

# **Croydon Bird Survey 1998**



Registered charity no 207076

## **Croydon RSPB Members Group**

**Edited by John Birkett**

on behalf of the environment committee

**(John Birkett, Simon Harris, Keith Neale, Doreen Main,  
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## Introduction

This is the fourth of our surveys carried out as part of our commitment to Local Agenda 21 and is the second to include data both from gardens and other sites. This year all the records are given in a single systematic list instead of putting those species seen only at other sites separately from those seen in gardens.

All the records that have been submitted are included in this report unless there is evidence of a misidentification (*eg* a report of a Buzzard described as ‘flapping and gliding’ which came from a location where there was known to be an active Sparrowhawk present at about the same time). This policy differs from that of both the London Natural History Society and the Surrey Bird Club where full descriptions are required for several species before the records are accepted. This often applies to birds of prey and some of the records in our reports relate to birds where an insufficient (or even non-existent) description has been submitted. Hopefully, these are mentioned in the main text.

## Garden Survey

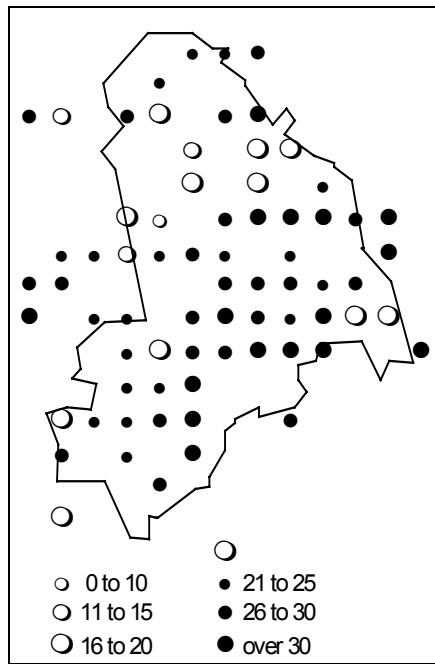
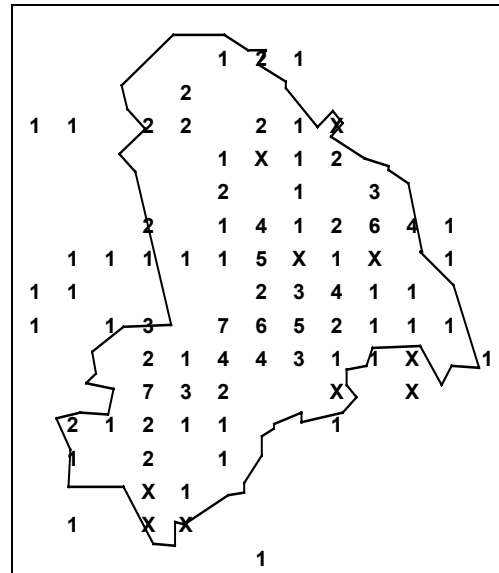
We had a record year for the garden survey with information coming from 146 gardens. Furthermore, 1998 saw the type of garden being surveyed range from a suburban garden with about 1.5 acres of land to a small, enclosed courtyard in the very centre of Croydon. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took the time and effort to complete (and submit) their forms. Inevitably, some people moved away from Croydon during the year, but it was satisfying to receive letters saying that they will miss doing the survey. One person even volunteered to submit details from his new garden in Bletchingley! If nothing else, if we have made at least a few people more aware of their own gardens as a valuable habitat, then we have achieved one of our aims.

As in previous years, there may be slight discrepancies between the figures for 1997 quoted in this report and those quoted last time. This is due to additional information being supplied in the intervening time.

The table gives the number of gardens participating each month and these have been used to calculate the relative occurrence (*‘ro’*) figures quoted in the main text. The *‘ro’* is the percentage of gardens from which a species was reported in a particular month. This allows records to be compared from month to month, or year to year.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Gdns	131	133	132	134	133	130	105	106	106	110	112	110

The accompanying map shows the distribution of gardens which participated during the year, with 'X' indicating that there are few, if any, houses in a particular area and no garden records would be expected. Efforts to improve coverage in parts of Croydon had some effect, but we can still benefit from increased participation, as shown by the gaps on the map.



The second map included here shows the average number of species found in the gardens in each of the squares.

The largest numbers appear to be in the south and east of the borough. In future, it would probably be beneficial to look at the total number of species recorded in each area.

### Most common species

The ten most common species are listed both by the percentage of gardens in which they occurred at least once during the year and by the percentage of the total number of records for the year. The 1997 figures are included for comparison.

One of the noticeable aspects of the total records list is that the top nine species all score 80% or higher with number ten scoring only 65% - a large difference. This suggests that the first nine are relatively regular visitors to our gardens (or at least make their presence known more readily) with other species being less conspicuous. I suspect Dunnock and Wren are more regular than the records suggest but they keep themselves more hidden. They also tend to visit in smaller numbers.

By gardens			By records		
Magpie	100%	(1 <sup>st</sup> = 100%)	Blue Tit	96%	(1 <sup>st</sup> 96%)
Blackbird	99%	(1 <sup>st</sup> = 100%)	Magpie	95%	(2 <sup>nd</sup> 95%)
Blue Tit	99%	(3 <sup>rd</sup> 99%)	Blackbird	94%	(3 <sup>rd</sup> 95%)
Robin	98%	(4 <sup>th</sup> = 97%)	Woodpigeon	90%	(4 <sup>th</sup> 88%)
Starling	98%	(4 <sup>th</sup> = 97%)	Robin	88%	(5 <sup>th</sup> 88%)
Great Tit	97%	(4 <sup>th</sup> = 97%)	Crow	86%	(7 <sup>th</sup> 85%)
Collared Dove	96%	(9 <sup>th</sup> 94%)	Great Tit	84%	(9 <sup>th</sup> 79%)
Crow	96%	(4 <sup>th</sup> = 97%)	Starling	81%	(6 <sup>th</sup> 85%)
Woodpigeon	94%	(8 <sup>th</sup> 95%)	Collared Dove	80%	(8 <sup>th</sup> 84%)
Jay	91%	(10 <sup>th</sup> 91%)	Jay	65%	

The top ten species (by percentage of gardens) for the 1998 Association of Croydon Conservation Societies (ACCS) survey are given here. Obviously, the ACCS have at least one participant who does not have Magpies in the garden.

ACCS Garden Wildlife Survey			
%age of gardens			
Blackbird	100%	Woodpigeon	92%
Blue Tit	100%	Crow	90%
Magpie	98%	House Sparrow	88%
Robin	97%	Jay	88%
Starling	95%	Great Tit	84%

Most of the 'top ten' are similar to ours with one significant exception. Their figure for House Sparrow is far higher than ours (which is at only 79% this year putting it 13<sup>th</sup> on our list).

### Other Sites

The survey of our open sites is progressing surely but slowly. There is always scope for more sites to be included, no matter how small. The incentive could be the chance of finding a scarce bird at a seemingly inauspicious site - recent Croydon records have included Pied-billed Grebe, Merlin, Barn Owl, Black Redstart, Pied Flycatcher and Red-breasted Flycatcher. Even if nothing unusual turns up, it is the common species that we need information about; all too often these are ignored, possibly until it is too late.

This year saw records from 26 areas. As well as single sites such as South Norwood Country Park, Lloyd Park, *etc* there were general areas such as 'Central Croydon', Meadow Hill, Sanderstead Village and Upper Woodcote Village. Unfortunately, some sites are included on the basis of a single visit during the year. A paucity of records from the sites during 1998 has meant that the Happy Valley and Farthing Downs records have been combined - they could both justify their own data.

### Editor's comment

There are some apparent downwards trends and, during the year, a few possible damaging factors have been mentioned to me. Apart from the tidying up of our roofs, as mentioned in the previous report, some species could be adversely affected by the use of chemicals in the garden, slug pellets being an obvious example where Song Thrushes could suffer (along with other species of birds and mammals). Another potential threat could be the conversion of small front gardens into hard standing for cars. This process may well involve removing hedges and untended shrubs and plants which offer potential cover and feeding areas for small birds. Indeed, many of my encounters with House Sparrows now seem to involve birds deep inside mature privet hedges and other bushes. These hiding places may even be in currently unpopular *Leylandii* hedges. Perhaps there is a place for them in our gardens after all! They certainly offer dense cover for birds if there is a predator about.

