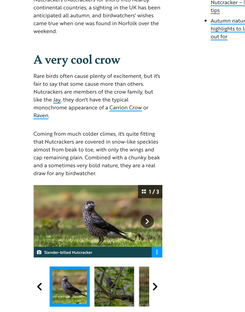
News

Influx of Nutcrackers a sweet treat for birdwatchers!

Excitement in Norfolk as rare bird arrives on UK shores from Siberia, as part of a wider influx on the continent.

27th Oct 2026 **5 min read**


Slender-billed Nutcracker

The Nutcracker might be one of the world's most well-known ballets, but this week another Nutcracker has been in the spotlight for birdwatchers!

Following a large influx of Slender-billed Northern Nutcrackers (Nutcrackers for short) into nearby continental countries, a sighting in the UK has been anticipated all autumn, and birdwatchers' wishes came true when one was found in Norfolk over the weekend.

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A very cool crow

Rare birds often cause plenty of excitement, but it's fair to say that some cause more than others. Nutcrackers are members of the crow family, but like the Jay, they don't have the typical monochrome appearance of a Carrion Crow or Raven.

Coming from much colder climes, it's quite fitting that Nutcrackers are covered in snow-like speckles almost from beak to toe, with only the wings and cap remaining plain. Combined with a chunky beak and a sometimes very bold nature, they are a real draw for any birdwatcher.


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Slender-billed Nutcracker



Why now?

Influxes of this species, like the one we've seen on the near-continent, are not unheard of. Often called irruptions, they occur when food is in short supply within the birds' normal range. In the case of the Nutcracker, pine seed crops in Siberia have likely failed, causing many birds to venture west in search of food.

There was a famous irruption in 1968 when more than 300 made it to the UK, but nothing on that scale has been seen since. With the last easily seeable bird being recorded in 1991, many UK birdwatchers will never have had the chance to see one of these speckled spectaculars on home soil before. With a combination of anticipation and good looks, it's no surprise this Nutcracker has attracted so much attention.

Mark Ward, Head of Conservation and Supporter Engagement, said:

> A whole generation of UK birders – myself included – have been waiting for a twitchable Nutcracker for 35 years. To have one arrive in my home county of Norfolk was just the perfect scenario. It well and truly put the icing on the cake at the end of an exciting week of rare bird arrivals from the east."

Eyes to the skies

There's every chance that more may arrive this autumn, but irruptions are often unpredictable. The next bird could turn up anywhere. Might we even see one reported in next year's Big Garden Birdwatch? We'll have to wait and see.

Slender-billed Nutcracker – ID tips

Don't get caught out by a much more common species which can cause confusion – the Starling! Here's our top tips for separating these Siberian rarities from Starlings in their speckled winter plumage.

Crack that ID!

- Similar in size to a Jay but a little bulkier
- White tail rim and bright white patch under tail
- Solid black cap which contrasts speckled face
- Long, slim bill
- Body is chocolate brown with prominent white spots
- Dark blackish wings and top of tail
- Harsh call similar to a Jay's: kraak-kraak-kraak-kraak-kraak


Slender-billed Nutcracker

Autumn nature highlights to look out for

Head to our wildlife hub for this month's nature highlights, including what to see now and all about migration.

Tell me more


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Discover why and how birds migrate, and the threats they face along the way.

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