

## Garden Warbler

The Garden Warbler (*Sylvia borin*) is a common and widespread small bird that breeds in most of Europe and in western Asia. It is a plain, long-winged and long-tailed typical warbler with brown upperparts and dull white underparts; the sexes are similar and juveniles resemble the adults. Due to its lack of distinguishing features, this species can be confused with a number of other unstreaked warblers. The Garden Warbler's rich melodic song is similar to that of the Blackcap, its closest relative, which competes with it for territory when nesting in the same woodland.

The preferred breeding habitat in is open woodland with dense low cover for nesting and despite its name, gardens



are rarely occupied by this small passerine bird. The Garden Warbler is strongly migratory, wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. A wide range of habitats are used in Africa, but closed forest and treeless Sahel are both shunned. Insects are the main food in the breeding season, although fruit predominates when birds are fattening prior to migration, figs being a particular favourite where available. These warblers have a mixed diet of insects and fruit in their African wintering grounds.

The Garden Warbler is hunted by Eurasian Sparrowhawks and domestic cats, and its eggs and nestlings are taken by a variety of mammalian and avian predators and it is a host of the Cuckoo, a brood parasite. The large and fairly stable numbers and huge range of the Garden Warbler mean that it is classed as least concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Despite a small population decline in much of its European range, the bird's breeding distribution is expanding northwards in Scandinavia.

Table below covers the ten-year period from 2004-2013. These figures are shown to highlight how scarce Garden Warblers can be in April, with both 2008 & 2013 having a blank month for April. As can be seen by the totals, it is not a widely recorded species in Fife during April.

YEAR	FIRST DATE	APRIL TOTAL	NUMBER OF SITES RECORDED (APRIL)
2004	26/4	3	3
2005	17/4	1	1
2006	30/4	2	1
2007	15/4	8	7
2008	-	-	-
2009	11/4	4	3
2010	25/4	4	2
2011	20/4	7	4
2012	29/4	2	2
2013	-	-	-

Photograph by S.Buckland