

London Bird Project

Title

London Bird Project 2002-2003

Description and Summary of Results

Rather little work has been done on which birds occur in urban areas and the importance of the various habitats within these, even the green spaces.

The London Bird Project aimed to rectify this for London. The object was to count birds in London's public green spaces and to relate these to the habitats present on and adjacent to the sites. The sites surveyed were all within Greater London with free public access, and included woods, cemeteries, formal gardens, parks and squares. Preferred survey sites were relatively small, discrete areas rather than such as the large well-known parks as a whole. An upper size limit to class as a single site was imposed at 80ha for practical reasons of survey.

In practice 128 sites were surveyed in both summers (2002 and 2003), 122 in both winters (2002/03 and 2003/04) and 277 sites were surveyed in at least one 'season'.

Larger sites consistently held more species than smaller sites and this was the most important factor for increasing the number of species. The presence of bodies of water and rough grass (including nettles and areas rich in weeds) also significantly increased the numbers recorded, as did, for the smallest sites, a greater proportion of adjacent gardens. The presence of buildings reduced numbers. For particular groups of species (woodland species, farmland species and habitat generalists), results were very similar to those for the total, except that there were no significant associations with the presence of water. These results therefore give some clear guidelines to maximizing avian diversity when designing green spaces in such as new residential developments. It was also clear that surrounding habitats are also important considerations.

Methods of Data Capture

Each site received up to six visits per year to count the birds, three in spring/summer (April-July) and three in winter (October-February). All birds which appeared to be using the site were recorded while walking a standard route chosen by the observer. Birds simply flying over (apart from swallows and martins and such as hovering Kestrels which were 'using' the site) were excluded as were all ducks and other wildfowl, these because it was usually impossible to tell whether or not they were wild -- many wildfowl in London's parks are feral or semi-feral and often of exotic species. It was stated that the routes taken should pass within 50m of all parts of the site if at all possible.

A detailed description of the habitat types present within the site and what constituted the boundaries of it were recorded.

The majority of sites were surveyed by volunteers, many coordinated by the BTO's Regional

Representative for Greater London Derek Coleman.

Purpose of Data Capture

The stated objective was to record what birds use London's public green spaces and to use the results to find what are the most important habitat features for birds in an urban landscape.

Geographic Coverage

Green spaces in Greater London.

Temporal Coverage

The summers of 2002 and 2003 (defined as April to July) and winters of 2002/03 and 2003/04 (October to February).

Other Interested parties

The Bridge House Estates Trust funded the project. Some additional funding was provided by the Nuffield Foundation (for a studentship bursary at the University of East Anglia), and the BTO Garden BirdWatch.

Organiser(s)

Su Gough as a BTO staff member.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The formal report on the survey itself is:

Chamberlain, D., Gough, S., Vaughan, H., Appleton, G., Freeman, S., Toms, M., Vickery, J. & Noble, D. 2005. The London Bird Report. (A report to The Bridge House Estates Trust.) *BTO Research Report 384*: 1-190.

The results were then used to produce a more general paper on green spaces in urban landscapes:

Chamberlain, D.E., Gough, S., Vaughan, H., Vickery, J.A. & Appleton, G.F. 2007. Determinants of bird species richness in public green spaces. *Bird Study* 54: 87-97.
The project was noticed in *BTO News* numbers 235, 238, 248, 255, 257 and 259.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

BTO Windows network central area.

Computer data -- outline contents

The main datafile is an Excel spreadsheet with worksheets Site, Habitat, Boundary, Other and Birds.

Other computer files contain copies of the forms, articles and newsletters, lists of volunteers and some artwork.

Computer data -- description of contents

The Excel datafile contains 5 worksheets:

- a) Site (basic information): Site Code -- a unique code for each site used as a marker throughout each work sheet; Site Name; Area (hectares); Borough
- b) Habitat (all information from the back of habitat recording form): Site Code; Site Type -- cemetery, park, playing field etc; Habitat Category -- see below; Percentage Cover -- as estimated by observer -- 'P' for present has been input as 1%
- c) Boundary (boundary type and adjacent habitat): Site Code; Boundary Code: NONE=No boundary, PAVE=Pavement, HDGE=Hedge, FENC=Fence, WATR=Waterbody, WALL=Wall, BLDG=Buildings, OTHR=Other; Boundary % Category: 1=<10%, 2=11-25%, 3=26-50%, 4=51-75%, 5=>75%; Adjacent Habitat Code: ROAD=Road, GARD=Private garden, WALL=Wall/Building, WATR=Waterbody/River, GREN=Other Green Space, RAIL=Railway, OTHR=Other, XXXX=Used to even up the table, will ALWAYS be '0'; Adjacent Habitat % Category: 1=<10%, 2=11-25%, 3=26-50%, 4=51-75%, 5=>75%
- d) Other (one-off questions on the front of the habitat recording form): Site Code; Nestbox: Nestbox present (Y) or not (N); Human disturbance (observer opinion): 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High; Traffic noise levels (observer opinion): 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High; Moles: molehills present (Y) or not (N); Ants: anthills present (Y) or not (N)
- e) Birds (bird/habitat data from the bird recording forms): Site Code; Visit: Summer 1, 2, 3 or Winter 1, 2, 3; Time: 1=Morning (< 11.00am), 2=Middayish (11.00am- 2pm), 3=Afternoon (2pm -5.00pm), 4=Evening (>5pm); Species: standard BTO 2-letter codes; Habitat Category (as on Habitat Worksheet): MG=Mown/short turf, RG=Unmown tall/rank grass, WD=Nettles/weedy areas, DT=Broadleaved trees, CT=Coniferous trees, VT=Evergreen trees, MT=Mixed trees, DB=Broadleaved bushes, CB=Coniferous bushes, VB=Evergreen bushes, MB=Mixed bushes, FF=Formal flowerbed, RF=Untended flowerbed, WT=Water body (pond, stream), ST=Statue/memorial, GV=Graves/tombs, FO=Fountain, WN=Wall/building (no vegetation), WV=Wall/building (vegetation/ivy), PV=Paved area, BE=Bare earth and bare paths, PY=Playground/play area, SP=Sports surface, O1=Other 1, O2=Other 2, O3=Other 3, O4=Other 4.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 Archive box contains data forms and associated letters, analyses and other -- papers.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information needed

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis