

# **Bird Survey Results for 1997**



**Croydon Members Group**

**Edited by John Birkett**

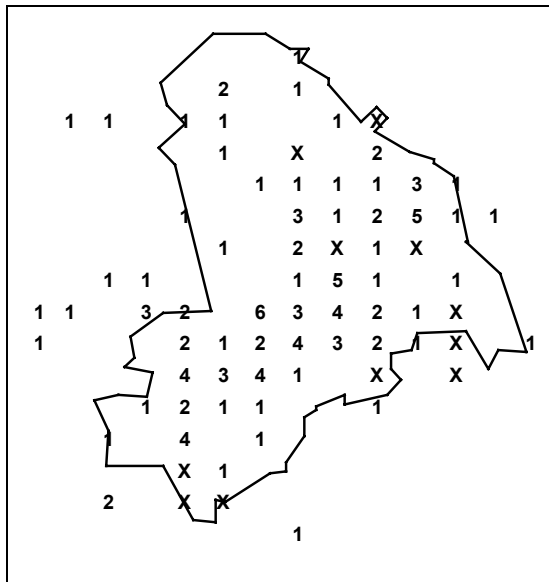
on behalf of the environmental sub-committee.  
(John Birkett, Simon Harris, Keith Neale, Doreen Main,  
and Pat Webster)

This report lists all the species which were recorded by Garden Survey participants in or from their gardens during 1997 and, in addition, information has been included about species recorded as part of our Other Sites Survey.

The 1996 figures given in this report are slightly different from those previously published. Information was received from an extra garden after the last report was published and this has now been incorporated.

### Garden Survey

This year we failed to reach the number of records for 1996 with forms being received from only 116 gardens plus some additional individual reports of less common species such as Goshawk, Buzzard and Wryneck. There are still areas of Croydon from which no garden records have been received. Even though many of these areas probably have comparatively fewer species present we need



records from the less bird friendly environments to fully assess distribution throughout the borough.

The map shows the distribution of gardens which participated during the year.

The area covered is divided approximately into one kilometre squares and the number of gardens for which records were received during the year is shown in each square. 'X' indicates that there are very few, if any, houses in a square and no garden records would be expected from there.

As last year, coverage varied from month to month and the number of gardens participating each month is shown in the table below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
No of gardens	100	101	100	103	103	101	82	83	81	81	85	83

Once again, for many species the percentage of gardens in which that species was recorded for a particular month is given as the relative abundance or 'ra'. This enables records to be compared from month to month or year to year.

74 species (including a Merlin) were recorded as part of the garden survey in 1997. Two additional species (Goshawk and Wryneck) are included on the

basis of individual reports from gardens. Once again the total does not include Buzzard because of problems previously mentioned. One other species, Woodlark, was reported. This, however, has not been included in the totals, pending a decision by the LNHS. Over the three years a total of 94 species have been recorded in gardens with question marks over three others.

The monthly summarised totals shown in the species list do not take into account the fact that the same birds may be recorded in more than one garden during a particular month. See the paper on page 34 about comparative studies of three gardens in close proximity.

Apart from House Sparrow, two other species (Swift and House Martin) appear to be showing a decline over the years. It is perhaps significant that all three species are heavily dependent on human habitation for nesting in an urban/suburban environment such as Croydon. We will be keeping an eye on how these species fare in the future. In the meanwhile, you may be able to help stop the decline by providing artificial nesting sites around your eaves. There is anecdotal evidence that Starlings are declining. This is another species that will nest in roofs although it also uses 'natural' sites.

### Most common species

Listed below are the ten most common species listed both by the percentage of gardens in which they appeared at least once during the year and by the total number of records. The positions and figures for 1996 are also given.

By gardens			By totals		
Magpie	100%	(1 <sup>st</sup> = 100%)	Blue Tit	96%	(3 <sup>rd</sup> 94%)
Blackbird	100%	(1 <sup>st</sup> = 100%)	Magpie	95%	(1 <sup>st</sup> 96%)
Blue Tit	99%	(1 <sup>st</sup> = 100%)	Blackbird	95%	(2 <sup>nd</sup> 95%)
Starling	97%	(4 <sup>th</sup> 99%)	Woodpigeon	88%	(6 <sup>th</sup> 86%)
Robin	97%	(5 <sup>th</sup> 98%)	Robin	88%	(4 <sup>th</sup> 91%)
Great Tit	97%	(7 <sup>th</sup> = 94%)	Starling	85%	(5 <sup>th</sup> 89%)
Carrion Crow	97%	(7 <sup>th</sup> = 94%)	Carrion Crow	85%	(7 <sup>th</sup> = 82%)
Woodpigeon	95%	(6 <sup>th</sup> 96%)	Collared Dove	84%	(7 <sup>th</sup> = 82%)
Collared Dove	94%	(9 <sup>th</sup> 93%)	Great Tit	79%	(10 <sup>th</sup> 73%)
Jay	91%	(10 <sup>th</sup> 93%)	Dunnoek	61%	

The decline of the House Sparrow continues. Last year it lost its place in the top 10 'gardens' list by declining from 91% to 89%. This year it dropped again to a mere 80%. There was another drop in the percentage of total records, which has now removed the House Sparrow from both lists. See the article later

in this report about this species. Its place has been taken by Dunnock, although this trails a long way behind Great Tit.

<b>BTO GBFS</b>			
%age Gardens (out of 248)			
Blue Tit	100	Great Tit	96
Blackbird	100	Dunnock	96
Robin	99	Starling	92
Chaffinch	98	House Sparrow	91
Greenfinch	97	Collared Dove	88

For comparison, the top ten species from the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey for winter 1996/7<sup>1</sup> are included in the table below.

The top three species in this survey are broadly comparable to ours but both Magpie (which was top for 1995 and 1996 in Croydon) and Carrion Crow are absent from the BTO survey top ten. Dunnock

is still not in our top ten as measured by the percentage of gardens but has just crept in to the list in respect of the percentage of total records. Perhaps this species is overlooked in many of Croydon's gardens.

### **Other Sites Survey**

In addition to the garden records we received data from 24 other sites in Croydon. Unfortunately some of these sites are included on the basis of information obtained from a single visit during the year. Addington Hills, Riddlesdown and South Norwood sites are well covered but information is sadly lacking from the Coulsdon area. If anyone goes to sites such as Coulsdon Common, Farthing Downs, Happy Valley, Devilsden Wood, *etc*, please fill in a record form and send us details of species seen there. We would still like information from **any** sites in the borough, even those that are well covered can benefit from additional recorders.

A total of 119 species were reported during the survey. As with the Garden Survey, no description has been obtained for the Buzzard. One other species may be included as a Lapland Bunting was reported to the London Natural History Society, but this is also subject to confirmation.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks go to all those who contributed information for both surveys; there are too many to list you by name. Some information has been obtained from the recently published "Birds of South Norwood Country Park 1935-1997" which includes a record of birds reported in 1997.

JB, July 1998

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<sup>1</sup> Source - BTO News no 212, September-October 1997

## Systematic List

The main list covers all those species which have been seen in gardens during the year and also includes some comments about these species where they have been reported from other sites. A separate list at the end covers additional species that have only been recorded from other sites.

### Cormorant

There is only one garden record this year with a bird flying over The Vale, Coulsdon in December. Once again, this is a site well away from water.

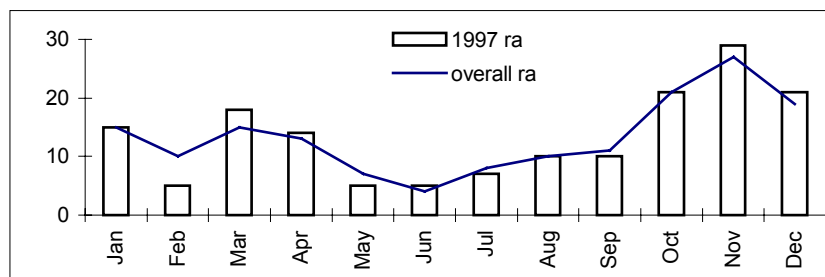
The main strongholds for the year were, as expected, South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake. One additional record came from Park Hill with a bird flying over there in September.

### Grey Heron

Reported from 53 gardens during the year, somewhat down on last year's 72. The majority of records came at either end of the year, but there was a distinct shortage in February for some reason. Apart from that, the pattern of occurrence very much reflects the overall pattern for the past three years.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	15	5	18	14	5	5	6	8	8	17	25	17
1997 ra	15	5	18	14	5	5	7	10	10	21	29	21
overall ra	15	10	15	13	7	4	8	10	11	21	27	19



Birds were also seen regularly at various bodies of water in the borough namely South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Millers Pond, with a few sightings from Waddon Ponds. One was even accidentally flushed from Sanderstead Pond late one November evening. Records from a few other locations refer primarily to birds flying over.

## Mute Swan

Another year with records from four gardens during the year, although those from The Ridgeway undoubtedly refer to birds from Waddon Ponds. This is the second year in a row that swans have been reported from Hurst Way. There are also records of swans which have not been specifically identified from Willis Court in September and November and from The Crossways, Old Coulsdon in December.

Shirley Avenue	January
Hurst Way	April
The Ridgeway, Waddon	September and October
Croham Valley Road	No month given

The only other records came from Waddon Ponds, where they were present all year, and South Norwood Country Park where it is becoming an increasingly regular, but still quite scarce, visitor.

## Canada Goose

This species was reported from 17 gardens in 1996 (19 in 1996). Once again, the majority of records are from the north eastern sector.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1996	7	11	14	13	9	3	3	6	8	5	5	5
1997	9	8	11	9	8	7	5	6	8	5	5	6

Most of the 'Other Sites' records come from Millers Pond, South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds where birds were present throughout the year. The only other record was of birds over Selsdon Wood in May.

## Mallard

There were distinctly fewer records this year, dropping from 25 gardens in 1996 to only 12 in 1997.

Despite this, there is still a distinct peak in late spring/early summer.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1996	4	5	12	13	14	10	2	5	2	4	3	2
1997	3	1	2	7	8	5	1	1	2	2	1	3

## Tufted Duck

This species has made a return to the Garden Survey with a record from The Ridgeway, near Waddon Ponds, in March.

Records from other sites related to Millers Pond, South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds. Birds were present almost constantly at all four locations with a high count of 57 at South Norwood Country Park on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Buzzard

There were, once again, several reports of Buzzard this year; but most are not accompanied by a fully detailed description. All potential sightings of this species, with a description whenever possible, are welcome. All this year's records are given with no attempt to justify them as proven wild birds, although most of them fit into the normal migration periods in spring and autumn.

Croham Valley Road	April
Sandy Lane South	April
Court Hill	May
Florence Road	June
Comport Green	August
Jordan Close	noon on August 12 soaring over Beechwood Road.

[This last record was the most annoying as I was almost certainly in my garden in Briton Hill Road when the bird flew over! Ed]

A bird was also reported from Park Hill on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

## Goshawk

Although not reported directly from the Garden Survey, a detailed description was received for a bird which was watched eating a Collared Dove in a garden in Hartley Old Road on July 8, 1997. The presence of yet another large raptor species in Croydon following last year's Honey Buzzard does not help in sorting out the true identity of the Buzzard sightings.

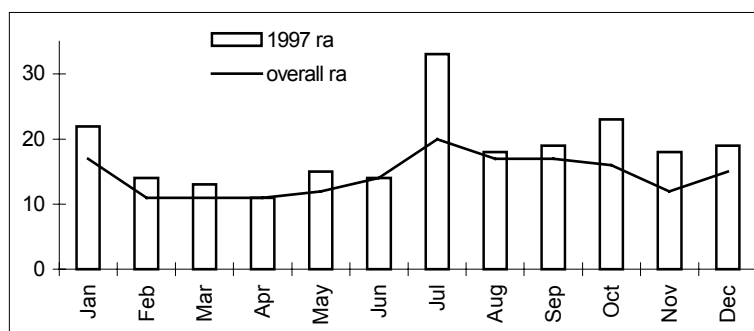
## Sparrowhawk

Despite a drop in the number of gardens participating in the survey, there was an increase in the number of Sparrowhawk reports for 1997. They were reported from 61 gardens which was only two less than last year. There was a large increase in records for July which might suggest the presence of several breeding pairs. The figures quoted on the next page show the overall relative abundance for 1995 to 1997 as well as detailing this year's sighting. The graph shows that Sparrowhawks were seen more frequently during 1997 than the average over the past three years.

## Croydon Bird Surveys - 1997

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	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	22	14	13	11	15	14	27	15	15	19	15	16
1997 ra	22	14	13	11	15	14	33	18	19	23	18	19
overall ra	17	11	11	11	12	14	20	17	17	16	12	15

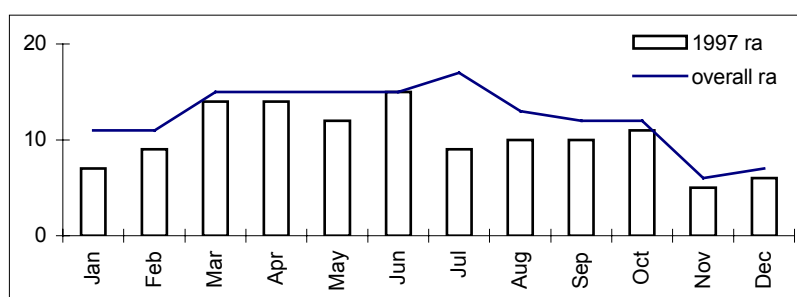


Sparrowhawks were also reported from 14 'Other Sites' during the year. As with the garden records, some of these almost certainly relate to breeding birds, but no breeding was specifically reported. Some of these birds may also have featured in the Garden Survey, due to the close proximity of sites.

### Kestrel

Unlike last year, Kestrels more or less held their own in respect of the proportion of gardens reporting the species during the year. They were reported from 43 gardens (37%) during 1997 compared to 49 in 1996 (34%). Having said that, the monthly records still generally show small decreases for most months when compared to the 1995 and overall figures.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	7	9	14	14	12	15	7	8	8	9	4	5
1997 ra	7	9	14	14	12	15	9	10	10	11	5	6
overall ra	11	11	15	15	15	15	17	13	12	12	6	7



They continue to succeed at South Norwood Country Park where four pairs bred again this year. Given the records from Lloyd Park and Riddlesdown, it also likely that they bred at those sites as well. In all they were reported from 12 'Other Sites'

## Merlin

Another new species for the Garden Survey. A male was observed on a rooftop in Harbury Road, Carshalton during March.

The place to find this species in Croydon remains South Norwood Country Park where single birds were recorded on at least five occasions. An unsexed bird was there on August 21<sup>st</sup> with females on September 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, October 21<sup>st</sup> and November 25<sup>th</sup>.

## Hobby

Having made its first appearance in the Garden Survey last year, there were two garden records for 1997. Another bird was reported from Briton Hill Road, Sanderstead in September following an earlier bird on July 30<sup>th</sup> at The Pines, St James Road.

Apart from this, the majority of records came from South Norwood Country Park as usual with birds seen there in both spring and autumn as well as a few sightings from South Norwood Lake.

## Pheasant

Another good year for garden sightings of this species. They were reported from four gardens during the year, two of them in Chichester Road.

Pine Coombe, Shirley Hills	March
Chichester Road (2 sites)	April and November
Shirley Church Road	October and November

Although not necessarily that common, Pheasants were recorded at seven Other Sites during the year.

## Lapwing

Reported from four gardens in 1997 (six last year). Three of the records came from a relatively small area around Sanderstead and Selsdon but they were widespread in time. Once again, information about flock sizes and direction of flight of any future sightings would be appreciated.

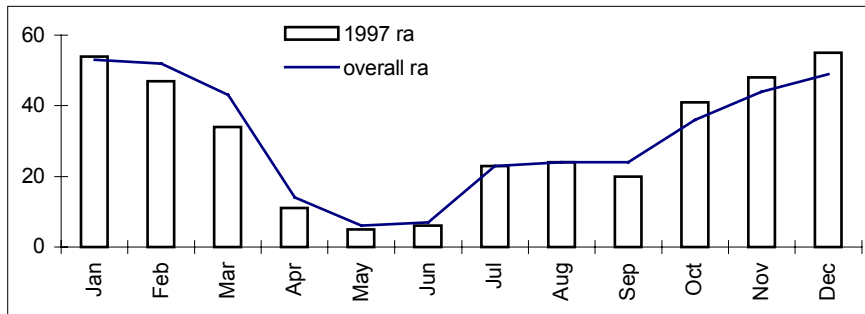
Brookcroft, Linton Glade	January
The Vale, Coulsdon	February
Briton Hill Road	June
Court Hill, Sanderstead	November

Elsewhere, the most reliable site was South Norwood Country Park with records in five months, but there were also birds seen at Lloyd Park in January. As ever, these refer to birds flying over without landing.

## Black-headed Gull

There was very little change in the proportion of gardens reporting this species with 69 this year (59%) compared to 80 (56%) in 1996. The fluctuation of occurrence during the year generally reflects previous years although many probably left slightly earlier with a distinct drop for March with an almost complete absence during the breeding season. Numbers then built up slowly again from July to the end of the year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	54	47	34	11	5	6	19	20	16	33	41	46
1997 ra	54	47	34	11	5	6	23	24	20	41	48	55
overall ra	53	52	43	14	6	7	23	24	24	36	44	49



Not surprisingly, the species was widespread at the Other Sites, with low numbers during May and June.

## Common Gull

The records for this species returned to more expected levels after last year's high. It may not be coincidence that this happened when Common Gull was removed from the listed species on the recording form.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	12	4	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	6	5

## Lesser Black-backed Gull

Reported from eight gardens during the year spread over all months except June and July, with more reports from the second half of the year.

## Herring Gull

Reported from six gardens during the year with a widespread distribution. As with Lesser Black-backed Gull, most records were in the second half of the year.

## Greater Black-backed Gull

This was only recorded from Goodwin Road during November as far as the Garden Survey was concerned. Elsewhere, the only records came from South Norwood Country Park. This is clearly the least frequent of the five main gull species in Croydon.

## Feral Pigeon

The records for this species show a similar status to 1996. It was found in 78 gardens (67%) against 99 (70%) in 1996, being present in about half of the gardens each month. The table gives this year's numbers plus the *ras* for 1996 and 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	50	54	57	55	58	60	48	44	41	42	43	44
1997 <i>ra</i>	50	53	57	53	56	59	59	53	51	52	51	53
1996 <i>ra</i>	47	51	53	57	54	62	50	49	48	43	52	50

## Stock Dove

Once again this species was reported from only four gardens, three of which also recorded the species last year. It seems likely that birds bred near Freshfields given the records throughout the summer months. There were also seen at several other sites during the year, with breeding likely at Lloyd Park and South Norwood Country Park at least.

Pittville Gdns, SE25	September to December
Freshfields, Shirley	May to August
Florence Road	June
Briton Hill Road	March

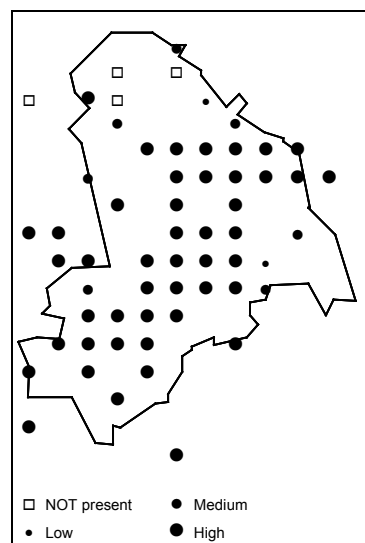
## Woodpigeon

Reported from 110 gardens (95%) against 139 (98%) in 1996. This species has a widespread distribution. It was also widespread at the various other sites from which records were received.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	89	94	94	95	93	90	76	72	65	64	66	67
<i>ra</i>	89	93	94	92	90	89	93	87	80	79	78	81

## Collared Dove

Reported from 109 gardens (94%) during 1997 against 132 (93%) in 1996. This has a widespread distribution through most of the borough but the map shows that it is slightly less regular in the extreme north.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	86	86	89	91	93	88	68	69	61	64	68	65
<i>ra</i>	86	85	89	88	90	87	83	83	75	79	80	78

## Ring-necked Parakeet

Although the number of sites was down slightly from 1996 only 13 gardens instead of 16, there is some evidence that this species is slowly spreading out from its main core in Croydon. Once again there are two main centres with some sites reporting the species every month and these coincide with the known sites at Lloyd Park (where a pair were seen using a nest hole) and Bethlem Hospital. There were also some records away from the main centres, including Purley Downs Road in June and Comport Green, New Addington in November and December. Several records also came from South Norwood Country Park and there were occasional reports from Croham Hurst.

## Cuckoo

This year saw records from six gardens, all in May, indicating a clearly defined passage. Elsewhere, they were recorded at two other sites (Littleheath Wood and Selsdon Wood) in May with South Norwood Country Park bucking the trend and having a male on two dates in early April!

Harbury Road, Carshalton  
Arkwright Road  
Brookcroft, Linton Glade  
Kingswood Way  
Old Farleigh Road  
Lower Barn Road

## Little Owl

This species was added to the Garden Survey list with one heard in Purley Downs Road during April.

It was also reported from two Other Sites, both on the edge of the borough, namely near New Addington and at Riddlesdown on unrecorded dates.

## Tawny Owl

Tawny Owls were reported from a similar number of gardens to last year.

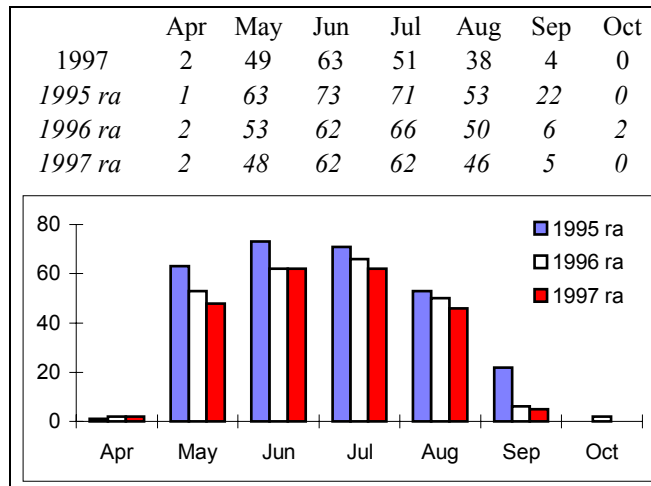
Freshfields	August and December
Oak Gardens, Shirley	January and August
Shirley Church Road	December
Castlemaine Avenue	January, February and December
Hurst Way	various months, including two birds in August
Hollingsworth Road	April
Chapel View	April
Briton Hill Road	December (31 <sup>st</sup> )
Mountwood Close	August
Old Farleigh Road	February, March and June
The Pines	March and October
Lower Barn Road	January and March
Hayes Lane, Kenley	eight months during the year

One was reported from Birdhurst Road in November and another, reported from Church Way, Sanderstead at the end of November or early December, may have been the same bird that was heard in Briton Hill Road a few weeks later.

Birds were also recorded at three other sites, namely Selsdon Wood, South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake. They must be present elsewhere but, as most of our participants in the Other Sites Survey do not usually visit their chosen sites at night, this species is under-recorded.

## Swift

For the third year in a row, the percentage of gardens reporting Swifts fell, although the monthly figures were similar to 1996. The yearly percentages have fallen from 73% in 1995 to 65% in 1996 and 59% in 1997. This may be another species to keep an eye on and reports of any specific nesting sites would be appreciated.



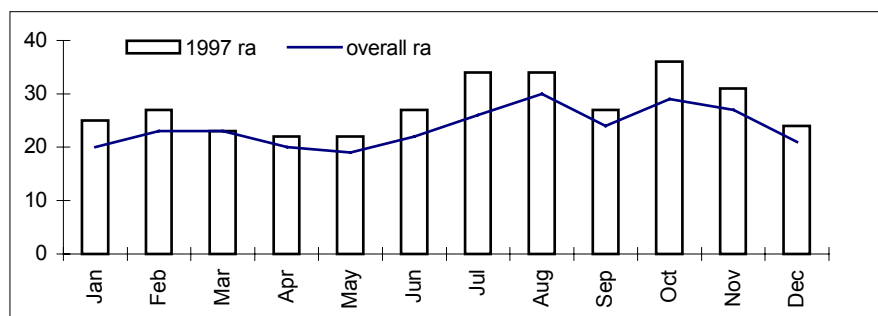
## Wryneck

Although not reported directly from the Garden Survey, one was seen on a patio in a garden in Riddlesdown Avenue on September 29<sup>th</sup>.

## Green Woodpecker

This is a species which seems to be showing a slight increase in garden records. It was reported from 61 gardens (53%) during 1997 following 70 gardens (49%) in 1996 and 52 (42%) in 1995. Likewise, most monthly figures showed increase. Once again, birds seemed to be resident in or near many gardens suggesting breeding in the locality.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	25	27	23	23	23	27	28	28	22	29	26	20
1997 ra	25	27	23	22	22	27	34	34	27	36	31	24
overall ra	20	23	23	20	19	22	26	30	24	29	27	21



Green Woodpeckers were also fairly common at the Other Sites in Croydon.

## Great Spotted Woodpecker

This was again the most frequently reported woodpecker in Croydon. Although it was not reported from any more gardens during the year, it was distinctly more prevalent in several months as shown by the percentages. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were seen in 75 gardens (65%) during 1997 against 96 (67%) in 1996.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	35	33	41	31	37	46	33	35	27	37	41	40
<i>1997 ra</i>	35	33	41	30	36	46	40	42	33	46	48	48
<i>1996 ra</i>	36	31	32	35	34	40	36	33	33	35	43	43

## Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

This species showed a very sharp decline in its fortunes and was not recorded from any gardens actually in Croydon this year, all three records coming from outside the borough boundaries. Partly to compensate, it was found at seven Other Sites during the year with South Norwood Lake being the most reliable. Indeed, given that there were records from April to July, it is possible that they actually bred at the Lake.

Brighton Road, Hooley	January
Harbury Road, Carshalton	October
Dalmeny Road, Carshalton	November

## Woodlark

A bird was reported from Brighton Road, Hooley on January 19<sup>th</sup> and would be a first for the Garden Survey if accepted by the London Natural History Society.

## Skylark

This species was only reported from two gardens during 1997 and these are likely to relate to passage birds in October. This is the third year that birds have flown over Briton Hill Road, which must mean that it lies near a migration route for this species.

Hayes Lane, Kenley	October
Briton Hill Road	October

Only four Other Sites reported Skylarks. They were present at Riddlesdown, where they bred, for most of the year. For the first time in many years, they failed to breed at South Norwood Country Park, possibly due to ever increasing disturbance. Breeding presumably occurred on the golf course next to Selsdon Wood and there were records from the breeding season at Kenley Common/Aerodrome.

## Swallow

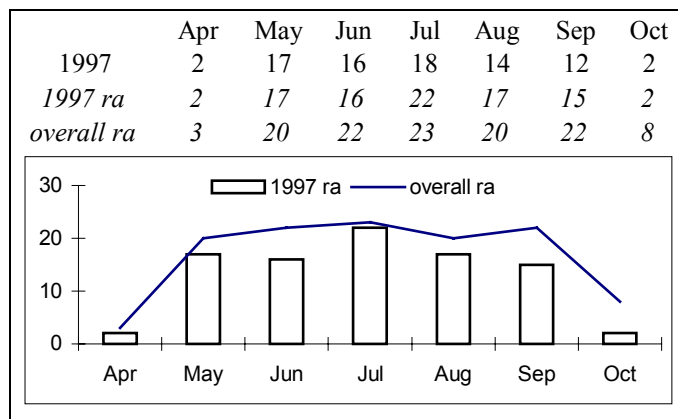
Reported from just 21 gardens this year, down on the 30 in 1996.

Monthly totals:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1997	2	11	8	8	3	3	2	1
1996	6	11	12	6	8	8	6	1

## House Martin

This species shows a slight decline in the percentage of gardens from 1996 and is now well down on 1995. It was seen from 34 gardens (29%) during 1997, 47 (33%) in 1996 and 51 (41%) in 1995. The individual monthly figures are also generally down with only the July figures showing any encouragement. Details of numbers and potential nesting sites would be welcomed to see how this species fares in the future.



## Grey Wagtail

The best year yet for garden records of this species, which was seen at seven sites during the year, four of them in October and November suggesting birds passing through. Grange Road had birds for the second year running.

Farley Road	January
Markfield, Courtwood Lane	May
The Ridgeway	June
Grange Road	October
Ridge Langley	October
Goodwin Road	November (21 <sup>st</sup> )
Shirley Church Road	November (23 <sup>rd</sup> )

Grey Wagtails were also found at Waddon Ponds, South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park (where they probably bred) and, more unusually, from Kenley Common in August and from the pond next to the council tip at South Croydon, again in the autumn.

## Pied Wagtail

This species was significantly down on last year, being reported from only 20 gardens (17%) against 36 (25%) in 1996. The distribution throughout the winter months was more even with no distinct peak at either end of the year. It was generally scarce or even absent from gardens during the breeding season.

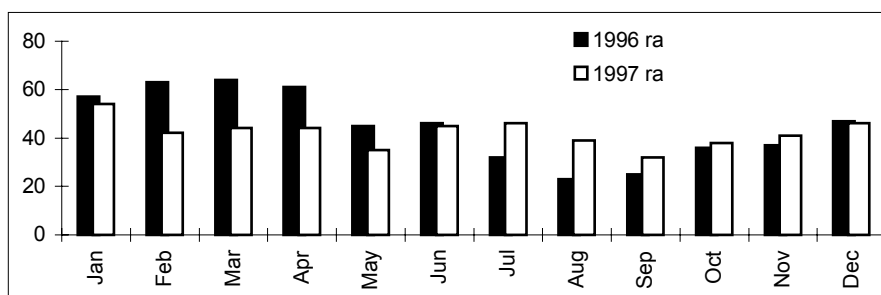
Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	6	8	6	3	3	2	0	1	5	6	7	9
1996	14	7	10	9	3	5	3	2	4	5	9	14

## Wren

Reported from 90 gardens (78%) during the year against 119 (84%) in 1996. Although elusive at times it was often present throughout the year. The species had shown an apparent decline in the later half of 1996. This seemed to have been reversed in January 1997, but perhaps the cold weather struck with late winter and early spring sightings being around 40% of gardens rather than the more usual 60%. The table shows this year's figures and the *ra* from both 1996 and 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	54	42	44	45	36	45	38	32	26	31	35	38
1997 <i>ra</i>	54	42	44	44	35	45	46	39	32	38	41	46
1996 <i>ra</i>	57	63	64	61	45	46	32	23	25	36	37	47



## Dunnock

There was very little change for this species either in the percentage of gardens reporting it throughout the year or for the monthly figures. It was reported from 96 gardens (83%) in 1997 following 120 (84%) in 1996. The *ra* for both 1996 and 1997 are given.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	69	65	72	68	63	63	46	38	41	51	49	54
1997 <i>ra</i>	69	64	72	66	61	62	56	46	51	63	58	65
1996 <i>ra</i>	65	68	68	71	66	56	52	48	44	50	62	67

## Robin

Reported from all but three of the 116 gardens (97%), this percentage has dropped slightly over the three years of the survey, down from 99% in 1996 and 100% in 1995. The monthly *ras* were generally slightly lower than for 1996.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	97	95	91	92	90	84	61	60	68	75	79	77
1997 <i>ra</i>	97	94	91	89	87	83	74	72	84	93	93	93
1996 <i>ra</i>	98	94	93	92	91	85	83	81	87	89	91	94

## Blackbird

Once again, this species was reported from all participating gardens. The table below gives this year's figures and the overall percentage of gardens for each month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	99	100	99	102	100	99	78	70	63	72	81	81
1997 <i>ra</i>	99	99	99	99	97	98	95	84	78	89	95	98
overall <i>ra</i>	99	99	99	99	98	97	95	88	80	84	92	97

## Fieldfare

After last year's high of sightings from 29 gardens, Fieldfares were seen in 25 gardens during 1997. This year, however, the peak was in January with another influx in December.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	17	6	1	0	0	2	6	11
1996	16	20	2	1	1	0	3	7

Fieldfares were also reported from eleven other sites during the year, mainly in January/February and November/December.

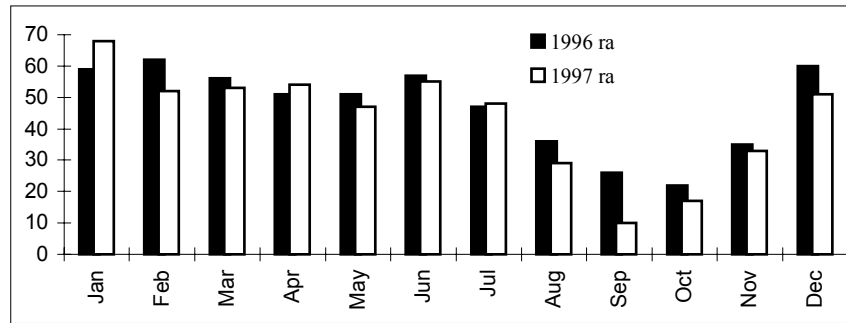
## Song Thrush

Reported from 101 gardens (87%) during the year against 119 (83%) during 1996. The BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey for 1996/7<sup>2</sup> reported Song Thrush from 68% of the gardens which is the same as our total from January alone. During the whole period from January to March, Song Thrushes were found in 79% of the participating gardens in Croydon, well above the BTO survey. By the autumn, however, Song Thrushes became particularly scarce being recorded in only eight gardens during September.

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<sup>2</sup> BTO News no 212 September-October 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	68	53	53	56	48	56	39	24	8	14	28	42
1997 ra	68	52	53	54	47	55	48	29	10	17	33	51
1996 ra	59	62	56	51	51	57	47	36	26	22	35	60

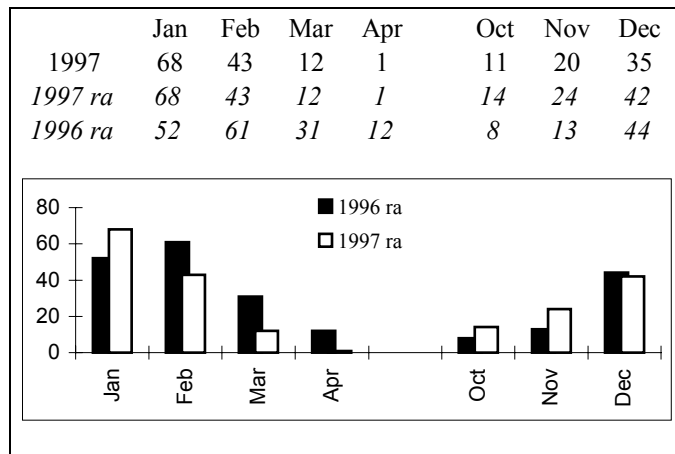


## Redwing

Like the other winter thrush, the Fieldfare, this species maintained a high profile in Croydon. It was recorded in 77 gardens (66%) during 1997 against 94 (66%) in 1996. Incredibly, it was recorded in 68% of gardens during January, the same as for Song Thrush. This figure was also significantly higher than the 33% overall for the winter of 1996-7 reported by the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey<sup>2</sup>.

The highest count by far was recorded in Shirley Church on October 11<sup>th</sup> when well over 1,000 birds (probably 1,500)

were logged flying over during an hour or so in the morning. This was clearly the day when Redwings arrived in Croydon as several flocks of up to 50 birds were also seen between Shirley and Coney Hall. All these counts are overwhelmed by the sight of more than 10,000 birds that apparently flew over Hampstead Heath on the same day!



## Mistle Thrush

Reported from only 54 gardens (47%), slightly down on last year's 70 (49%). This species was most prevalent in winter but reasonably high numbers of gardens continued reporting them until April/May.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	30	23	25	23	19	16	2	5	9	12	14	17
1997 ra	30	23	25	22	18	16	2	6	11	15	16	20
1996 ra	32	24	32	16	20	17	13	11	11	15	14	25

<sup>2</sup> BTO News 212 September-October 1997

## Whitethroat

Reported from just two gardens, down on last year's five, with no suggestion of breeding.

Pittville gardens, SE25	May
Harbury Road, Carshalton	July and August

Birds were also reported from five other sites; Kenley Common, Lloyd Park, Riddlesdown, South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake. The country park must be the main site with good numbers breeding there.

## Garden Warbler

This year this species came closer to living up to its name, being reported from at least five gardens during the year. There was also a possible late autumn record from a sixth garden.

Oaks Road, Kenley	March
Croham Valley Road	April, September, October
Briton Hill Road	May
Hayes Lane, Kenley	May to July
Harbury Road, Carshalton	September

Elsewhere, Garden Warblers were recorded at six other sites, but only the Addington Hills records clearly suggested breeding. As usual birds were reported in both spring and autumn at South Norwood Country Park, but did not stay for the whole summer.

## Blackcap

As usual, the Blackcap was by far the most frequently reported warbler from gardens with most records coming from the winter months. Reported from 36 gardens (31%) in 1997 against 54 (38%) in 1996. There were a few gardens which reported birds throughout the summer suggesting local breeding. Even more gardens reported Blackcaps in January despite the fall in the number of gardens participating. 21% of gardens had Blackcaps at least once in January which compares to the 24% throughout the whole winter 1996-7 reported by the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey<sup>2</sup>

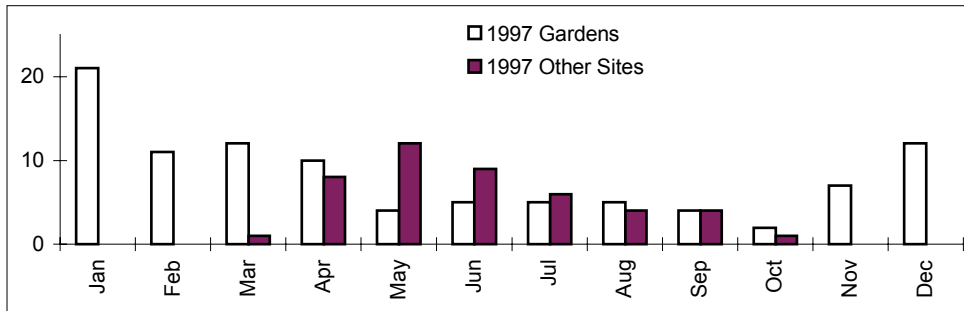
It is interesting to compare the monthly garden records with those from other sites, where no wintering birds were found. Overall 14 other sites reported Blackcaps, which almost certainly bred at most if not all sites.

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<sup>2</sup> BTO News 212 September - October 1997

## Croydon Bird Surveys - 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997 Gardens	21	11	12	10	4	5	5	5	4	2	7	12
1997 Other Sites	0	0	1	8	12	9	6	4	4	1	0	0



### Wood Warbler

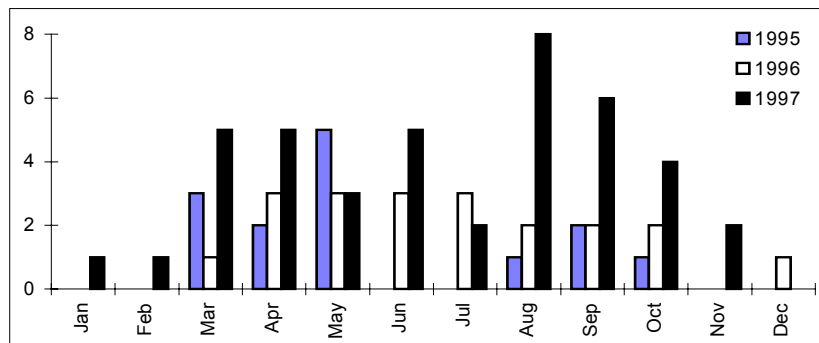
There was a single garden record for the year, this time from Riddlesdown Road in April.

A bird was also heard for a short while in Selsdon Wood one morning in early May. It was located during a recce prior to a bird race.

### Chiffchaff

This was by far the best year for Chiffchaff records, being reported from 20 gardens well up on the ten in each of the last two years. Once again, the records from at least three gardens are likely to relate to breeding birds. Birds were spread between the two migration periods, but there was at least one wintering bird early in the year. The last garden record was in mid-late November. The table below shows the records for the three years.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	1	1	5	5	3	5	2	8	6	4	2	0
1996	0	0	1	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	0	1
1995	0	0	3	2	5	0	0	1	2	1	0	0



Away from gardens, Chiffchaffs were reported from most suitable sites and almost certainly bred at many of them.

## Willow Warbler

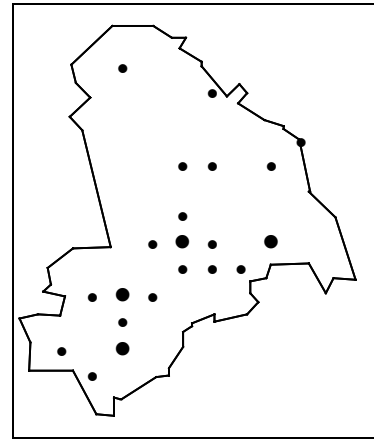
This was reported from seven gardens with an even split between spring and autumn records.

Chepstow Rise	April
Hurst Way	April
Harbury Road, Carshalton	April, August
Riddlesdown Road	April, August
The Vale, Coulsdon	May, August
Briton Hill Road	August
West Hill	August

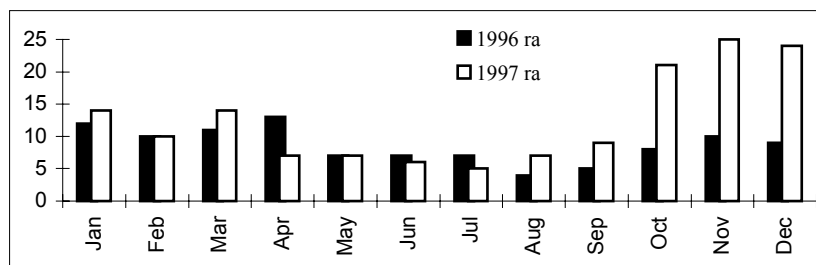
This species was also reported from fewer Other Sites than Chiffchaff and there was little evidence of potential breeding.

## Goldcrest

This was reported from 39 gardens (34%) during the year against 45 (31%) in 1996. There was clearly an influx in late autumn/winter with the *ra* beating the relevant period in 1995. Our early year totals are clearly far higher than those reported by the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey which only placed them in 5% of gardens for the whole of the 1996-7 winter period<sup>2</sup> (our lowest for any single month in that period was 8% in October 1996!) Again it is likely to have bred in or near several gardens. The distribution map shows that it appears to be more prevalent in the south of the borough, this may, however, be affected by under-recording.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	14	10	14	7	7	6	4	6	7	17	21	20
1997 <i>ra</i>	14	10	14	7	7	6	5	7	9	21	25	24
1996 <i>ra</i>	12	10	11	13	7	7	7	4	5	8	10	9



Goldcrests were also recorded in 13 of the Other Sites with breeding likely in several of them (confirmed in Purley Beeches).

<sup>2</sup> BTO News 212 September - October 1997

## Spotted Flycatcher

This species returned to the Garden Survey report by virtue of a single August record from a garden in The Vale, Coulsdon.

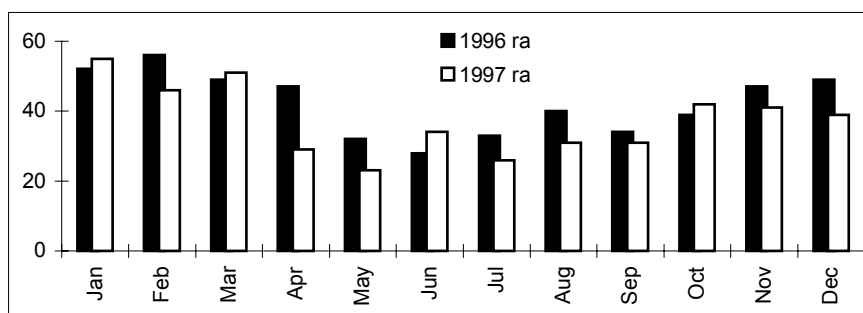
It did not fare much better in the Other Sites Survey, being recorded at only three sites, namely Addington Hills, Kenley Common and South Norwood Country Park. It is unlikely that any of these specifically related to breeding birds.

## Long-tailed Tit

Reported from 89 (77%) gardens during 1997 against 114 (80%) last year. As last year it was present in about half the gardens during the first three months, they never reached this level later on. Indeed, comparison of the monthly figures shows no real pattern. Long-tailed Tits seemed to be more common than last year in a few months but well down in many others. Once again they were present in about a quarter to a third of gardens during the summer months and, presumably, bred in those vicinities.

The BTO garden bird feeding survey<sup>2</sup> showed they had been present in 45% of gardens during 1996/7. Once again this figure represents our minimum percentage during the winter months with birds being seen at least once in 73% of the gardens participating from January to March..

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	55	46	51	30	24	34	21	26	25	34	35	32
1997 ra	55	46	51	29	23	34	26	31	31	42	41	39
1996 ra	52	56	49	47	32	28	33	40	34	39	47	49



Long-tailed Tits were also reasonably common in many of the Other Sites that were surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> BTO News 212 September - October 1997

## Marsh Tit

There were records from only two gardens during the year and both of these only reported them for a single month. One of these (Brookcroft) had previously recorded them during several months. Although we lost one of the more regular sites, the presumption must be that the status of this species is becoming ever more parlous in Croydon.

Brookcroft, Linton Glade	January
Markfield, Courtwood Lane	April

It may also be significant that both these gardens are very close to Selsdon Wood which was one of only two Other Sites to report Marsh Tits during the year, the second being Riddlesdown. With information that the site at Riddlesdown may now be deserted it is possible that all Croydon's Marsh Tits are concentrated at a single site! This is a very sobering thought and all records of this species would be appreciated, even if not part of either survey.

## Coal Tit

Reported from 68 gardens (59%) in 1997 against 97 (68%) during 1996. Despite this apparent overall decline from last year, birds were generally present in similar, or even in greater, numbers of gardens for each individual month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	45	47	40	37	34	37	27	26	24	31	39	38
<i>1997 ra</i>	45	47	40	36	33	37	33	31	30	38	46	46
<i>1996 ra</i>	37	40	37	37	29	26	23	34	29	36	47	50

## Blue Tit

Reported from all but one of the 116 gardens against all 143 last year. This is once again one of our most common species even without counting the actual number of birds present during a month. This trend is also repeated in the Other Sites survey.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	97	99	98	99	101	97	77	79	77	77	83	80
<i>1997 ra</i>	97	98	98	96	98	96	94	95	95	95	98	96
<i>1996 ra</i>	97	97	98	99	98	93	85	86	87	88	94	95

## Great Tit

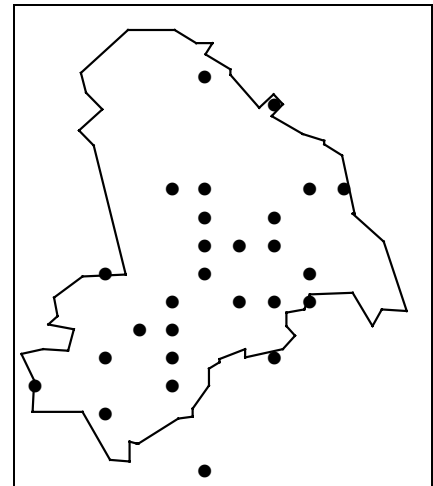
Reported from 113 gardens (97%) in 1997 against 135 (94%) in 1996. This species was distinctly more prevalent in most months during the year, but it was never as common as Blue Tits.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	77	80	84	80	84	80	60	61	63	62	74	72
<i>1997 ra</i>	77	79	84	78	82	79	73	73	78	77	87	87
<i>1996 ra</i>	75	76	80	81	73	71	64	65	66	68	77	79

## Nuthatch

Reported from 29 gardens (25%), down from last year's 42 (29%) and closer to the 25 in 1995. Following on from the high numbers at the end of 1996, numbers remained high until the summer when they returned to the levels of late 1995.

The distribution map includes data from both the Garden Survey and the Other Sites Survey. With the exception of South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park, birds are present essentially in the central and southern parts of Croydon.



Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	18	18	17	11	13	17	14	9	7	9	10	9
1996	10	8	10	8	9	10	13	15	21	18	23	20

## Treecreeper

Reported from 12 gardens in 1997, only slightly down on the 15 last year.

Shirley Church Road	January and November
Hollingsworth Road	January and February
Chapel View	January
Brookcroft, Linton Glade	January, July, December
Markfield, Courtwood Lane	January, June
Marlpit Lane	January
Hayes Lane, Kenley	January, December
Ridge Langley	February
Kingswood Way	February and October
Bushey Road, Shirley	April
Mead Way, Old Coulsdon	April, May
Croham Valley Road	May

Although sometimes elusive, Treecreepers were also recorded at many of the woodland sites in the Other Sites Survey.

## Jay

This species was reported from 105 (91%) gardens against 133 (93%) in 1996. They were reported from just over half the gardens each month.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	63	54	60	61	59	59	44	43	43	55	52	54
1997 <i>ra</i>	63	54	60	59	57	58	54	52	53	68	61	65
1996 <i>ra</i>	55	52	62	61	64	60	63	52	61	76	79	77

## Magpie

The top species for the third year in a row, Magpies were recorded from all gardens yet again.

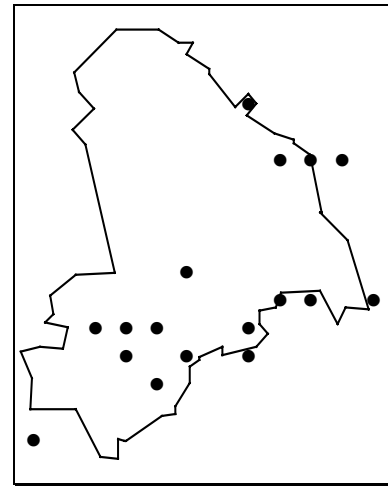
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	98	95	95	101	97	95	78	79	75	78	81	79
1997 <i>ra</i>	98	94	95	98	94	94	95	95	93	96	95	95
1996 <i>ra</i>	95	97	97	95	94	92	97	94	95	97	97	97

Apart from their garden appearances, Magpies were also widespread elsewhere. A large roost builds up in winter at Farthing Downs, with a smaller one near Croham Hurst.

## Jackdaw

Reported from 14 gardens (12%) in 1997 against the 16 (11%) in 1996.

The distribution is shown on the map. This is perhaps one species to watch as it appears to be slowly spreading out from its main core area around the colony at the Rose and Crown pit, by Riddlesdown, towards South Croydon. There is also another potential build up towards the north east of the borough. Records from South Norwood Country Park are increasing in frequency with more birds being reported and there are records from Shirley/West Wickham. The table below shows the number of records for each month.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	3	4	4	3	8	5	2	1	4	7	4	4
1996	5	4	6	6	7	8	3	1	3	7	5	2
1995	4	4	4	5	7	8	0	1	1	3	1	2

## Rook

The number of gardens reporting Rooks declined to just two and one of these was a newcomer to the survey. Both these gardens are relatively close together, one being just in Kent and the other being in New Addington near the boundary. We have also received records from just one other site and this was once again Riddlesdown.

Willis Court, West Wickham	All year
Comport Green, New Addington	September, October, December

## Carrion Crow

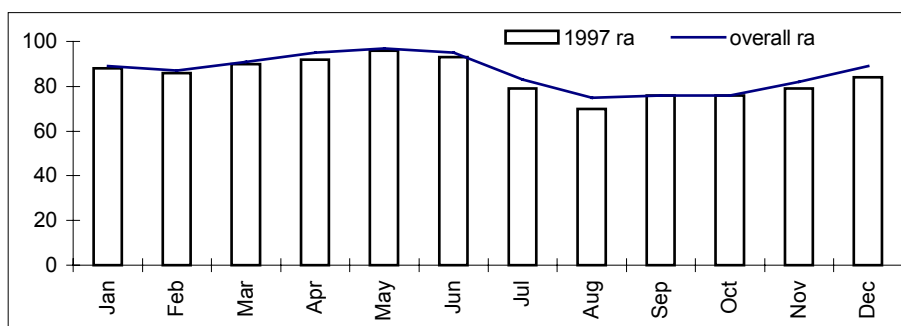
Reported from 113 gardens (97%) during the year against 135 (94%) in 1996. This species remains widespread in respect of both the Garden and Other Sites Surveys.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	87	83	86	87	88	87	69	67	65	72	73	74
1997 ra	87	82	86	85	85	86	84	81	80	89	86	89
1996 ra	79	80	85	83	87	84	80	76	78	81	82	82

## Starling

Reported from 113 gardens (97%) during the year against 142 (99%) in 1996. This is another very common species. There are fears that Starlings are declining but, unlike House Sparrows, there is no real evidence yet for this in the results of the Garden Survey. The percentage of gardens reporting the species each month during 1997 was generally very slightly down on the overall figures and it may be worth looking to see if this continues in the future as similar comments may have been applicable to House Sparrows only a few years ago.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	88	87	90	95	99	94	65	58	62	62	67	70
1997 ra	88	86	90	92	96	93	79	70	76	76	79	84
overall ra	89	87	91	95	97	95	83	75	76	76	82	89



## House Sparrow

This species has shown another dramatic decline, being reported from only 93 gardens during the year. The monthly totals for 1997 compared to 1996 are given below. A more detailed analysis is given in the paper at the end of this report. The results of the Other Site Survey also show that House Sparrows are absent from some areas.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	59	60	61	66	68	68	51	44	39	44	46	44
1996	86	85	84	85	90	88	83	75	68	69	73	78

## Tree Sparrow

This is the second year in a row that this species has been recorded for the Garden Survey and both records are given below. The only other known record for Croydon this year relates to three birds seen at South Norwood Country Park on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

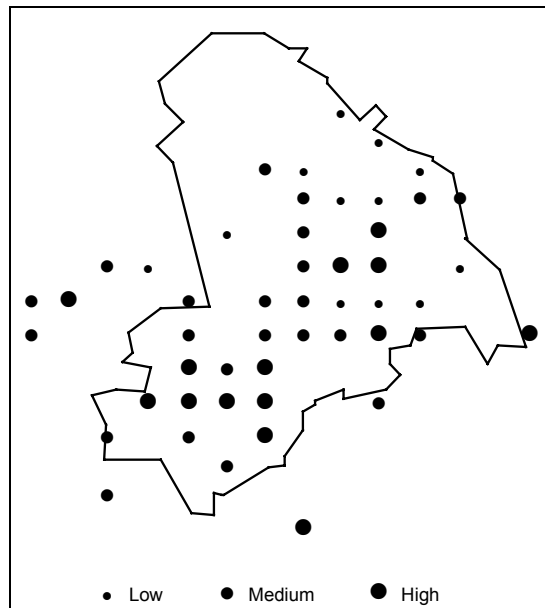
Kendall Avenue South  
Rylandes Road

November and December  
December

## Chaffinch

Reported from 88 gardens (76%) during 1997 against 105 (73%) in 1996. Numbers were highest at the beginning of the year, continuing from the increase at the end of 1996. Records again built up towards the end of the year but they were present throughout the summer in well over a third of the gardens.

Chaffinch distribution is shown on the map. It is clearly more common in the south western parts of the borough with only a token showing in the north as far as gardens are concerned. Despite this, it still has two strongholds in the north, namely South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park.



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	63	59	56	45	42	38	28	24	21	27	36	43
1997 <i>ra</i>	63	58	56	44	41	38	34	29	26	33	42	52
1996 <i>ra</i>	48	46	43	48	44	39	29	25	23	34	54	55

## Brambling

There were three garden records this year, up slightly on last year's two. To date, seven of the records have come from a relatively small area centred around Sanderstead.

Church Way, Sanderstead  
Lower Barn Road  
Briton Hill Road

January  
February  
March

Away from gardens, Bramblings were recorded at three other sites. The most regular site was South Norwood Country Park where birds were recorded on several occasions in February, March, October and November. December records came from Addington Hills and South Norwood Lake.

## Greenfinch

Reported from 93 gardens (80%) during 1997 and 114 (80%) in 1996 making it slightly more widespread than Chaffinch.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	48	53	52	53	46	59	38	34	22	32	38	40
<i>1997 ra</i>	48	53	52	52	45	58	46	41	27	40	45	48
<i>1996 ra</i>	44	42	48	57	51	43	40	31	21	23	39	50

Although not recorded regularly at some of the Other Sites, Greenfinches are, nevertheless, reasonably common all over.

## Goldfinch

Reported from 53 gardens (46%) in 1997 against 68 (48%) in 1996. As usual, the fewest garden records came from the middle of the year when a large flock develops at South Norwood Country Park. A few of the gardens had birds present for several months in late spring/summer suggesting breeding in the locality.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	20	12	8	7	9	6	7	3	4	11	16	16
<i>1997 ra</i>	20	12	8	7	9	6	9	4	5	14	19	19
<i>1996 ra</i>	14	15	11	11	8	11	8	4	5	5	13	19

## Siskin

This species continues to show a completely erratic pattern of appearance in Croydon. It was much more common than last year but still did not reach the number of records from 1995. There was a distinct peak in March when birds were presumably passing through the area, unlike 1995 when birds were present from January to March/early April. There were also slightly more records from the end of the year, which might be a result of a nationwide influx which was noticed during the autumn.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	4	6	17	2	3	2	5
1996	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
1995	17	26	25	9	0	0	0

The bulk of records from Other Sites came from South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park, mainly late in the year.

## **Linnet**

Reported from three gardens, one less than last year. Two of these sites were on the eastern edge of the borough and the third is close to Riddlesdown.

Lower Barn Road	April
Willis Court, West Wickham	May and June
Comport Green, New Addington	August

Elsewhere, Linnets were only seen constantly at South Norwood Country Park although they were also seen reasonably frequently at Riddlesdown and South Norwood Lake and occasionally at three other sites.

## **Redpoll**

This was the best year yet in respect of the number of gardens reporting Redpolls. They were reported from seven gardens against three in 1996 and six in 1995. One of the sites\* reported the first ever sighting there.

Riddlesdown Road	January
Kingswood Way	February and December
Croham Valley Road	March
Briton Hill Road	March
Falconwood Road, Addington	April
Church Way, Sanderstead	December
*Buttermere Gardens	December

Once again, the most regular Other Site for this species was South Norwood Country Park, with a few records coming from Lloyd Park and Riddlesdown.