While on the subject of predators, we have had a few returns where participants mentioned observed (not presumed) predatory activity. Some mentioned Sparrowhawks taking birds with perhaps the most serious example being the bird at Mayfields that was regularly seen taking House Sparrows and also included a Goldfinch in its diet. (That was not part of our survey by the way). The only definite nest predation was carried out not by birds, foxes or cats but by squirrels that took at least two broods of Wrens in one garden. Another squirrel was seen eating a great Spotted Woodpecker that had died after flying into a window. While Magpies continue to get a bad press, there is potential evidence of the biter being bit with a young cat bringing at least three Magpies in to its owner.

JB. July, 1999

Please note, the views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the editor and are not necessarily those of the RSPB.

## Systematic List

This list includes all known records of birds reported in Croydon during 1998, whether or not they were found as part of our surveys.

### Little Grebe

This species was present most of the year at Waddon Ponds with the only other record being of two birds at South Norwood Country Park on October 9<sup>th</sup>.

### Great Crested Grebe

This was mainly recorded from South Norwood Lake and South Norwood Country Park, having bred again at the former site. It was also found during a single visit to Brickfields Meadow in August. Could this be another useful site for waterfowl in Croydon.

### Cormorant

This species continues to be reported flying over gardens, often nowhere near any water. In 1998 there were five reports, from four gardens, including three over Grenaby Road in May and four over St James Road on February 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was also a belated report of four over Markfield in October 1997. Not surprisingly, most records came from South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake but another bird was seen over Riddlesdown in May.

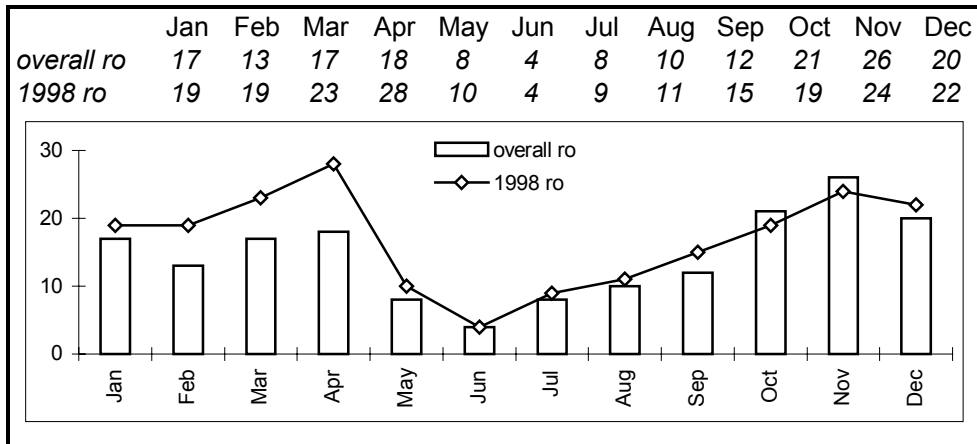
### Bittern

A bird was reported from South Norwood Country Park in December and, if accepted, it would appear to be the first record for Croydon.

### Grey Heron

Reported from 80 gardens (55%) spread out over the borough. The majority probably relate to birds flying over, although some are using garden ponds. The pattern of occurrence throughout the year was very much the same as in previous years. This is shown on the graph on the next page which gives the relative occurrence for 1998 compared with the average over the period 1995 - 1998.

Birds were also recorded regularly at Millers Pond and South Norwood Country Park and less frequently at other bodies of water such as South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds. As with gardens, however, no site can be overlooked with Herons being reported from such unlikely locations as Addington Hills, Kenley Common, Lloyd Park, Purley Beeches and Riddlesdown.



### Mute Swan

Surprisingly, there were no records of swans flying over gardens this year.

Waddon Ponds was, once again, Croydon's main site with six cygnets being raised there. South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake both had many more records than usual, but no attempted breeding. Other reports came from Millers Pond and Meadow Hill.

### Greylag Goose

This species has yet to really establish itself in Croydon but once again there were a few records from South Norwood Country Park with another over Meadow Hill in April.

### Canada Goose

The species continues to be seen over gardens, most frequently in the north east of the borough.

The four regularly surveyed ponds and lakes all had birds throughout the year, with less expected records relating to birds flying over at Kenley Common, Parkfields, Riddlesdown and Spring Park Wood.

### Shelduck

A newcomer to the garden survey with five birds flying SW over Harbury Road, Carshalton on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Another three were at South Norwood Country Park on April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> with another at that site in December.

### **Teal**

This is still one of our scarcer wildfowl with only a handful of records, all from South Norwood Country Park.

### **Mallard**

Although garden records are still down on the 1996 figures, Mallards were reported from 21 gardens with the peak months again being late spring and early summer.

A visit to almost any substantial body of water is likely to produce at least a couple of Mallards, but those at Croham Hurst, Lloyd Park and Purley Beeches were hardly in typical habitat. Although not covered in the survey, the Selhurst Triangle Nature Reserve (in the tangle of railway lines by Selhurst depot) attracted the occasional Mallard to its small pond.

### **Shoveler**

This species was only reported from South Norwood Country Park during the first winter period and autumn. None were reported in November and December. There was no sign of the regular double figure flocks that had appeared in recent years. The reason for this decline is not known and this is a species to keep an eye on in case there is an environmental factor.

### **Pochard**

There were no garden records, but birds were seen during the winter months at the four main bodies of water.

### **Tufted Duck**

Present throughout the year at the four main sites, with breeding being recorded.

### **Goldeneye**

A female at South Norwood Country Park on November 7<sup>th</sup> was only the second or third record for Croydon.

### **Ruddy Duck**

This scarce visitor was recorded at South Norwood Country Park in May and September.

### **Hen Harrier**

A potential first record for this species actually within Croydon itself, a pair was reported flying over a Kenley garden during January.

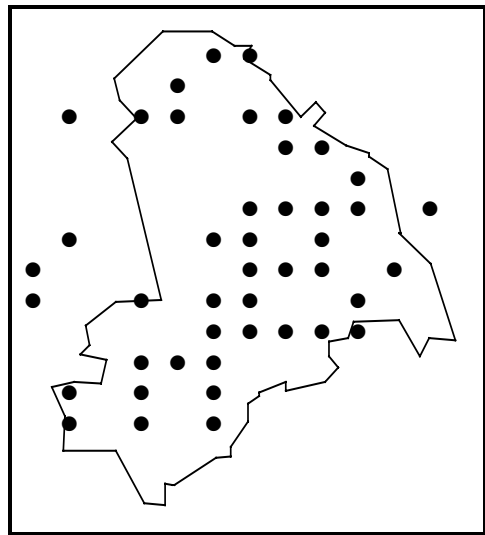
### **Buzzard**

One of last year's records (from New Addington) has been accepted by the London Natural History Society and, hence, Buzzard can now be included in the total of species reported in the garden survey.

After a couple of years with several records, there were only two possible Buzzards for 1998. One was reported over a garden in Croham Valley Road in May and the other was at Kenley Common on October 9<sup>th</sup>. Contributors are reminded that, for the time being, a description and exact dates for all Buzzard sightings would be appreciated.

### **Sparrowhawk**

Although the number of records was slightly down from last year, Sparrowhawks were still reported from about half (49%) of Croydon's gardens. This figure is similar to that for the BTO Garden Bird Feeding Survey of 1997/8 in which they were reported from 52% of gardens.<sup>1</sup> These records include three birds at Hurst Way in July and August, two at Briton Hill Road in September and two at Chepstow Rise in April. Among the prey items were House Sparrow and Blackbird. One was also seen chasing a great Spotted Woodpecker (which abandoned its usual undulating flight to move faster!).

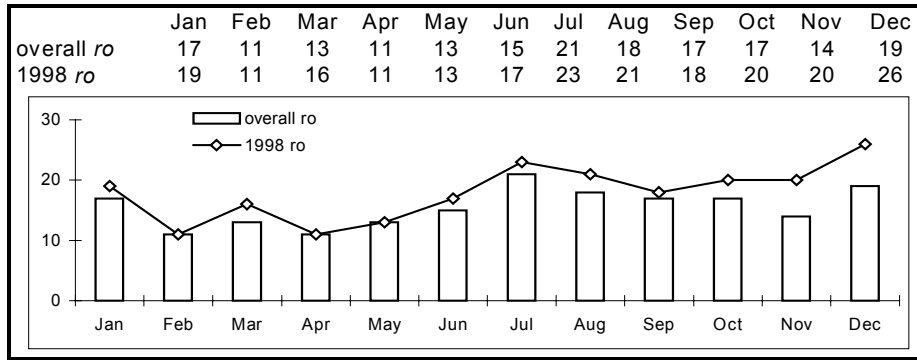


The accompanying map shows the distribution across the borough and the graph shows the relative occurrence this year compared to the average for 1995 to 1998.

Comparison with data from the BTO Garden BirdWatch Handbook is difficult for the reasons given in appendix A, but their survey ranges from 5 to 15% in each recording period compared to 10 to 20% for ours.

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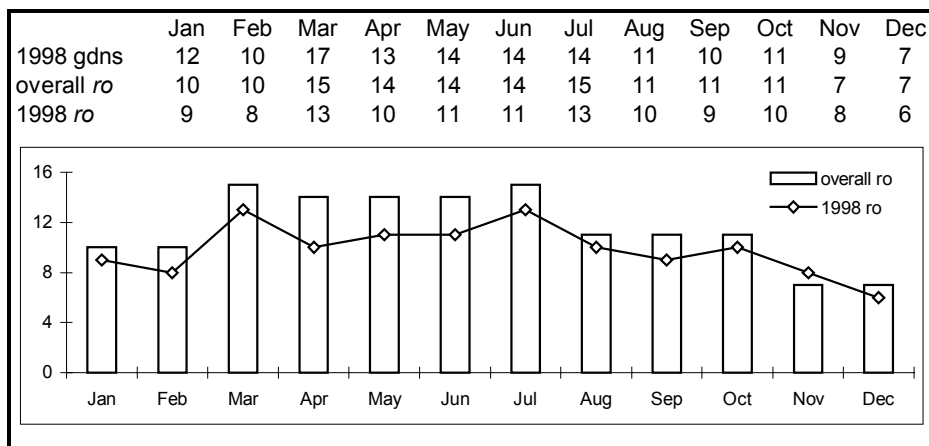
<sup>1</sup> BTO News no 218, Sept-Oct 98



Away from gardens, Sparrowhawks were reported from 16 other sites. Definite breeding was reported from one of these with a pair displaying at another. Regular records during the summer also suggest breeding elsewhere.

### Kestrel

This was reported from 46 gardens (32%) compared to 44 (37%) last year. The *ro* figures are generally slightly worse than those for 1997 and there is also a slight decrease for each month when compared to the average for 1995 to 1998 as shown in the following graph.



As far as other sites are concerned, Kestrels are doing reasonably well. Four pairs nested again at South Norwood Country Park and there was a pair at South Croydon Rec. At least one pair is believed to have bred on an office block in central Croydon, while regular records during the summer suggests breeding at several other locations.

### Merlin

There are two records of our smallest bird of prey in November. One was at Kenley Common on November 5<sup>th</sup> and one was at South Norwood Country Park

on November 12<sup>th</sup>. Early in the year, one had been reported from the country park on February 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Hobby**

This continues to grace the garden survey with one at Shirley Church Road on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere, Hobbies were in rather short supply with only a few records from South Norwood Country Park in August and September and a single record from Addiscombe Rec. in September.

### **Pheasant**

This species goes from strength to strength in the garden survey. It was reported from eight gardens during the year against five in 1997. Some of them are from areas bordering on open countryside (*eg* Layhams Road and Courtwood Lane) but others, such as The Ridgeway in Sanderstead, are in areas of housing.

Sadly, the same cannot be said about its fortunes at South Norwood Country Park where, having been present for many years, the last record came in July 1998. Other records came from four other sites, all in the first half of the year.

### **Water Rail**

Recorded from South Norwood Country Park at both ends of the year, with some multiple sightings.

### **Moorhen**

This species found its way back into the garden survey with a bird in Shirley Church Road during March. Otherwise, it was recorded throughout the year at five sites: Millers Pond, Sanderstead Pond, South Norwood Country Park, South Norwood Lake and Waddon Ponds.

### **Coot**

Reported from the four main bodies of water throughout the year and was also found on the single visit made to Brickfields Meadow.

### **Oystercatcher**

Reported from Cricket Green, Mitcham in July. Strictly speaking this is not in Croydon, but is still a good record.

### **Lapwing**

There was just one garden record this year with a single bird over St James Road on 12<sup>th</sup> December.

There were several records from South Norwood Country Park, but the best was a flock of over 100 in a field by Kent Gate Way during late December. This is the first recent record of a flock taking up residence in Croydon.

### **Woodcock**

There were two records, both during November. One was at Beaulieu Heights Wood on November 7<sup>th</sup> and the other was near the quarry at Riddlesdown.

### **Jack Snipe**

As usual this species was found at South Norwood Country Park during the winter months.

### **Snipe**

Another species that was found only at South Norwood Country Park, some times in double figures, during January to April and from October to December.

### **Whimbrel**

One flew over South Norwood Lake on July 21<sup>st</sup>.

### **Spotted Redshank**

One flew over South Norwood Country Park on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Green Sandpiper**

A few records from South Norwood Country Park including a bird in November.

### **Common Sandpiper**

Occasional visitor to South Norwood Country Park.

### **Mediterranean Gull**

One flew east over South Norwood Country Park on September 15<sup>th</sup> with a flock of 25 to 30 Black-headed Gulls.

### **Black-headed Gull**

Reported from 84 gardens (58%) during the year. Although records were lower than normal early in the year, the seasonal trends were similar to previous years tailing off in April with very few records for May and June.

It is a similar story for the open spaces where this species was also recorded.

### **Common Gull**

Reported from only 13 gardens during 1998. The monthly totals compared to those for 1997 are given below.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	12	4	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	5	4
1998	7	5	4	1	1	3	2	2	1	1	4	7

Away from gardens, Common Gulls were reported from 12 sites, with the most regular being South Norwood Country Park.

### **Lesser Black-backed Gull**

Reported from 18 gardens during the year. Records for this species are now beginning to show a definite trend with only limited appearances during May to June. With the changes at Beddington SF, including landfill, this could alter in the next few years.

### **Herring Gull**

Reported from nine gardens, this species is becoming slightly more regular. The landfill at Beddington SF means that it is worth looking out for possible further increases. There is also a possibility of breeding on the buildings near the sewage farm if more birds are encouraged to stay around during the summer.

### **Great Black-backed Gull**

The only regular site for this species was South Norwood Country Park where it was reported during several months. Rather surprisingly, it was also reported from three different gardens during the year as shown below.

Purley Downs Road	March
Courtwood Lane	October
Briton Hill Road	December

### **Common Tern**

Birds were seen at both South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake during July.

### **Feral Pigeon**

Reported from 104 gardens (71%) during the year and seen in 50 to 60% of gardens each month. There is no significant change from last year. Likewise, it is regularly present in many of our open spaces.

### **Stock Dove**

Reported from five gardens in 1998, one up on the past two years. The only regular garden reports came from Freshfields, Shirley where, as last year, birds were present throughout the summer. Unlike last year, when they were present from September to December at Pittville Gardens, they were only reported for one month this year.

Stock Doves were also present at 10 other sites during the year with summer records from several of them suggesting that local breeding could have taken place.

### **Woodpigeon**

Recorded in 137 gardens (94%) during the year. This remains the most regular of the pigeon family to visit our gardens, although Collared Doves were reported from a greater percentage of gardens over the year as a whole. Woodpigeons were found at about 90% of the gardens each month.

This is also the most widespread member of its family at other sites, being regularly reported from most of them.

### **Collared Dove**

Reported from 140 gardens (96%) Collared Dove has overtaken Woodpigeon as the most widespread member of the pigeon family to visit gardens. It is, however, a less frequent visitor being seen in only about 80% each month.

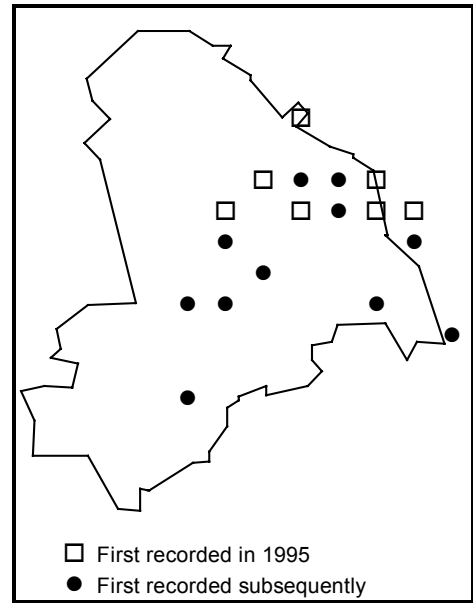
### **Turtle Dove**

Reported from Palace Square in May with autumn records only coming from South Norwood Country Park.

### Rose-ringed Parakeet

Reported from 25 gardens during 1998, this species is definitely spreading out. The map shows the distribution in 1995 together with additional sites where it has been seen subsequently.

Apart from the gardens, it has also been seen at eight other sites from South Norwood Lake (in April) to Riddlesdown (in February).



### Cuckoo

Recorded from just three gardens, all during May.

Harbury Road, Carshalton  
Courtwood Lane  
Comport Green

The only other records came from Lloyd Park (again in May) and South Norwood Country Park (in July and August).

### Little Owl

1998 records came again from the very edge of the borough with up to two birds at both Meadow Hill and Riddlesdown during the year. There was also an unconfirmed report of at least one bird near Hutchingsons Bank.

#### *1997 additional record*

There was one at Birdhurst Rise in December.

### Barn Owl

A bird was reported from Kenley Common/Aerodrome in January with another in April.

## Tawny Owl

Reported from just 13 gardens during the year against 15 for 1997. Additional records for 1997 came from Markfield at the end of the year. The list of gardens for 1998 is given below.

Maberley Road, SE19  
 Freshfields, Shirley  
 Shirley Church Road  
 Castlemaine Avenue  
 Dalmeny Road, Carshalton  
 Hurst Way  
 Chapel View  
 Ewhurst Avenue  
 Farm Fields  
 Markfield, Courtwood Lane  
 Lower Barn Road  
 Abbots Lane  
 Hayes Lane

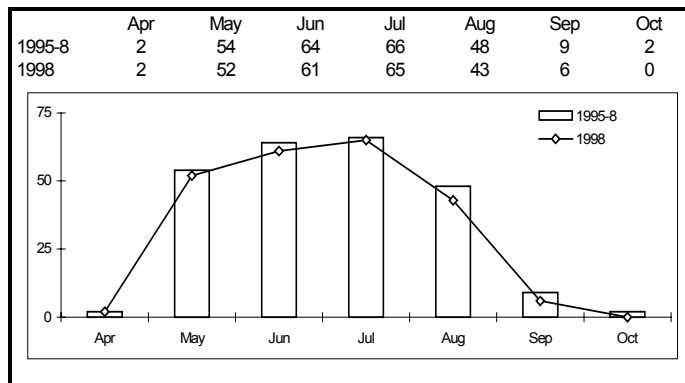
Other records came from just five sites but, once again, it must be safe to assume that this species is under-recorded.

## Short-eared Owl

A single bird was at South Norwood Country Park on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Swift

Reported from 93 gardens (64%) in 1998 compared to 70 (59%) in 1997. A passage of in excess of 150 birds was noted over Shirley Church Road on July 31<sup>st</sup>, keeping just ahead of gathering storm clouds. In the last report it was suggested that there was an apparent decline of this species over the period 1995 to 1997. This year's figures, hopefully, mean that this trend may have stopped. Even so, it will be worth keeping an eye on Swifts. The graph compares 1998 with the average for 1995 to 1998.



As usual, most records were from May to August but there were a few from April and September.

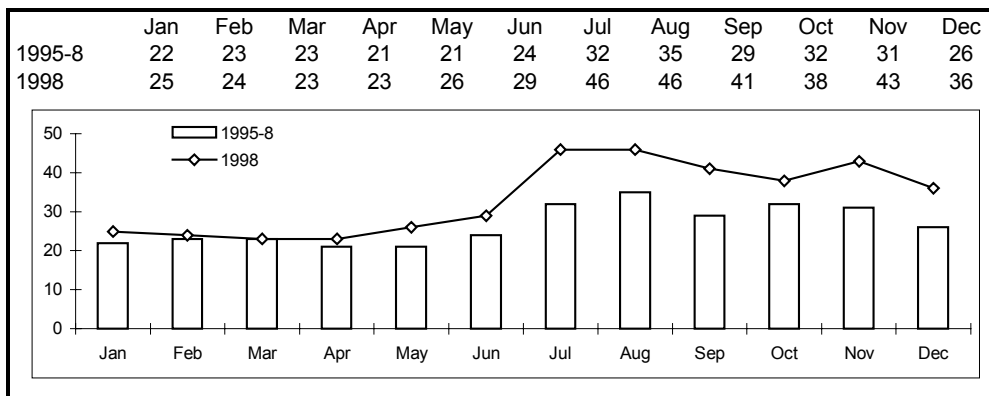
It was a similar picture for the other sites with the only early birds being at South Norwood Country Park and late birds were seen at Millers Pond in September.

### Kingfisher

A bird was reported from a garden in Oaks Road during the summer and it would be nice to think that this was a locally hatched bird. We had the first known breeding record of Kingfishers in Croydon with a pair raising two young at South Norwood Country Park. Birds were present there for most of the year although they became scarce in winter (when previously they had been at their most frequent). Birds seen at South Norwood Lake in July were considered to have originated from the country park.

### Green Woodpecker

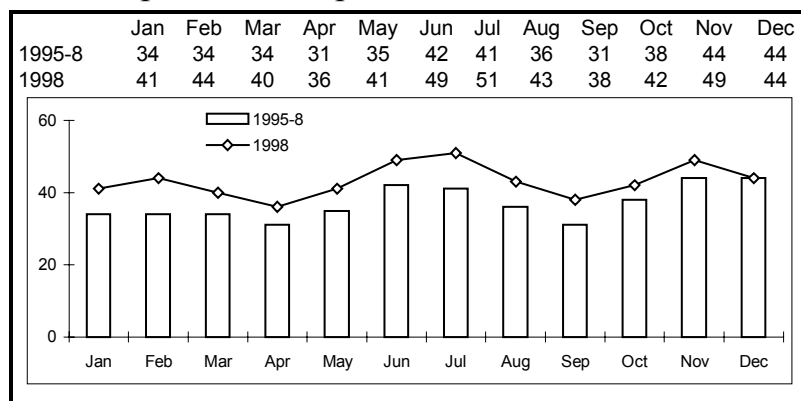
This was an unprecedented year for Green Woodpeckers. They were reported from 87 gardens (60%) compared to 62 (52%) in 1997. There was a noticeable rise in records during the second half of the year when they were present in over 40% of the gardens each month. This almost certainly suggests a successful breeding season. The graph shows the figures for 1998 and those for 1995-8.



Away from gardens, Green Woodpeckers were found at 16 other sites with regular summer records suggesting breeding at many of them.

### Great Spotted Woodpecker

As with its larger cousin, Great Spotted Woodpecker also showed an increase during the year, but this was not as dramatic as for Green Woodpecker. It was found in 103 gardens (71%) compared with 77 (65%) in 1997. Once again, regular summer records and



the appearance of juveniles indicated breeding near many gardens. The graph shows figures for 1998 and the average for 1995-8.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers were also seen at 20 other sites during the year.

### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**

It was a better year for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, being seen in seven gardens (all but one of which was actually in Croydon, against the three (in Hooley and Carshalton) last year.

Shirley Church Road (two gardens)  
Dalmeny Road, Carshalton  
Briton Hill Road  
Ridge Langley  
The Vale, Coulsdon  
Abbots Lane

Elsewhere, they appeared at six sites, the most regular of which was South Norwood Country Park.

### **Skylark**

Reported from three gardens, two of these were primarily autumn migration records but the third related to birds at the golf course near Selsdon Woods where they presumably bred.

Pollards Hill South	Sept, Oct
Courtwood Lane	June, July, Oct, Nov
Lower Barn Road	Aug

There were breeding records from both Riddlesdown and Kenley Common/Aerodrome and, although not really surveyed it is quite likely that breeding occurred at Farthing Downs. For the second year running Skylarks failed to breed at South Norwood Country Park although they were occasionally present outside the breeding season. The only other record comes from Lloyd Park in November.

### **Sand Martin**

The only garden record was actually outside Croydon with a report from Harbury Road, Carshalton in October. South Norwood Country Park provided the only Croydon records with birds in April and September.

### **Swallow**

Recorded over 26 gardens during the year against 22 in 1997. The occurrence generally reflected last year as shown in the figures for 1997 and 1998.

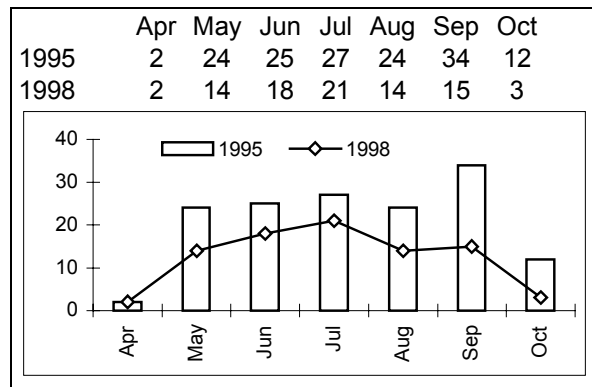
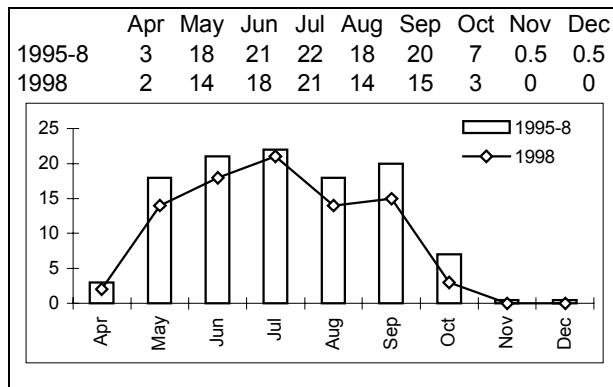
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1998	4	11	9	7	7	6	3	0
1997	2	12	9	9	4	4	2	1

There is a similar spread over the 12 other sites where Swallows were recorded, although there was a late record from Millers Pond in December.

### House Martin

The survey data collected during 1998 tended to point to a further, small, decline in House Martins in Croydon. They were generally reported from a smaller percentage of gardens each month this year compared to last year. Our data does not look at actual numbers or breeding sites but will include sightings of birds feeding or migrating over gardens. Information from one feeding area - South Norwood Country Park - suggests that House Martins were hard to find there during 1998. This is potentially in conflict with the emergency House Martin survey carried out by the RSPB<sup>2</sup> which suggests that although House Martins were late arriving there was no significant decrease overall in the number of nests. There was, however, a slight decrease in the south-east. One possible slight problem with the basis of that survey is that in order to get data, the RSPB survey was primarily targeted at premises where there were House Martin's nests in 1998 - if they did not have nests they may not have received a form, even if birds had nested there in previous years. This could, potentially have omitted part of the decline from the survey. The apparent decline in Croydon was, however, probably less in 1998 than it had been in previous years. The figures fell from 41% of gardens in 1995 to 33% to 29% and now to 26%. The ACCS also shows a decline from 35% in 1997 to 29% in 1998<sup>3</sup>.

The first graph shows the comparative monthly figures for 1998 and the average for 1995-8. The second compares 1998 with 1995.



<sup>2</sup> "The findings of the 1998 RSPB house martin survey" produced by the RSPB

<sup>3</sup> ACCS 1998 Croydon Garden Wildlife Survey

### **Tree Pipit**

A single bird was at South Norwood Country Park on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **Meadow Pipit**

Rather surprisingly for a species that has not featured in the garden survey before, Meadow Pipits were reported from three gardens.

Pollards Hill South	Oct and Nov
Pittville Gdns, SE25	April (4 <sup>th</sup> )
Courtwood Lane	Sept, Oct, Nov

There were also birds present throughout the year at Riddlesdown, where they bred. South Norwood Country Park saw wintering birds at both ends of the year with an unusual record in July. Two other sites, Croham Hurst and Kenley Common had birds earlier in the year.

### **Yellow Wagtail**

This found its way into the garden survey when one flew over Briton Hill Road on September 20<sup>th</sup>. The only other records were from South Norwood Country Park in the autumn.

### **Grey Wagtail**

Another unexpected species that continues to turn up in gardens. Grey Wagtails were reported from seven gardens during 1998 as shown below.

Whitgift Almshouses	July, Aug, Sept
Shirley Church Road	Jan 17 <sup>th</sup>
Campion Close	Nov
Gravel Hill	Jan, Oct
Grange Road	Dec
The Ridgeway	Feb
Courtwood Lane	One on Oct 20 <sup>th</sup>

Most related to single birds at either end of the year but up to two birds at the Whitgift Almshouses from July to September is unusual and perhaps suggest a breeding attempt in the unlikely habitat of central Croydon. Further support for this may come from a record from Fairfield Gardens in June.

Apart from the records given above, birds were seen on office roofs in central Croydon in November and December and two birds seen in Blenheim Park Road on October 29<sup>th</sup> were presumably part of the now expected autumn passage. More expected sites were South Norwood Country Park (where they probably bred) and Waddon Ponds (which also had summer records).

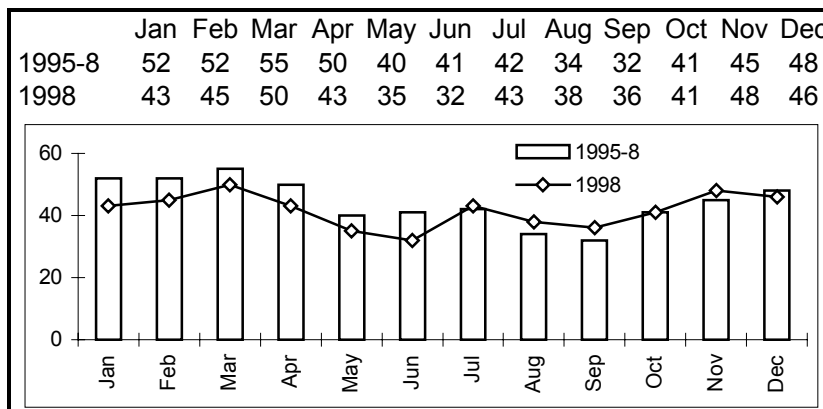
## Pied Wagtail

After a decline last year, Pied Wagtails returned to more like their status in 1995 and 1996, being seen in 39 gardens (27%) compared to 20 (17%) in 1997. The ACCS survey also noted an increase from 16% in 1997 to 23% in 1998<sup>3</sup>. Most garden records were from outside the breeding season but a few were from summer months.

Although birds were recorded regularly at sites such as South Norwood Country Park and Meadow Hill, the best way to see Pied Wagtails was at the overnight roost in North End where up to 200 birds gathered at dusk in a few trees during the winter months. The roost was present until March and again in December.

## Wren

Reported from 109 gardens (75%) which was similar to last year's 91 gardens (76%). In the first half of the year the percentages were down on the average but picked up in the second half as shown on the accompanying graph.



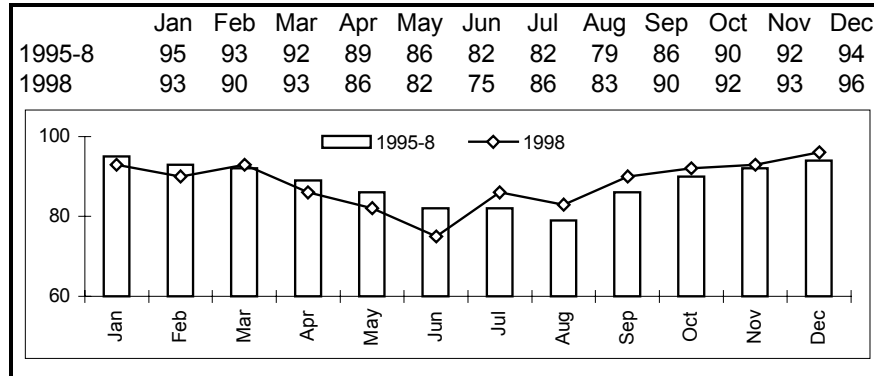
## Dunnock

Dunnocks were recorded in 125 gardens (86%) up on last year's 98 (82%) but it still dropped out of the top ten mainly because Jays increased in frequency rather than Dunnocks decreasing. As ever, this rather skulking bird is likely to be under-reported.

