Sofia is among the European capitals with the highest diversity of birds – more than 200 species can be seen here. One reason is the varied mosaic of parks that combine different habitats on their territory. Even in the smallest green spots in the city you'll see birds and you'll hear their song. The parks in Sofia offer you an excellent opportunity to get to know our bird neighbours better.

Among the easiest to see are the great tits, blackbirds, jays, magpies and chaffinches. With a bit more patience you'll be able to observe species like the green woodpecker, the nuthatch, the long-tailed tit, the wren and the robin.

The spots on this map are easily accessible and yet they will surprise you with an exceptional diversity of birds.

Go for a slow walk in the park, listen carefully for the songs of its inhabitants and you will be surprised by the winged treasures hidden in its boundaries!

WHAT'S THAT BIRD?

You see a bird that you don't recognize? Here are a few ways to find out what species it is:

Download the SmartBirds App

SmartBirds

Look for it in the online bird guide on the BSPB website

www.birds.bg

Check it up in a bird guide book

www.vrabcheta.bg

"Meet the birds of Sofia"
is an initiative of Sofia Municipality in partnership with the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds.

Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds

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PARKS FOR BIRD WATCHING

HOW TO BE A GOOD BIRDWATCHER?

- Observe the birds and take pictures but do not scare them away and do not disturb them.
- Bring them raw sunflower seeds or other raw, unsalted seeds and nuts. Do not feed them bread or other processed foods.
- Do not go near the nests of birds, particularly when there are young chicks inside. Keep your distance from the nests and be quiet.

Bird watching trail

Follow the designated bird watching trail and look for the information hotspots that will introduce you to the winged world of Sofia City.

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- **Binoculars**
- **A bird guide**
- **Patience**

GREAT TIT

The great tit is the most common tit species in Bulgaria. Its role in nature is to keep insect populations in check; some insects can damage trees and other plants. In the summer this little fellow is able to eat its own weight in insects in a day.

MOORHEN

The first you'll notice about the moorhen is its yellow beak and its red forehead. Moorhens often wade in the shallows on their long green legs in search of some delicacy – a water snail or some insect larvae. They can have two broods per year and their young are able to swim from the day they hatch.

JAY

Jays are among the most intelligent birds. In autumn they stock hundreds of acorns and are able to find them later if need be. Also, they are great imitators and can reproduce many of the sounds they hear. They have been known to imitate donkey bray and human speech. Also, they warn other birds of danger.

NUTHATCH

The nuthatch is capable of a rare feat – it can creep upside down down the trunks of trees. It is a diligent bird that stocks food (mainly seeds and nuts) in crevices in the trees. Its powerful beak can deal with the shells of most nuts. It nests in tree hollows, narrowing the entrance to the right size with mud.

GREEN WOODPECKER

The green woodpecker is a big fan of ants and their larvae so you can often see it digging on the ground. It's a true living gem, glowing bright green as it flies between the trees. Both parents share the responsibility of raising their young.

KESTREL

When hunting, the kestrel often hovers in the air, fluttering its wings like a butterfly. Over the last decade kestrel numbers in the city increase: it nests on the roofs and ledges of Sofia's higher buildings. It can be seen flying over the park or hunting in the open areas.

SCOPS OWL

The scops owl is Bulgaria's smallest owl and the only one that migrates to Africa for the winter. Its distinctive call can be heard during their breeding season in all Sofia parks. Breeding partners like to cuddle against each other and groom their partner's plumage with their beaks.

HAWFINCH

Besides its beautiful plumage, the hawfinch's most distinctive feature is its massive head. It has a thick, sturdy beak that allows it to crush open the pits of cherries and other fruits easily in order to get to the seed inside. In the process it exerts a pressure of about 4 kg per square centimeter.

GREENFINCH

The greenfinch's name comes from the emerald green plumage of the males. As with many birds, they are more vividly coloured whereas the females are of duller, grayer appearance. Greenfinches are quite noisy when they form a flock, constantly calling one another.

