

Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Bird · Summer migrant · Apr-Sep · some overwinter



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A neat grey warbler with a sharply defined cap — glossy black on the male, russet-brown on the female, which regularly gets it mistaken for a different bird. Blackcaps breed in Dumfries woodland with a good understorey, in mature gardens and along scrubby riverbanks. They arrive in April, but confusingly a separate population from central Europe now spends the winter in British gardens, so a blackcap at a feeder in January is entirely possible.

BEHAVIOUR

The song is one of the finest of any British warbler — a scratchy start that builds into a loud, clear, flute-like tumble, delivered from cover rather than an open perch. Blackcaps feed on insects through the breeding season and switch to berries and fruit in autumn; wintering birds take suet, fat and apples in gardens and can be aggressive towards other birds at a feeder.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Typical warblers (Sylviidae)
SIZE	13 cm · smaller than a sparrow
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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