<sup>3</sup> ACCS 1998 Croydon Garden Wildlife Survey

## Robin

The ever popular Robin turned up in 143 gardens (98%) against 116 (97%) in 1997, representing a slight increase overall. Interestingly though, percentages were down on the average over the first half of the year and up in the second.



## Black Redstart

An unexpected garden bird, a female was in Freshfields (yes - our leader's garden) on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## Whinchat

As usual passage birds were present in spring and autumn at South Norwood Country Park. In addition there was a female at Meadow Hill on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

## Stonechat

Yet again there were wintering birds at South Norwood Country Park at both ends of the year, but one in May was less usual. The only other record was of one at Kenley Common on September 9<sup>th</sup>.

## Wheatear

South Norwood Country Park remained the best site with birds in both spring and autumn. There were, however, two other records. These were from Riddlesdown in March and Sanderstead Rec. in October.

## Ring Ouzel

Two at South Norwood Country Park on October 7<sup>th</sup> coincided with a massive influx on the coast and, as far as can be told, represents the first sighting of more than a single bird at a time in Croydon. Still to be confirmed is one that was reported through the ACCS garden survey.

*1997 additional record*

Although not attributed to one of our participants, a single bird was reported through the ACCS survey. It was found in a Sanderstead garden during March.

### Blackbird

Reported from 145 gardens (99%) this was the first year that Blackbirds were not reported from every garden. There was the usual slight drop in late summer/early autumn. This pattern of occurrence, and even the approximate percentages, mirror those shown in the BTO Garden BirdWatch<sup>4</sup>.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	127	131	131	131	127	124	103	91	88	96	104	105
1998 ro	97	99	99	98	96	95	98	86	83	87	93	96
overall ro	99	99	99	98	97	96	96	87	81	85	92	96

### Fieldfare

Numbers were down on previous years, being reported from only 21 gardens (14%) against 27 (23%) last year. Even so, this is a higher percentage than the 5% in the BTO garden bird feeding survey<sup>1</sup>.

Most records came in January, February, November and December with one apparent May record from Layhams Road.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	...	Oct	Nov	Dec
1997	17	6	1	...	3	7	13
1998	11	13	1	...	0	8	5

Likewise, Fieldfares were only recorded from eight other sites, down from the 11 last year.

### Song Thrush

Recorded in 104 gardens (71%) well down on last year's 103 (87%). The monthly figures also show big declines apart from September and October when numbers are usually very low anyway. The table gives the data for 1998 and 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	61	63	54	58	50	46	40	22	13	19	26	44
1997 ro	69	53	54	55	48	55	48	28	10	18	34	52
1998 ro	47	47	41	43	38	35	38	21	12	17	23	40

While there could be many factors affecting Song Thrushes, one that can be readily redressed is the use of slug pellets which not only get rid of the birds'

<sup>4</sup> BTO Garden BirdWatch Handbook

<sup>1</sup> BTO News no 218, Sept-Oct 98

food but can also directly kill within a few hours any thrushes that eat slugs and snails that have been ‘treated’.

### Redwing

Like Fieldfares, Redwing records were also down, to 63 gardens (43%) from 79 (66%). This is still far greater than the BTO garden bird feeding survey where they were reported from only 6% of gardens during the winter of 1997-8<sup>1</sup>. The records from January to March showed a big decline, but those from October to December were not that much worse than 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	...	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	28	30	14	0	...	14	22	41
1997 ro	68	42	13	1	...	13	25	43
1998 ro	21	23	11	0	...	13	20	37

They were seen at 19 other sites and were found at more of them each month during the winter than Song Thrushes.

### Mistle Thrush

Reported from 71 gardens (49%) against 55 (46%). Although there are some fluctuations in the monthly figures, this species is generally quite stable unlike its smaller cousin.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	25	22	27	23	22	20	8	6	11	16	15	25
1998 ro	19	17	21	17	17	15	8	6	10	15	13	23
overall ro	26	20	24	18	18	16	9	10	12	15	15	23

### Grasshopper Warbler

One was at South Norwood Country Park on July 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Sedge Warbler

Present at South Norwood Country Park from April to August with some pairs breeding.

### Marsh Warbler

A singing bird was reported from South Norwood Country Park in June.

### Reed Warbler

Present at South Norwood Country Park throughout the summer with several pairs breeding.

<sup>1</sup> BTO News no 218, Sept-Oct 98



### Lesser Whitethroat

Reported from five other sites, none from gardens. It was mainly found in May but birds were at South Norwood Country Park between April and September.

### Common Whitethroat

This was also reported from five sites with breeding likely at several of them including South Norwood Country Park which held a healthy population as usual.

### Garden Warbler

Another good year with birds being reported on passage from five gardens as listed below.

Rushmead Close	September
Harbury Road, Carshalton	August
The Ridgeway, Sanderstead	May
Rylandes Road	April
Lower Barn Road	August

They were also recorded at seven other sites but no specific notes were given of breeding occurring.

### Blackcap

Reported from 51 gardens (35%) during the year. Slightly up on last year's 39 (33%). Once again, a large proportion of the garden records were of presumed wintering birds but there was also a peak in July suggesting local breeding.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	23	17	14	11	12	9	12	7	8	2	11	11
1998 ro	18	13	11	8	9	7	11	7	8	2	10	10
overall ro	16	12	11	10	8	6	8	5	4	2	7	12

Blackcaps were again widespread at other sites with breeding likely at many of them. There was only one potential wintering bird and this was at Kenley Common in February. Other early birds were at South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake in March with the former having birds right through to October.

### Chiffchaff

Even allowing for the possibility that some birds reported as Chiffchaffs may actually have been Willow Warblers, this species has seen a large increase in garden records over the four years of the survey. It was reported from 34 gardens (23%) in 1998 against 22 (18%) in 1997, 10 (7%) in 1996 and 11 (9%)

in 1995. This differs from the ACCS survey where Chiffchaffs were reported from 14% of gardens in both 1997 and 1998<sup>3</sup>.

There was one February record, from Rectory Lane, Wallington, and a few gardens had birds for most if not all of the summer. The majority of records, however, fell in the spring and autumn passage periods.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 totals	0	1	6	14	11	5	5	8	15	6	0	0

The other sites reported Chiffchaffs between March and November (at South Norwood Country Park) with most records coming in spring and early summer.

### Willow Warbler

Unlike Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers have not shown any significant changes in occurrence over the years. They were found in 10 gardens during 1998 compared to seven in 1997. This year the bulk of records came during autumn passage in August and September with only one report from the first half of the year.

In contrast, most of the records from the eight other sites came in the first half of the year, with the earliest bird being at South Norwood Lake in March.

### Goldcrest

The apparent influx of last autumn was almost certainly responsible for the high number of records early in 1998. Goldcrests were reported from 60 gardens (41%) during 1998 against 40 (34%) in 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	32	22	26	15	14	14	7	8	12	21	21	18
1998 ro	24	17	20	11	11	11	7	8	11	19	19	16
overall ro	17	13	15	10	8	8	6	6	8	16	18	17

Birds were also reported from 15 other sites in Croydon with breeding likely, or confirmed, at several of them.

### Firecrest

One was reported from Purley Downs Road on September 29<sup>th</sup>.

The only other site to report them was Beaulieu Heights Wood where they have been regular winter visitors in previous years. Up to three birds were present during the winter.

<sup>3</sup> ACCS 1998 Croydon Garden Wildlife Survey

### Spotted Flycatcher

A much better year for this species. It was reported from five gardens during 1998 which is more than the total of four over the previous three years. Even more encouraging was that one of these referred to a family party in July.

Bramley Hill	June
Falconwood Road	July (family of 5)
Harbury Road	September
Courtwood Lane	September
St James Road	September

They also fared well at other sites, being reported from Addington Hills, Kenley Common, Lloyd Park, South Norwood Country Park and South Norwood Lake. An adult was feeding young at Park Hill in July and there were two at Meadow Hill on September 4<sup>th</sup>.

### Red-breasted Flycatcher

A new species for Croydon, an immature bird was found at Beaulieu Heights Wood on November 5<sup>th</sup> and stayed until November 7<sup>th</sup> giving good views to those lucky enough to get there. Some people even had the flycatcher and three Firecrests in the same view. This site is less than a mile from last year's Pied-billed Grebe. What else will turn up in that area and will increased observer cover find other good birds elsewhere in Croydon?

