

Great Spotted Woodpecker 1959/60

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

During the 1950s there had been increasing reports of Great Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos major* visiting bird tables, even in suburban areas, and of them visiting and attacking nestboxes. Hence a survey was organised to try to determine the extent of these habits, to find whether or not they were causing any problems and, if possible, to get any information on any reasons for the perhaps changing behaviour of the birds.

In the event only 323 forms (containing 2200 records) were returned out of 1800 distributed.

Visits to bird tables dated back to at least 1914-15 but most were more recent although it was not clear whether this was simply due to the increase in numbers of bird tables. In England damage to nestboxes dated back to at least 1909 although again most records were recent. There were eight times as many records of damage to boxes than to nestlings and no proven record of egg destruction.

Overall the survey provoked more questions than answers and a conclusion was that more research was needed on most aspects of the bird's behaviour that were asked about.

Methods of Data Capture

Following an extensive literature search the survey was conducted using a questionnaire. This asked observers to note the present status of the species in the observer's area. Regarding visits to bird tables observers were asked to note their opinion as to whether this was a new habit in their area, just related to increasing tameness or whether it was a shortage of other food. Similarly with attacks on nestboxes, was it a new habit locally and was it caused by a shortage of other potential nest sites.

It was suggested in the report that one reason for the paucity of replies was that the questionnaire was overly complicated. It seemed that the question about National Grid Reference was especially problematic.

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the status of the species especially in relation to its apparent increase at bird tables and in its attacks on nestboxes.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain – the species did not occur in Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

The winter of 1959/60 with records primarily to be gathered from January to March 1960.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised and run as a Trust-aided enquiry.

Organiser(s)

Rosemary (Mrs P V) Upton

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The report of the survey was printed privately as:

Upton R. 1961. Great Spotted Woodpecker Inquiry 1959/60. Privately printed.

It was sent to correspondents but was never formally published as the organiser and the BTO could not agree on the form it should take.

The survey was noted in all four *Bird Study* issues for 1959 (vol.6) and that for March 1960.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 folder containing some letters.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis