

# NATURE AND YEW



The yew tree is important for many species of wildlife. **Birds** such as thrushes, fieldfare and blackbirds feed on the yew berries as they are migrating, which also helps to disperse the seeds far and wide. Other birds, such as Britain's smallest, the goldcrest, like the canopies of yews which they use for nesting in. However the old, gnarly trunks with gaps provide the perfect habitat for all number of other birds which need ancient trees to nest in, such as owls and the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

The peeling bark of yews can also provide a perfect habitat for **insects and spiders**. The decaying bark, splits and gaps in ancient trees such as yews also makes them suitable for a wide range of species. **Squirrels, badgers and bats** all find them of use for finding homes.

**Fungi** also find the yew important, with more than 250 species of fungi found on yew trees. Species such as the yellow and orange Chicken-in-the-Woods fungi rarely use any other conifers. These fungi in turn support other species. **Caterpillars** of Buff Footman **moths** feed on lichen and fungi that live on yew trees, and the yew also supports other moth caterpillars, particularly those of the Satin Beauty moth.

But despite being helpful for many species, yew trees can also be deadly for others! Much of the yew is very poisonous for cows and horses. However animals which have become naturally tolerant of the yew can eat it without problems, such as **deer**.

**Activity:** *Using this sketch of a yew tree, draw pictures of wildlife and other parts of nature that might use the tree, and draw an arrow to which part of the tree they would be using.*