### Long-tailed Tit

Reported from 106 gardens (73%) slightly down from 91 (76%) in 1997. Although the monthly figures were slightly higher than 1997 in a couple of months, they were generally lower. Indeed, they are generally lower than those for 1995 when Long-tailed Tits were found in only 71% of gardens. This might indicate that although Long-tailed Tits are still visiting the same number of gardens during the year, their visits are becoming less frequent. Having said that, there was a flock of about 70 in Freshfields on July 6<sup>th</sup>.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	60	58	50	39	39	31	28	30	31	35	33	37
1997 ro	55	46	51	30	24	34	25	32	30	43	43	39
1998 ro	46	44	38	29	29	24	27	28	29	32	30	34

Long-tailed Tits were found at 18 other sites and were seen regularly at many of them.

### Marsh Tit

There were some additional records for 1997. They were also seen at Markfield quite frequently during the second half of the year. A record from Windermere Road, Coulsdon in January made a total of three gardens for 1997.

Unfortunately, Marsh Tits were only reported from two gardens in 1998.

Church Way, Sanderstead      September  
 Markfield, Courtwood Lane      Eight months during the year

The only other records came from Kenley Common in March and April. Although it is believed that they were still present in Selsdon Woods in the breeding season (as well as during the winter) no specific records were submitted.

### Willow Tit

A bird was heard calling in Kings Wood on May 4<sup>th</sup>.

### Marsh/Willow Tit

A bird visiting Briton Hill Road in September and October was thought to be a Marsh Tit (possibly the one seen at Church Way) but was not conclusively identified.

### Coal Tit

Reported from 99 gardens (68%) compared to 77 (65%) in 1997. There was no real change in the occurrence of this species.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	58	52	46	46	38	38	37	44	43	45	52	44
1997 <i>ro</i>	45	47	40	36	32	36	33	32	29	38	46	46
1998 <i>ro</i>	44	39	35	34	29	29	35	42	41	41	46	40

### Blue Tit

Reported from 144 gardens (99%) compared to 118 (99%) last year. This remains our commonest member of the tit family to visit gardens. Although they take readily to nest boxes, birds in one garden forsook these to nest under the loose tiles in a neighbouring roof.

## Great Tit

Reported from 142 gardens (97%) compared to 115 (97%) last year. Many of the monthly figures showed an increase over the last two years suggesting that Great Tits are becoming more prevalent in our gardens.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	110	110	107	114	111	101	89	84	90	89	100	101
1997 ro	78	79	84	77	82	80	73	73	77	76	87	86
1998 ro	84	83	81	85	84	78	85	79	85	81	89	92

## Nuthatch

Reported from 51 gardens (35%) which was significantly up on 30 (25%) last year. Even so, it turned up in a smaller proportion of gardens for much of the first half of 1998, picking up later on when it was found in about 20% of gardens each month in the second half. The 'drop' early in the year appears more to do with exceptionally high levels in 1997 than a decrease overall as the figures during this period are better than those for 1995 and 1996.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	18	21	17	17	14	15	21	22	20	24	29	26
1997 ro	19	18	18	11	13	18	18	12	8	12	12	12
1998 ro	14	16	13	13	11	12	20	21	19	22	26	24

Nuthatches were also fairly common in wooded sites including a pair that bred in Sanderstead Cemetery. There was an unusual record of two at South Norwood Country Park on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

## Treecreeper

This elusive species kept an even lower profile in 1998, being reported from only nine gardens against 12 last year.

Chichester Road	March
Shirley Church Rd	March and December (in different gardens)
South Way	January
Gravel Hill	January
Brookcroft	Feb, July to Sept, Nov, Dec
Courtwood Lane	Jan, March, June, July, Sept, Oct, Dec
Bouverie Road	February and April
Taunton Avenue	June, July

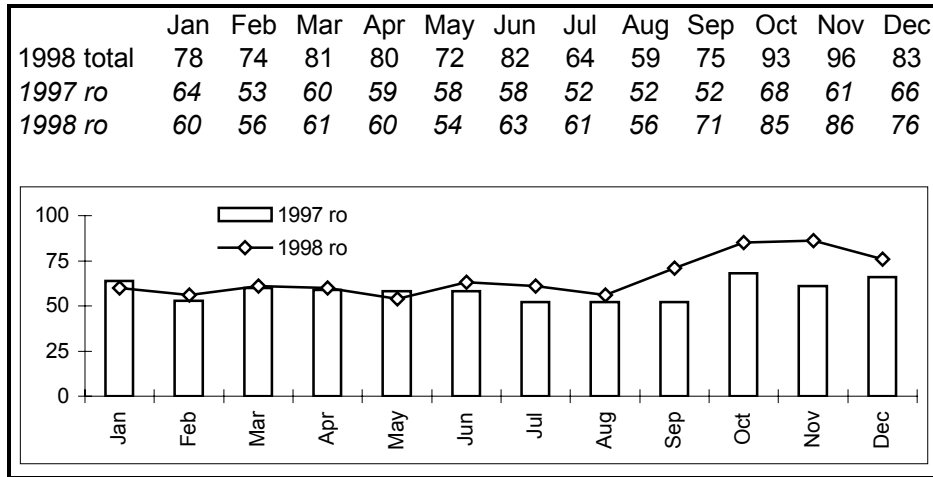
Elsewhere, it was found at various wooded sites in Croydon.

## Golden Oriole

A bird was singing at Kings Wood in the late afternoon of May 4<sup>th</sup>.

## Jay

Reported from 133 gardens (91%) against 108 (91%) in 1997. There was no real change to the status of this colourful member of the crow family in the first half of the year but it became more prevalent later on.



## Magpie

This species is now the only one that has been reported from every participating garden. One even turned up at the Whitgift Almshouses, where it was one of only five species recorded! A nest in North End was apparently being added to on the very late (or is it very **early**) date of November 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Jackdaw

Jackdaws showed a slight increase, being reported from 20 gardens (14%) against 14 (12%) in 1997. One high count was of 10 over Shirley Church Road on January 10<sup>th</sup>.

The two main other sites were Riddlesdown, where good numbers were present all year and South Norwood Country Park. There were also occasional records from eight other sites.

## Rook

This species made something of a comeback in 1998, being reported from nine gardens with a possible minor passage in March. The main areas, however, were Willis Court, West Wickham, Rectory Lane, Wallington and Comport Green, New Addington which are all on the edge of (or even outside) Croydon.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	4	3	5	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	3
1997 total	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	2

### Carrion Crow

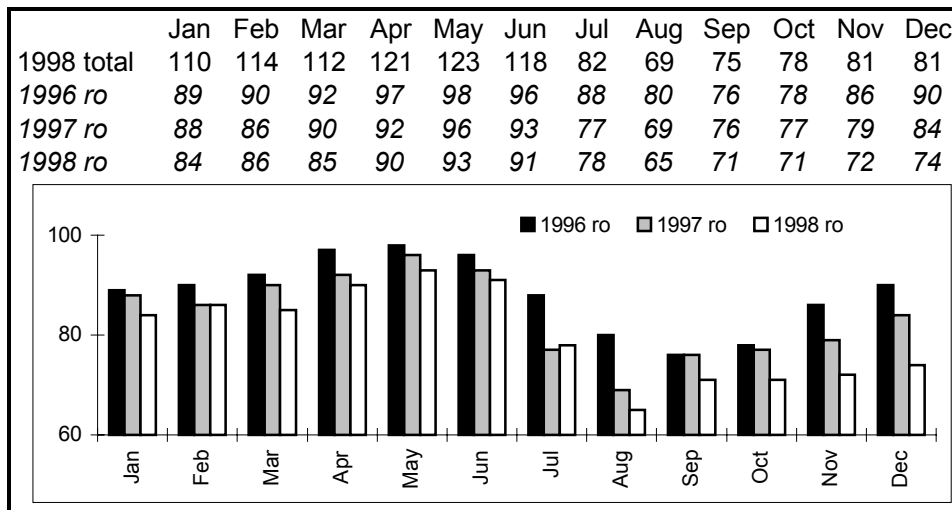
Reported from 140 gardens (96%) compared to 114 (96%) in 1997.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	117	113	116	112	118	112	87	88	90	91	96	95
1997 ro	87	83	86	85	86	86	85	80	80	89	85	90
1998 ro	89	85	88	84	89	86	83	83	85	83	86	86

Large flocks of Carrion Crows are now being reported from some areas with possibly 100 or more birds being seen at a few.

