



Edmund Fellowes / BTO

## Central England doesn't provide homes for House Sparrows any more

House Sparrows are almost completely dependent on human buildings for their nest sites; they like to nest in high-up cavities, such as gaps under eaves, and will also take to nest boxes.

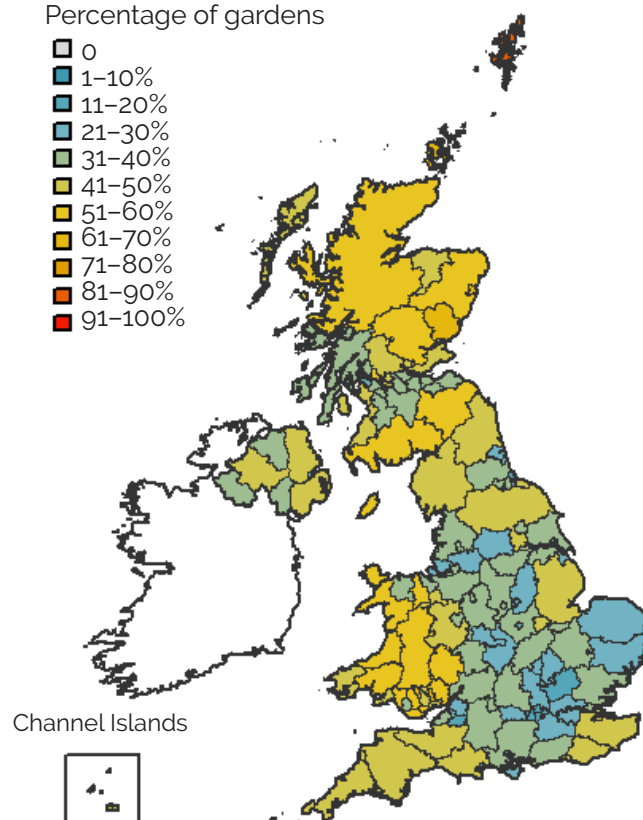
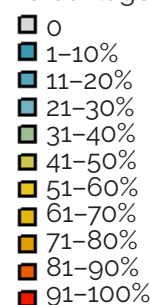
Gardenwatch results show that House Sparrows are much less often seen nesting in gardens in central England and East Anglia, compared with other parts of the UK. These are the areas from which House Sparrows have been lost since the early 1990s, while populations in Wales, Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland remained stable.

These declines have not been attributed to a single cause, but it's clear that the habitats in central England and East Anglia don't support House Sparrows in the same way they used to, possibly due to a lack of suitable nest sites.

The most frequent recorded use of gardens by House Sparrows was to visit bird feeders, which at 67% was higher than all other species except for Blue Tit.

### House Sparrow nest use

Percentage of gardens



For other maps visit [www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results](http://www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results)

## House Sparrow facts

- Feeder use: 72% of gardens.
- Natural food use: 52% of gardens.
- Shelter use: 67% of gardens.
- Water use: 53% of gardens.
- Breeding activity: 47% of gardens.
- Nest use: 35% of gardens.

Maps by Kate Plummer, BTO

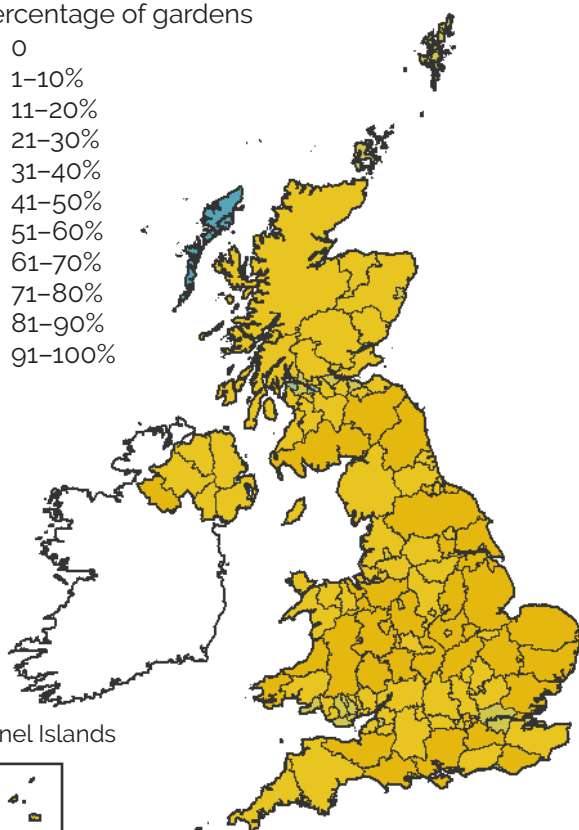
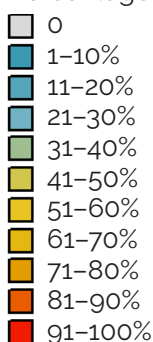
Gardenwatch was the UK's biggest ever garden wildlife audit, running during Springwatch in May 2019. The complete set of maps can be found at: [www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results](http://www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results)

# What you can do to help

It has been suggested that one of the reasons House Sparrows have declined is due to a loss of nesting sites, as house renovation has removed the gaps and niches they used to exploit. In natural sites House Sparrows will nest in loose colonies in dense vegetation, so putting up several nest boxes close together, or a 'sparrow terrace' with several chambers, may prove attractive. House Sparrows can be sensitive to disturbance at the nest, so it's recommended that boxes are sited at least two metres above ground level.

## Nest box provision in gardens

Percentage of gardens



Channel Islands



Liz Cutting / BTO

House Sparrow groups are particularly attracted to dense vegetation, and will not often venture far from shelter. Garden plants and shrubs that provide particularly dense cover include Ivy, rambling roses, Hawthorn, *Berberis*, *Pyracantha*, Wild Privet and Holly. Growing a native hedge along a fence line would provide a good habitat for House Sparrows, particularly if the plants are allowed to grow to above head height, since this species prefers high perches.

For more information on how to help the wildlife in your garden, please visit: [bit.ly/bto-wildlife-gardening](http://bit.ly/bto-wildlife-gardening)

## Help monitor House Sparrows

RECORD THE WILDLIFE IN YOUR GARDEN

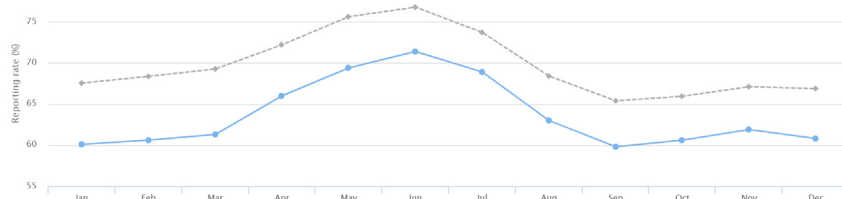
FOR BTO GARDEN BIRDWATCH [www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw)

You can record the wildlife visiting your garden through the BTO's Garden BirdWatch. Keeping simple lists of the birds and other animals that visit your garden over a week will help with national research into the importance of gardens for wildlife.



Percentage of BTO Garden BirdWatch gardens recording House Sparrows across the year.

Blue line (2019)  
Dotted line (average from 1995-2019)



Source:GBW

Find out more about Gardenwatch and what we discovered: [www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results](http://www.bto.org/gardenwatch-results)