## **Crossbill**

This was a very welcome addition to both the Garden and Other Site Surveys. There were three (possibly four) records during the year. The first was at South Norwood Lake where nine birds were seen briefly on June 30<sup>th</sup>. A few birds were then noted at Croham Hurst in July. Perhaps the least expected record came from the editor's garden in Briton Hill Road where Crossbill was heard flying over on October 19<sup>th</sup> when other birds were on the move. There was also a possibility that birds were present in Selsdon Wood, but no formal record has been submitted.

## Bullfinch

Reported from 33 gardens (28%) against 42 (29%) in 1996. Once again there is a peak during the summer months with another high count in December. The table shows the figures for all three years.

Monthly totals:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	6	4	5	4	5	9	5	8	1	7	6	11
1996	11	7	8	5	11	13	10	7	3	2	15	6
1995	9	5	5	8	9	11	6	6	3	0	3	7

Bullfinches were also reported from about half of the Other Sites, spread throughout the year.

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## Birds Reported only from Other Sites

### Grebes

There was a most unexpected addition to the Croydon list when a **Pied-billed Grebe** was first identified at South Norwood Lake on January 26<sup>th</sup> and finally left on March 30<sup>th</sup> having been admired by many people. It returned to London the following winter (1997-8), but chose to take up residence on Tooting Bec.

**Little Grebes** were reported from four sites. The most regular was Waddon Ponds where it was present for most of the year. The other records were of occasional birds at Millers Pond, South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake.

**Great Crested Grebes** were reported from only two sites. As usual it was present all year at South Norwood Lake where it bred. It was only seen on a few occasions at South Norwood Country Park, well down on most recent years and there was not even an attempt at breeding there.

### Wildfowl

Apart from the ubiquitous Canada Geese there were two other species of goose reported during the year. **Greylag Goose** was reported from two sites. A single record came from South Norwood Lake in January, but they were more frequent at South Norwood Country Park where birds were seen in January, March and June. The latter site had its record count when 17 birds flew east on January 25<sup>th</sup>. **White-fronted Goose** was recorded from South Norwood Country Park<sup>3</sup> when a single bird flew over on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

A pair of **Mandarin** were present at South Norwood Country Park<sup>3</sup> on March 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>.

The only records of **Teal** came from South Norwood Country Park where it was recorded quite frequently during the winter.

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<sup>3</sup> The Birds of South Norwood Country Park 1935-1997

**Pintail** records again came only from South Norwood Country Park where there was a young bird on several dates in late September and early October.

**Shoveler** were slightly more widespread. It was widely recorded at South Norwood Country Park during the winter months with up to 16 birds being seen. The other records came from South Norwood Lake in January.

**Pochard** were reported from four sites, being regularly recorded at South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds, with a few early year records from Millers Pond. The maximum count was of 25 at South Norwood Country Park in March.

The **Red-breasted Merganser** that was present at the end of 1996 stayed for a few days into 1997.

There were a few records of **Goosander** from three sites. One bird was at Millers Pond early in the year. Four flew south at South Norwood Country Park on January 14<sup>th</sup> and one flew over Park Hill on December 28<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, a pair of **Ruddy Duck** were at South Norwood Country Park<sup>3</sup> on August 9<sup>th</sup>.

## **Raptors**

Most raptor species have already been dealt with in the main text. No other raptors were specifically mentioned by participants in the Other Sites Survey but an **Osprey** was reported flying over 'Croydon' on August 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **Waders and other water birds**

Once again there were one or two **Water Rails** present at South Norwood Country Park at both ends of the year.

**Moorhens** and **Coots** were generally present at Millers Pond, South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds throughout the year. There were also several broods of Moorhens at Sanderstead Pond.

**Dunlin** made it onto the list again, this time with a single bird at South Norwood Lake on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

The only records of **Woodcock** were from South Norwood Country Park in January and March.

As might be expected, **Jack Snipe**, **Snipe** and **Redshank** were only found at South Norwood Country Park during winter and early spring.

**Green** and **Common Sandpipers**, passed through South Norwood Country Park in spring and autumn but there were very few records of the former species.

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<sup>3</sup> The Birds of South Norwood Country Park, 1935-1997

## Miscellaneous

**Sandwich** and **Common Terns** were seen at South Norwood Country Park during the year with the latter also being reported from South Norwood Lake.

The only **Turtle Doves** were singles recorded at South Norwood Country Park on three dates in August.

A **Barn Owl** was at South Norwood Country Park on an unreported date in January.

The only site for **Kingfisher** was South Norwood Country Park where birds were present in most months and, for a time, there was a hope that they would actually breed.

**Sand Martins** passed through South Norwood Country Park in both spring and autumn.

Unusually, there were no records of **Tree Pipit** from South Norwood Country Park this year, nor from any other site. **Meadow Pipits** were recorded at four sites. The most regular was South Norwood Country Park where birds were present in both winter periods and on passage. There is one record from the Meadow Hill area. Birds were also recorded from Riddlesdown, where breeding may have occurred and a family party was seen at Kenley Common on June 16<sup>th</sup>. This last record suggests breeding somewhere in the locality, although Riddlesdown is not that far away as the pipit flies.

**Yellow Wagtails** were seen on passage at South Norwood Country Park, but spring records were distinctly scarce this year. More unusually, there were two birds at the pond next to the council tip in South Croydon during the autumn.

Two **Redstarts** were recorded. There was an April bird at Riddlesdown and one at South Norwood Country Park on September 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Whinchats** were regularly seen at South Norwood Country Park in spring and autumn and a few birds also turned up at Kenley Common and Meadow Hill in the autumn. The only site for **Stonechat** was South Norwood Country Park where the usual wintering birds could be found. **Wheatears** could be found at South Norwood Country Park, mainly in the spring with only a few autumn records. Another autumn sighting was at Meadow Hill.

Several warbler species were primarily associated with South Norwood Country Park.

**Grasshopper Warbler** was there between April 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>. **Sedge** and **Reed Warblers** both bred there, with up to 12 pairs of the latter holding territory. **Lesser Whitethroats** were regularly seen there, but also turned up at four other sites.

**Firecrests** were found at four sites in Croydon. Early in the year birds were found at Addington Hills and South Norwood Lake. There were passage birds at South Norwood Country Park in March and September. No detailed records were received for Beaulieu Heights Wood which has been the stronghold for this species in recent years. Even so, they were reported during the year.

**Pied Flycatchers** were reported from South Norwood Country Park in the spring and from Park Hill in September.

A **Lapland Bunting** reported flying over Selsdon Wood on October 13<sup>th</sup> has been included in this report although it was not part of our Survey.

The only site reporting **Yellowhammers** was Riddlesdown, although they should be present at other locations, especially in the Coulsdon area.

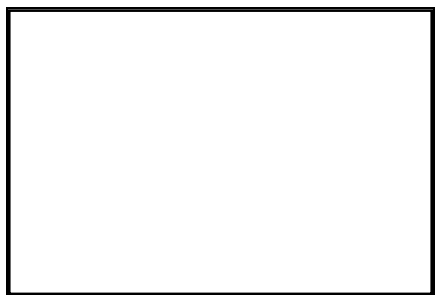
**Reed Buntings** were present all year at South Norwood Country Park where several pairs bred.

Unfortunately, there were no records at all of **Corn Bunting** during the year.

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### A Comparative Study of Three Gardens in Close Proximity

This study was prompted by a request from the Surrey Bird Club to provide fuller details about wintering Blackcaps so that they could try to assess the actual number of birds involved by correlating sightings from different gardens. This has been extended to look at several different species recorded in three gardens in Sanderstead during the months November 1997



to February 1998 inclusive. The gardens lie within a distance of five hundred yards and all are within the area bounded by the three roads. Because of this, the general habitat is similar although one garden is close to a small wood, which may affect the species using the garden. Despite their proximity, however, these three gardens are each in different 1Km recording squares used for collating our Garden Survey data.

The species considered are Redwing, Blackcap, House Sparrow, Brambling, Siskin and Redpoll. Most of these (Redwing, Brambling, Siskin and Redpoll) are winter visitors to the area while House Sparrow is now very localised in Croydon.

Details were obtained about the approximate numbers of birds seen each month and their frequency of occurrence, as well as the availability of food.

#### **Redwing**

Garden A recorded about ten birds fairly regularly in November and early December until the cotoneaster berries became scarce. After that there were only occasional records of a few birds. Garden C mainly recorded occasional birds on a few dates each month apart from a flock on November 24<sup>th</sup>. Garden B, however, had 6 to 10 birds more or less daily throughout the winter, feeding on apples and cotoneaster berries (which lasted until April).

Most records came from Garden B which maintained the natural food supply for the longest time and it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the records from the other two gardens relate to the same flock.

#### **Blackcap**

This species was only recorded occasionally in all three gardens. Garden A had a male on a few dates in December until the cotoneaster berries ran out. Garden C had a male on one date in November and an unsexed bird on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Birds were more regular in Garden B with a single male in December then two males in January and a male and a female in February.

Although the same male could have turned up in all three gardens, there is no clear evidence for interchange particularly in January and February.

### **Redpoll**

All the records came from Garden C (which is near the wood). Up to seven birds were seen in December, up to eight in January and just one in February. They were usually found in or near a silver birch. There is a large silver birch near Garden A but it does not regularly attract this species.

There was clearly no interchange of this species between the gardens.

### **Siskin**

This species was reported from all three gardens. There were a few birds in Gardens A and C in late December, following the first record of six birds at Garden A on December 16<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers in both Gardens A and C built up for much of January and February with a maximum of 10-15 birds. Although Garden B shared in their presence, Siskin numbers never reached more than one male and one female. In all three gardens, the birds were using seed and nut feeders which were regularly replenished.

It is hard to determine whether or not the same birds were using Gardens A and C. Both had similar numbers but they are either side of the other site where numbers did not build up to anything like the same extent. If it was the same flock, why didn't they use the middle garden? Given that this was a good winter for Siskins, it is quite possible that two different flocks were present in the area.

