

Friends of City Gardens

Big Garden Birdwatch in the City 25th/26th January 2014

This was the 7th year volunteers have counted birds in City gardens as part of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. Both the number of species counted and the number of individual birds remained much the same as last year with 13 different species and 110 individual birds counted in a total of 15 different gardens.



It was encouraging to have spotted a starling this year - one of the most elusive birds in the City - but the low numbers of this species and the house sparrow continue to be disappointing. For the second year running no greenfinches were counted,

although there is a thriving population in the Fann Street wildlife garden. Once again goldfinches put in an appearance and have been seen regular visitors to feeders in Bunhill Fields and Fann Street. Wood pigeons headed the list of most numerous birds, followed by blue tits, blackbirds and great tits.

The weather during the 2013 breeding season was mixed with a cold spring which lasted well in to April and then a hot summer that extended into September. Although we saw birds checking out nest boxes during last



January's Birdwatch it is likely the 2013 nesting season was delayed and that some species may not have been able to raise more than one brood. Spring 2014 has been generally mild, wet and very windy, but there was evidence of birds checking nest boxes in Christchurch Greyfriars, Cleary and Barbican gardens and male robins and wrens were acting territorially.

Nest box survey January 2014

Volunteers helped clean and survey all the nest boxes in the City during early January 2014 to check on the success of the 2013 breeding season. In total for the 2013 nesting season there were 43 nest boxes in 13 gardens. Twelve of the boxes had been occupied (28%) in comparison to 29% in the 2012 nesting season. The majority of nests were those of blue tits (58%) with the remainder great tits.

Table 1: 2009 - 2014 Birdwatch results

| | 2014 | 2013 | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total birds counted | No. | No. | No. | No. | No. | No. |
| Woodpigeon | 25 | 28 | 23 | 10 | 20 | 24 |
| Blue tit | 21 | 27 | 26 | 33 | 26 | 13 |
| Blackbird | 19 | 19 | 29 | 12 | 29 | 29 |
| Great tit | 13 | 11 | 5 | 9 | 11 | 10 |
| Robin | 10 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 13 | 9 |
| Carrion crow | 3 | 7 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 6 |
| Magpie | 1 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 11 | 9 |
| Dunnock | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Chaffinch | 3 | 3 | 2 | | 1 | 2 |
| House sparrow | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 28 | 13 |
| Wren | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Goldfinch | 6 | 1 | 12 | 1 | | 1 |
| Greenfinch | | | 6 | 12 | 12 | 8 |
| Starling | 1 | | | 3 | | |
| Others | | | | 1 | 2 | |
| Total number of species (exc. feral pigeon) | 13 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 13 |
| Total number of birds (exc. feral pigeon) | 110 | 112 | 142 | 100 | 164 | 128 |

Table 2: Nest boxes and number of nests for 2013 season

| | 2013 | | 2012 | | 2011 | |
|--------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| | No. boxes | No. nests | No. boxes | No. nests | No. boxes | No. nests |
| Finsbury Circus | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Cleary Garden | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| St Botolph without Bishopsgate | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| St Mary Aldermanbury | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| St Paul's Cathedral | 5 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| Bunhill Fields | 5 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 4 |
| Fann Street, Barbican | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 1 |
| Bernard Morgan House | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Postman's Park | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Christchurch Greyfriars | 13 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| St Dunstan's in the East | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Byward Street | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Thomas More, Barbican | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| Speed House, Barbican | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 43 | 12 | 48 | 14 | 51 | 18 |
| Occupancy | 28% | | 29% | | 35% | |