



media release

EMBARGO: no publication or broadcast before:

Monday 29 March, 2010

It's official, small birds struggled to beat the snowy winter

The woodpigeon is Greater London's number one garden bird.

Woodpigeons have moved steadily up the list, one position each year from its number four spot in 2007. However, the pole position may well be down to the cold snap that adversely affected smaller birds this year.

Nearly 530,000 people took part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch 2010, counting over 8 and a half million birds. 73 species were recorded in 280,000 gardens across the UK over the weekend of 30 and 31 January.

It's helped the conservation charity get an idea of just how the bad weather at the start of the year affected bird populations. London's house sparrows have been in decline for many years, but 2010 saw a slight increase in sightings. The winter snow and ice forced small birds such as these to work harder to find food. Gardens were their best bet, particularly where food is put out for them.

Numbers of almost all small to medium birds in the Top Ten most common London garden birds were up compared with 2009 and 2008, with the exception of starlings. Flocks of these probably flew out of gardens to collectively seek food and shelter on playing fields, parks and the countryside surrounding Greater London.

The weather was also responsible for many more sightings of countryside birds like fieldfares and redwings, in London, but these mostly favoured large open spaces and failed to make it into the Top Twenty garden sightings. As well as redwings and fieldfares, other members of the thrush family, including blackbird, song thrush and mistle thrush, were seen in higher numbers this year, also looking for food.

Big Garden Birdwatch is the biggest wildlife survey in the world and provides the RSPB with a fantastic snapshot of how garden birds are faring.

RSPB London's Tim Webb said "The awful weather had an impact this year and although sightings were generally up in gardens, it could have wiped out thousands of small birds. Our *Make Your Nature Count* summer survey will give us a better idea of how many survived the snow and ice."

Some of the UK's most familiar species continue to suffer huge declines. In just the last five years alone, house sparrows have declined by 17% and starlings by 13.7%. London's house sparrows retained their number three spot, but fourth placed blue tits have closed the gap and could move up next year.

Ends

For further information please contact:

Tim Webb, RSPB London Communications Officer on 020 7808 1246 or 07921 740 753.
Sarah Kelly, RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch co-ordinator on 01767 693 116

Photographs and broadcast-quality footage:

Photographs to accompany this press release can be found at the following link:

[www.rspb-images.com/respages/storysetsignon.aspx?key=380b5450-7bb1-47d4-9945-
ea2c30518c77](http://www.rspb-images.com/respages/storysetsignon.aspx?key=380b5450-7bb1-47d4-9945-
ea2c30518c77)

Username: rspb

Password: garden

Further images are available in digital format from RSPB Images by contacting Lee Douane on 0114 258 0001, email lee@rspb-images.com.

Broadcast-quality Beta footage is available on request from the RSPB press office - Contact Emily Sanders on 01767 693 023

Additional notes:

1. Borough by borough results are available upon request, contact Tim Webb. 020 7808 1246

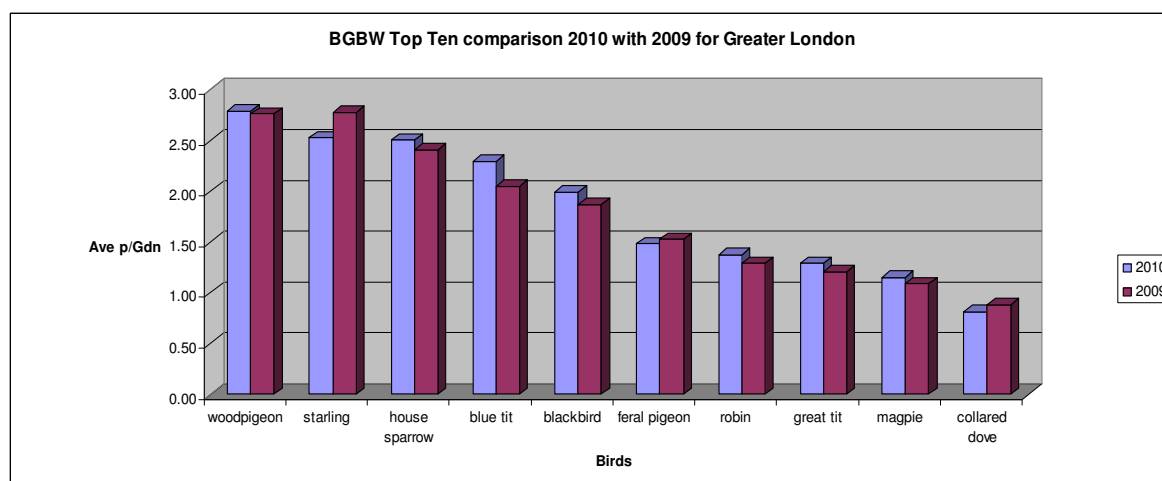
This table shows Greater London's Top Ten garden birds, recorded by 26,792 participants from 15,112 gardens across the Capital.

Bird 2010	Ave p/Gdn	Rank	Present in % p/Gdn
woodpigeon	2.79	1	82.8
starling	2.53	2	51.0
house sparrow	2.51	3	46.0
blue tit	2.30	4	82.7
blackbird	1.99	5	89.9
feral pigeon	1.48	6	35.0
robin	1.38	7	86.6
great tit	1.29	8	59.4
magpie	1.15	9	56.8
collared dove	0.82	10	35.4

2. This table shows the Greater London results for 2009 and 2008.

Bird 09	Ave 09	Present in % of Gdns	Rank 09	Bird 08	Ave 08	% p/gdn 08
starling	2.78	48.39	1	starling	3.14	51.78
woodpigeon	2.77	81.38	2	house sparrow	2.63	46.44
house sparrow	2.41	42.94	3	wood pigeon	2.38	77.43
blue tit	2.05	78.24	4	blue tit	2.09	80.30
blackbird	1.87	87.44	5	blackbird	1.72	84.95
feral pigeon	1.53	34.85	6	feral pigeon	1.41	32.55
robin	1.29	84.43	7	robin	1.23	81.47
great tit	1.21	56.52	8	magpie	1.20	56.99
magpie	1.09	55.23	9	great tit	1.07	50.87
collared dove	0.88	36.15	10	collared dove	0.90	37.32

3. Graph showing comparisons between 2010 & 2009 BGBW results for Greater London:



4. This table shows the average number of the 2010 top 10 species of birds recorded per garden across the UK, and compares this with the results from the 2009, 2005 and 1979 surveys.

Species	Ave p/Gdn in 1979	Ave p/Gdn in 2005	Ave p/Gdn in 2009	Ave p/Gdn in 2010	% change 1979-2010
house sparrow	10.0	4.6	3.7	3.8	-62.3
blackbird	4.0	2.4	2.8	3.3	-18
starling	15.0	3.6	3.2	3.1	-79
blue tit	2.4	2.9	2.5	2.6	5.7
chaffinch	3.0	1.7	2.0	2.2	-27
wood pigeon	0.2	1.4	1.9	1.9	855
robin	2.0	1.3	1.4	1.5	-25.5
great tit	0.9	1.4	1.4	1.4	54
collared dove	.28	1.5	1.4	1.3	375
goldfinch	-	.75	1.3	1.3	-

5. To keep up to date with the work of the RSPB in London, please visit our blog page: <http://blogs.rspb.org.uk/london>.
6. There are eleven *RSPB Local Groups*, organised and run by volunteers, covering most of Greater London. They run events and activities linked with RSPB campaigns. Contact details can be found at: www.rspb.org.uk/london. Wildlife Explorers are our youth groups. Full details can be found at: www.rspb.org.uk/youth/join_in/wex.asp.
7. RSPB London is a proud member of The London Biodiversity Partnership, co-ordinating conservation work across the Capital: www.lbp.org.uk.
8. The RSPB supports the International Year for Biodiversity 2010: www.biodiversityislife.net.

Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way. Sign our [Letter to the Future](#)