ROBIN

The robin is a close relative of the nightingale. In early morning its delicate song echoes through the park. You can see it here all year round; it is easily identified by the rusty red colour of its throat and chest. They feed mainly on insects.

MEET THE BIRDS OF SOFIA

- **1** city
- **5** parks
- **3** itineraries
- **36** information hotspots
- **200** species of birds

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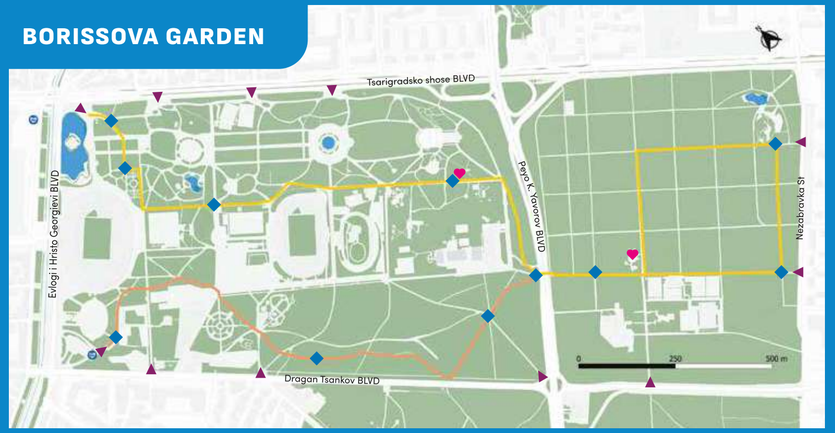
BORISSOVA GARDEN



SOUTH PARK

WEST PARK

BORISSOVA GARDEN

MAIN ATTRACTIONS:

- Feeding birds and squirrels from hand.
- Sun garden with a concentration of forest birds.

LAYMEN ITINERARY

- **Itinerary length:** 3,7 km
- **Duration:** from 1.30 h to 4 h
- **Accessibility:** Asphalt and forest lanes. The area near Eagle's Bridge is easily accessible for people of every age, with strollers or in wheelchairs. The area near Iztok neighborhood is suitable for people of every age, but not in wheelchairs.

EXPLORER'S ITINERARY

- **Itinerary length:** 1,5 km
- **Duration:** from 30 min to 1.3 h
- **Accessibility:** Asphalt and forest lanes. Not suitable for people in wheelchairs or with strollers.

SOUTH PARK

MAIN ATTRACTIONS:

- Statue of the Great tit and the gazebo near it.
- The lakes with waterfowls.
- **Itinerary length:** 2,6 km
- **Duration:** 40 min to 2 h
- **Accessibility:** Heading south from the statue of the Great tit and to the lakes with waterfowls you will walk on asphalt lanes which are easily accessible. The second part of the itinerary leads through a wilder part of the park as well as stairs and it is not suitable for people in wheelchairs or with strollers.

MAP LEGEND:

- Information hotspots
- Park entrance
- Stairs
- Main attraction
- Laymen itinerary
- Explorer's itinerary
- Bird watching trail

WEST PARK

MAIN ATTRACTIONS:

- A small marsh with dragonflies, bog turtles, crested newt and the birds, living in the forest.
- The open spot, from which the spring and autumn migration of the birds on Via Aristotelis migration route can be observed.

LAYMEN ITINERARY

- **Itinerary length:** 3,2 km
- **Duration:** 1 to 3 h
- **Accessibility:** Easily accessible for people of every age, as well as with strollers or in wheelchairs.

EXPLORER'S ITINERARY

- **Itinerary length:** 6 km
- **Duration:** 1.5 h to 4 h
- **Accessibility:** 70% accessible lanes and 30% steep or forest lanes. Not suitable for people in wheelchairs or with strollers. Suitable for bikers.