### **Brambling**

Unlike Siskin, there is no problem with this species. A male was using Garden A on several dates in February and there was a female in Garden C on January 11<sup>th</sup> and February 13<sup>th</sup>. No Bramblings were reported from Garden B. The birds tended to be feeding on the ground.

Quite clearly, given the different sexes, different birds were involved.

### **House Sparrow**

Only Garden B reported this species regularly, having 8-10 birds every day. The only birds recorded at Garden A were those heard from about 50-100 feet away while in the back garden. These are almost certainly the birds being seen in Garden B, ranging only over a short distance. Garden C had only two records, three males on December 1<sup>st</sup> and a single male on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This clearly shows the patchy distribution and the lack of interchange between B, where the birds were common, and A where they never got closer than about 50 feet.

Although not detailed above, some information was obtained for Chaffinch and Greenfinch. Both species were relatively common in all three gardens throughout the winter and no suggestion is offered as to whether the same birds appeared in each garden.

### **Summary**

There is no clear evidence for interchange of birds between the three gardens. Indeed, some species clearly indicate the opposite. It is possible that at least some of the species, particularly Redwing and Siskin, ranged over the whole area but did not use each garden to the same extent.

## House Sparrows in Croydon

Over the three years that the Garden Survey has been running, there has been a noticeable decline in the records of House Sparrows. The once ubiquitous ‘Cockney Sparrer’ is no longer one of our most regular garden residents. Although they are still relatively common in some gardens, their distribution has become distinctly patchy. Mention the apparent decline to someone who still has a resident flock in the garden and the response is likely to be one of disbelief.

The Garden Survey makes no attempt, at present, to assess the actual numbers of birds present, but only looks at whether a species has been recorded at least once during the month. Thus, it can be used to determine the percentage of gardens in which species are present during a specific month and where they have been reported at least once during the year. Table 1 shows the percentage of gardens in which House Sparrows were recorded for each year of the survey. It also gives the percentage of the maximum possible number of records (100% would mean that it was recorded every month in all gardens taking part).

There was only a small drop in the percentage of gardens between 1995 and 1996 with a sharper decline the next year, while the numbers of records fell proportionately more. This might indicate that birds were still hanging on in some gardens during 1996, but were becoming less common, then disappeared completely in 1997.

	1995	1996	1997
%age of gardens	91%	89%	80%
%age of records	82%	76%	59%

Table 1

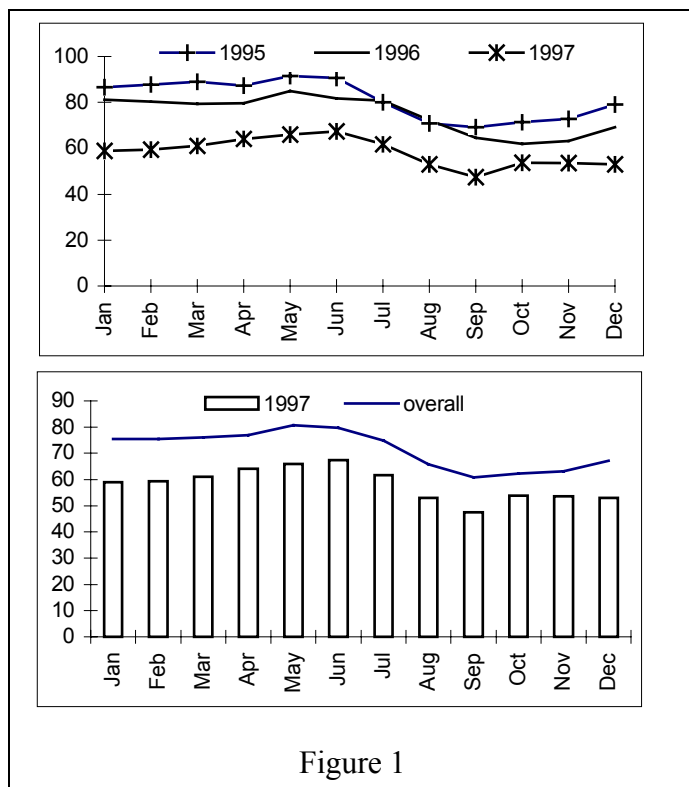


Figure 1 shows the change in records for each month. The first graph shows the percentage of gardens which reported House Sparrows each month for the three year period.

There is a seasonal variation with the first graph showing similar general trends. The more worrying feature is that, with the exception of July and August 1995 and 1996, the percentage of gardens reporting House Sparrows has declined steadily for each month over the three years. This decline is also shown in the second graph which compares the figures for 1997 with the overall percentages for the period 1995-7. It was recorded in a noticeably smaller percentage of gardens in each month during 1997 than over the three year period.

Evidence for the now patchy distribution comes partly from the survey and partly from personal observations.

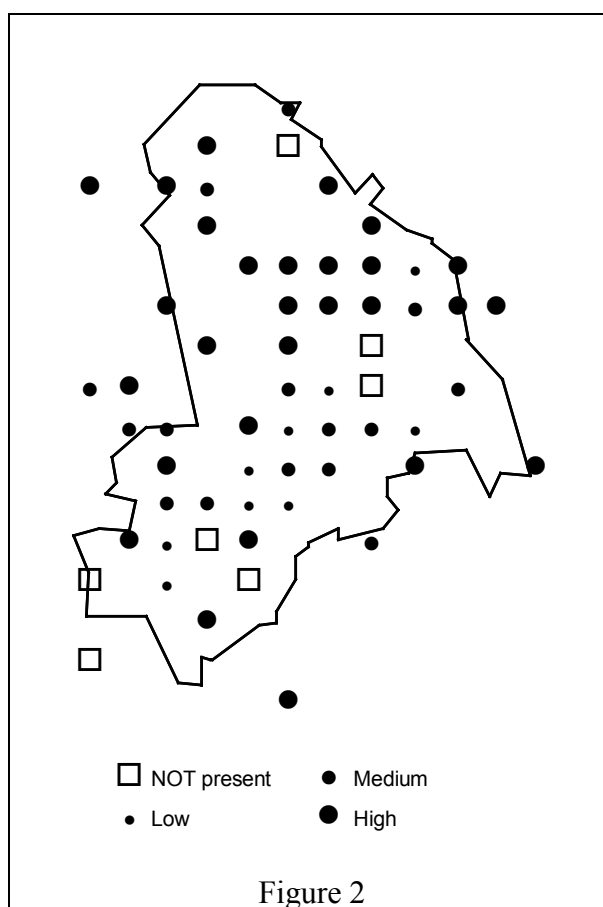
In some instances we have received records for several gardens within the same 1Km square, even from the same road. These show considerable variation. For example, one garden in Croham Valley Road had House Sparrows every month while another reported them for only three out of the twelve months. In another square, two of the gardens had House Sparrows for eleven months; the other two (both of which were in the same road as each other) had only single records.

I effectively lost House Sparrows from my garden completely in July 1997. A couple of years earlier they had been almost daily visitors but became less and less frequent. Today, I can still hear them, but only from about 50-100 feet away when I am at the bottom of my garden. I have also noticed that as I walk from my home towards Croham Hurst I do not encounter House Sparrows for the first few hundred yards. As I get closer to the Hurst I find House Sparrows in a few isolated gardens.

Figure 2 is a distribution map which uses the percentages of sightings for each 1Km square. The information has been divided into four categories

- Birds absent every month
- 'Low' - recorded on less than one third of possible occasions
- 'Medium'
- 'High' - recorded on more than two thirds of occasions

This shows that House Sparrows tend to be more regular in gardens around Thornton Heath, Shirley, Central Croydon and other areas in the north of the borough. They are much thinner on the ground towards the south. This certainly contrasts with Chaffinches which have almost the reverse distribution trend.



A recent London Natural History Society Newsletter<sup>4</sup> contained an article by Helen Baker on House Sparrow monitoring. Helen has been carrying out a House Sparrow survey since 1995 but only has information from about 35 gardens for each year. This small sample has meant that it is hard to reach any definitive conclusions. There is, however, an indication that (in the participating gardens) more young are being raised but maximum monthly counts are declining. Bearing in mind that this information is taken from gardens that actually still have House Sparrows, this study seems to fit in with our findings. Interestingly, according to Helen's article, in a response to a parliamentary question, Baroness Hayman replied that "there is little evidence to suggest a significant long term decline in numbers or range of

<sup>4</sup> London Natural History Society Newsletter 147, April 1998

House Sparrows...” She went on to comment that the breeding bird survey introduced in 1994 should...provide improved monitoring of the sparrow population.

No particular reasons have been found for the apparent decline. Direct predation would not seem to be the major cause. Such activity, whether avian or mammalian, would be likely to cover a relatively wide area and should not account for a concentration in one garden and a dearth less than 100 yards away. It is more likely to be due to habitat loss, possibly of nesting or roosting sites. Several people have commented about losing sparrows after having had roofing/guttering work. I have also heard from several people that they had previously lost their sparrows, but they returned about one and a half to two years later. This aspect will be followed up by looking at records from gardens that have participated for several years.

JB

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## Latest news

Just as this report was being finalised, a report came in that at least one **Hoopoe** (possibly three) was watched for about ten minutes in a garden in Onslow Gardens, Sanderstead during August, 1997. This is being followed up and details will be sent to the London Natural History Society.

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*“Part of the value of local reports such as this is gathering evidence of local and national trends, such as increasing populations (Ring-necked Parakeet and Sparrowhawk, for example) and the declining fortunes of others (Corn Bunting, House Sparrow). A number of exciting birds, such as Honey Buzzard, Woodcock and Common Redstart, here provide the ultimate reward for dedicated garden-watchers, and underline the fact that there’s always the chance of seeing something new - or unexpected - right on your doorstep.”*

From **Birdwatch** magazine, March 1998 about our 1996 report. That last comment certainly came true for the person who had the Wryneck on their patio!

Any original material from this report can be quoted in other publications with the appropriate acknowledgements.