

New Zealand Garden Bird Survey



**Landcare Research
Manaaki Whenua**

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What is it?

A count of the largest number of each bird species seen (and/or heard) at one time during 1 hour of observation in home gardens, local parks, and school grounds.

Why do it?

To determine population trends of our more common birds, especially native birds such as kereru, tui, and bellbird. To learn and have fun.

Background

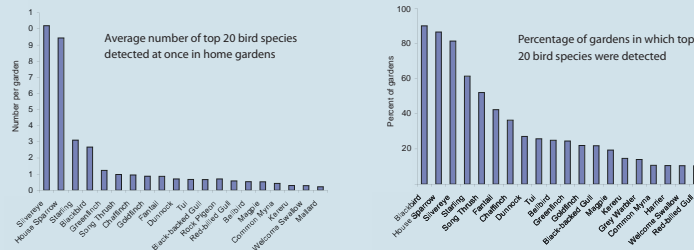
We know that some of our rarer native birds such as kiwi, kakapo, and kokako are declining as a result of predation by introduced mammals, and that the Department of Conservation and private conservation groups are undertaking various management activities to reverse this decline. However, we do not know whether more common native birds such as kereru, tui, and bellbird, are declining or increasing. Measuring the population trends of these species is an enormous task, and this project seeks public help to do this in urban and rural gardens, parks, and school grounds.

Results 2007

A total of 2064 people participated in the 2007 garden bird survey, sending in returns from 1954 home gardens, 78 local parks, and 32 school grounds (24 from school classes and 8 from members of the public visiting schools).

Home gardens

Silvereyes were recorded in the greatest numbers, house sparrows were a close second, and starlings a distant third. Blackbirds were the most widespread, being recorded in 90% of gardens, house sparrows in 86%, silvereyes in 81%.



Parks

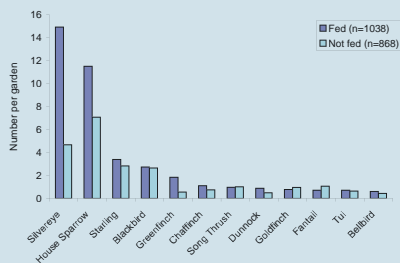
More blackbirds, song thrushes, rock pigeons, ducks, and gulls than in home gardens.

Fewer silvereyes and house sparrows.

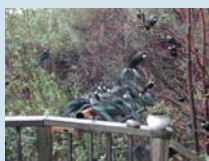
Gardens where birds were fed

68% of participants fed birds in their home gardens. Most fed bread, fat, seeds, fruit and sugar-water.

More birds, especially silvereyes, house sparrows, and greenfinches, occurred in gardens where supplementary food was provided than where it was not.



Silvereyes (left) and tui (right) at sugar-water feeders



(photo: R. McNeary)

Schools

More house sparrows, blackbirds, song thrushes, rock pigeons, ducks, and gulls than in home gardens.

Fewer silvereyes, grey warblers, greenfinches, chaffinches, goldfinches, and dunnocks.

Schools gave the survey to children to do in class and/or as homework.

The children first learned to identify birds, then did the survey. They graphed their results as part of maths so they could compare them with those from other schools.



Birchwood Kindergarten (above) and Newbury School pupils (left) taking part in the garden bird survey

Top 10 birds in 2007

Silvereye
10.2 per garden
(native species)



House sparrow
9.4 per garden
(cf. 4.4 in UK)



Starling
3.1 per garden
(cf. 3.7 in UK)



Blackbird
2.7 per garden
(cf. 2.3 in UK)



Greenfinch
1.2 per garden
(cf. 1.2 in UK)



Song thrush
0.97 per garden
(not in UK top 10)



Chaffinch
0.94 per garden
(cf. 1.9 in UK)



Goldfinch
0.87 per garden
(not in UK top 10)



Fantail
0.86 per garden
(native species)



Dunnock
0.70 per garden
(not in UK top 10)



2008 survey

One hour sometime between 12 and 20 July (or 12 and 25 July for schools). Instructions and survey forms can be downloaded from www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biocons/gardenbird

Acknowledgements

The 2064 participants in the 2007 survey. The Ornithological Society, Forest & Bird, and Royal Society of New Zealand for promoting the survey.