

How to record tree phenology

- **Use mature trees (30 years old or more), as young trees show different responses.** Even trees of the same species, close to each other can behave very differently.
- **If you are finding it difficult to decide when to record, wait until the event is occurring in three trees of the same species in close proximity to each other.** Record the trendsetters rather than the extraordinary.
- Leaves may fall off before you have recorded any significant colour change. This may be the species or the weather conditions. Don't worry! **Just record when the tree is bare.**

The effects of drought: In dry summers some species such as beech and birch may show the effects of drought, which can be confused with the onset of autumn. These include early colour changes and shrivelling and falling of leaves. Record the date you see first tint whatever the cause.

Guide to terms used in the autumn



First tint: when several leaves on the same tree or branch have started to change colour – first indication of autumn colouring.



Full tint: when all the leaves on a tree have changed colour – full autumn colouring.

Trees & shrubs: leaf tints & fall	First tint	Full tint	Leaf fall	Bare
Ash	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /
Beech	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /	/ / / /



Leaf fall: Beginning of autumn leaf fall, some bare twigs or branches.



Bare: Completely bare except for shrivelled leaves.

Fruit ripe: Soft to touch, full coloured or falling naturally (oak and horse chestnut) – see illustrations for more help. For elder, blackthorn and blackberry this means very dark berries. For hawthorn (right), rowan, holly and dog rose this means red berries. They will also feel softer. **Birds eating the fruit should not always be taken as an indication of ripeness.**



Trees & shrubs: fruiting scores	Fruit ripe	Fruiting score
Ash	DO NOT RECORD	/ / / /
Beech	/ / / /	/ / / /

Fruiting score (if in doubt, please leave it out!): Should be recorded from untrimmed bushes or trees. This refers to the amount of fruit (or seeds) on a tree or shrub:

1 = no fruit, 2 = meagre, 3 = moderate, 4 = good crop, 5 = exceptional



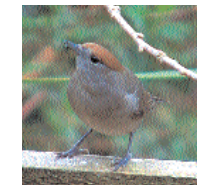
This is a subjective assessment of the fruit crop, similar to when people say it is “a good year” for blackberries, or that there aren’t many holly berries this year. **Please don’t record this until you feel confident to do so** – if you are not used to looking it may take a number of seasons to “get your eye in”.

If so, don't worry, just record when you do feel confident. It is not strictly phenological, however it is an indicator of winter food availability for birds and mammals, as well as the seed source available for natural regeneration of trees and shrubs, and may be linked to climate variables in preceding seasons.

Bird arrival	First seen	3rd bird
Fieldfare	/ / / /	/ / / /
Redwing	/ / / /	/ / / /

First seen: The first time you see a live, active individual of a species.

3rd bird: The date by which you have seen three separate live individuals (this may be all at once). However, if you can't tell them apart, assume those seen on three separate days are different.



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