily distinguished from other Tits because they are bigger and have black heads.

Listen, can you hear the sound of the Song Thrush singing her musical song? Song Thrushes are easy to spot too, just listen out for their song and follow the sound. Let's walk along the track to the new Woodland Garden where the sound is getting louder. She must be singing very nearby.



There she is sitting right up high on the top of that budding Ash tree, repeating her song over and over.

How would you describe this Song Thrush?

I would say she is a medium sized woodland bird, with a buff coloured chest with lots of brown streaks in it and she sings a glorious tune.

Did you know Song Thrush use a prominent stone to break the shell of their favourite food, snails, to get access to the soft, delicious meal inside? They are one of the few birds known to do this. So, if you see broken snail shells near a stone or concrete, you will know a Song Thrush has been there before you.

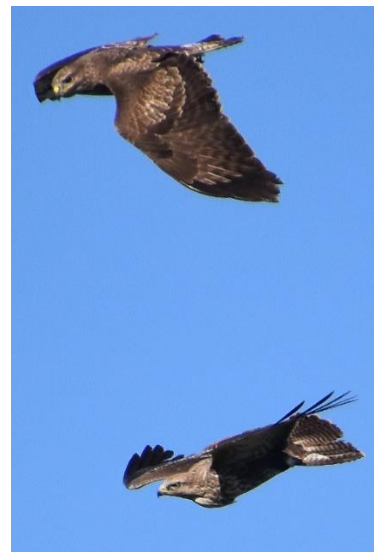
A lot of birds also sing while they are flying, like Skylarks. I normally hear them first and then have difficulty spotting them, for Skylarks fly so very high above the fields. Their continuous flow of rapid song, only given while they are flying, usually lasts about five minutes before they return to the ground to rest before heading back up again to

continue their song. When not singing they spend most of their time on the ground for they, like me, enjoy walking around. I can hear some singing Skylarks above the Old Lay field but I cannot spot them.

Oh look! Here is another bird I tend to hear before I see them, the Brown Buzzard. Only today there he is sitting perched on top of that Barn Owl Nest Box in the wild flower meadow. No wonder we have not been able to attract a Barn Owl to our box for who would want to live with such a great big predator bird sitting right on top of their nest!



Brown Buzzard using the Barn Owl box as his lookout



Brown Buzzards soaring high

Gosh he has spotted us and taken flight to go and join his mate soaring high up above in the sky. Close up, Brown Buzzards are truly amazing birds but I think they look rather scary.

How would you describe this Brown Buzzard? He is one of the largest birds I have ever seen.

So, you could say he is a very large bird, with a very wide wingspan, that likes to soar high in the sky. His beak is brown, he is mainly brown coloured too when viewed from the top, with a large flat head but underneath he has a lot of



Look at his wing span!

pale, almost white wing feathers, that look like they have been tipped in brown paint.

Let's walk quietly to the woods by the Lily Lake to listen out for any bird's making a warning call for this is always a good sign that a predator bird might be nearby. Maybe the predator is too close to the other bird's nest, or too near their territory or maybe they have newly fledged young, so they call out and shout, not only to give a warning to other birds but to get help to chase the predator away.

I can hear some Jays making their loud raucous skraaak-skraaak warning call so let's rush over to the other side of the wood to see if we can spot them. Jays are very wary and secretive birds who fly away at any sign of disturbance but these are not, for I can still hear their call, so something must be near their nest and upsetting them.



The Jay's warning call is coming from somewhere near the top of that old Oak tree, so let's stay very quiet and keep our eyes open to see what we can spot.


Can you that Tawny Owl, about half way up the tree?

Why don't you try to describe him to me?

He is obviously having a morning doze while hiding in those branches, perhaps he had a busy night hunting for his dinner.

Can you tell me what he might eat for his dinner?

Tawny Owl hiding in the Oak tree	
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<p>There is one of the Jays right at the top of the tree. They are preparing to mob the Tawny Owl whose very presence is clearly upsetting them, so I guess their nest must be nearby.</p> <p>No need to worry though for the Tawny Owl has just flown off to find somewhere more peaceful to sleep.</p> <p>Why would you think this Jay is easy to spot?</p>	
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Did you know that both Tawny Owls and Jays are predator birds that like to steal other bird's eggs and chicks to eat as tasty snacks? Can you name some other predator birds? Maybe you will spot one today.

Sometimes the predator is not another bird but a naughty cat or weasel, stoat or pine martin, for they too also attack other bird's nests while out hunting.

Time to head back home now but let's go the slightly longer route, over the small iron bridge and back along the other side of the Old Lay field, for sometimes I can spot flocks of chaffinches and other smaller finches that like to live together in the hedges by the side of the field. Now is their breeding season but we might still be lucky and spot one of two.

Look over there, in the Hornbeam taller branches sticking out the top of that hedge.

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Male Linnet



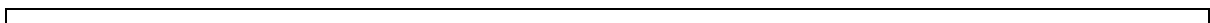
Male Yellowhammer

Can you see those two different smaller birds, one a very dusty pink colour and one a bright yellow and orange colour sitting on those branches? From their distinctive bright colours, I am guessing they both are male and their partners must be sitting on eggs somewhere near.

The dusky pink coloured bird with the darker grey beak is a Linnet. It also has a long thinner tail with a fork at the end. Linnets are normally nervous birds and will fly away when approached but I can always spot them flying along the hedgerows with their distinctive up and down flight. This Linnet has not flown away for he is far too busy competing in a singing competition with the Yellowhammer sitting next to him, both singing merrily their rapid and melodic twittering. Why don't you have a go at describing the Yellowhammer.

Male yellowhammers are unmistakable with their bright yellow head and chest. I often see them perched on top of a hedge or bush, singing their lovely song.

We are nearly home but let me show you a special bird's nest for it is very close by. We only spotted it when preparing to have some windows replaced in our clubhouse. As we cleared the ivy surrounding the old windows, we unintentionally uncovered this blackbird's nest.






What a surprise it was to see these four well-fed chicks looking back at us!

We quickly covered back up the nest and left the chicks undisturbed, for all wild bird species, their eggs and nests are protected by law. You must never intentionally disturb birds while they are nesting, building a nest or in or near a nest, so work will now not continue on the windows until these chicks have all successfully fledged their nest.

Now it is your turn to do some Bird Spotting. You might like to have paper and pen with you to jot down what you see. Did you see the bird in a garden, in a tree, out in a park or somewhere else? Next, describe the bird, start with its head colours, then feathers, wings, and beak, sometimes leg colours play an important part too in helping to identify your bird. You can also note down what the bird was doing, was it eating, singing, sleeping or flying?

Making a drawing of the bird will help identify it too. If you need more help in identifying your bird, try looking on the internet. I find this site very useful in helping to identify some of the birds I see - <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/>

Finally, do not forget to send your drawing to your favourite Toosey and tell them all about where you saw your bird and how you identified it. Maybe we can put all the drawings and letters together to make a special book about birds. Wouldn't that be great!

Love from your Bird Spotting friend Trudy Scrumptious 

*Let Love be our kindness to everyone while we learn, play & grow together!*