### Starling

Reported from 143 gardens (98%) against 115 (97%) in 1997. One participant noted a roost of about 200 Starlings that formed in a Poplar near the garden, with regular counts of 20 to 30 birds in the garden. Despite the apparent stability, anecdotal evidence suggests that Starlings are declining in Croydon. When you look at the percentage of total records, these have gone down from 89% in 1996 to 85% in 1997 and 81% in 1998. The graph shows how the monthly figures have also declined over the last three years. This general pattern of occurrence is similar to that shown by the BTO Garden BirdWatch<sup>4</sup> but their figures did not appear to suggest a year on year decline.



### House Sparrow

The survey results for House Sparrows in 1998 were somewhat enigmatic. The distinct downward trend from the past three years seems to have bottomed out. In some months the percentage of gardens was slightly down and, in others, slightly up. As we had tried to get more potentially less bird friendly areas

<sup>4</sup> BTO Garden BirdWatch Handbook

involved during the year, we also looked at comparing only those sites which participated in both 1997 and 1998 to eliminate possible bias. Although this showed slight differences the general trend was still the same as when using all the data. The percentages were higher in the middle of the year and lower at the beginning and end. While this seems to be good news for House Sparrows, several sites which had previously held good numbers suddenly showed noticeable declines during 1998. The two sets of information are hard to reconcile. One possible explanation is that up to now the declines have essentially meant that small colonies have been lost, leaving mainly the larger ones which, although reduced in numbers, still survived. We will have to wait and see what happens in 1999 - will numbers go down again or show more signs of recovery? The BTO garden bird feeding survey has also seen declines in House Sparrows. There is a comment that “attendance at GBFS gardens each winter in the 1970s averaged 97% but has fallen over recent years to 89% in winter 1997-8. Formerly most gardens lacking House Sparrows were in rural and upland outlying situations but today the species is becoming scarce even in suburban localities ... In prime suburban habitat House Sparrow flock sizes have more than halved since peaking following the productive breeding season of 1976...”<sup>1</sup>. It does not specify what is happening in fully urban areas which could include certain parts of Croydon.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	70	77	77	92	93	89	73	58	52	55	56	57
1997 ro	60	60	62	64	67	67	63	53	48	55	54	53
1998 ro	53	58	58	69	70	69	70	55	49	50	50	52

### Tree Sparrow

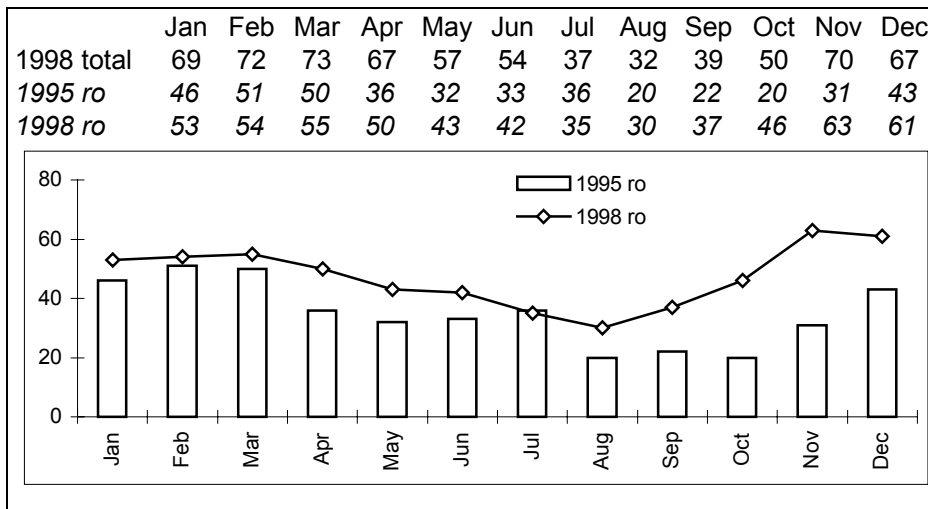
The only records came from Kendall Ave South, where there were occasional records of a single bird in March, October and November.

### Chaffinch

Reported from 114 gardens (78%) compared to 91 (76%) in 1997. This is the third increase in a row, suggesting that Chaffinches are faring well in Croydon’s gardens. The graph shows the change in monthly figures between 1995 and 1998.

There was a Chaffinch with a white head and upper breast that frequented a couple of gardens in Sanderstead. As these were two of the gardens used in the comparison last winter, it was hoped that this would shed some light on how far our wintering finches roam. As it was only reported from the two gardens, either it was flying into an area with no coverage or its range was very limited, suggesting a relatively small feeding territory.

<sup>1</sup> BTO News no 218, Sept-Oct 98

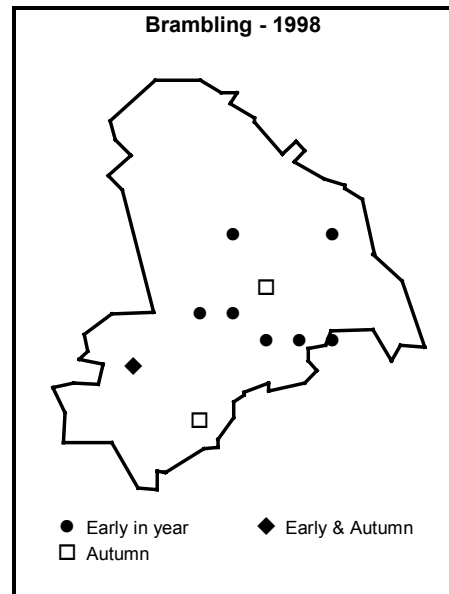


A flock of 60 Chaffinches was reported from Beaulieu Heights Wood on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

### Brambling

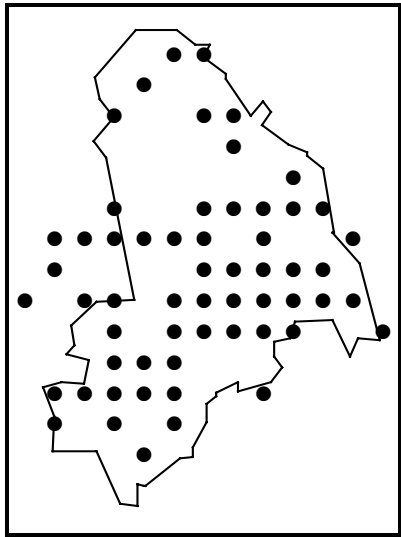
The number of Brambling records rose noticeably in 1998. They turned up in more gardens that previously during the first part of the year, eight gardens in 1998 against a maximum of three in earlier years. There were also several birds late in the year whereas previously there had been no garden records for this period. The map shows the distribution of gardens during the year.

Outside of the garden survey, a double figure flock frequented a garden in the Riddlesdown area early in the year and a flock of 40 was found at Addington Hills, with birds still there in February. Other records were from Park Hill in October, South Norwood Lake (six on October 24<sup>th</sup>) and South Norwood Country Park in December.



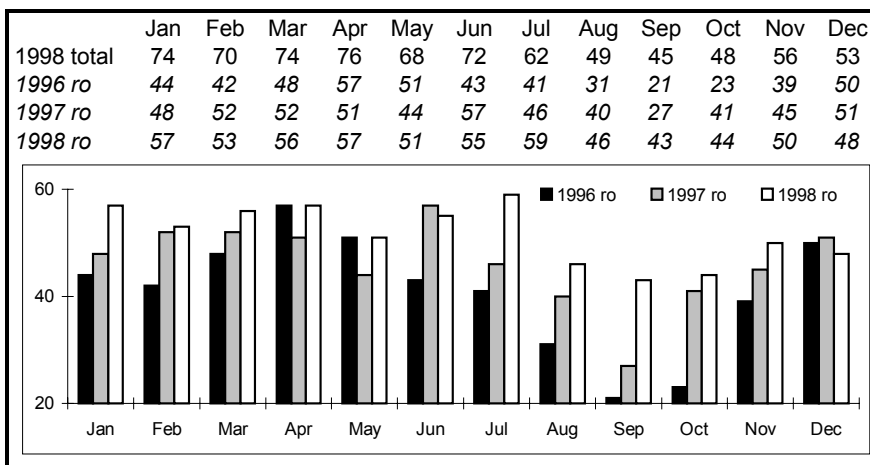
### Greenfinch

Reported from 117 gardens (80%) compared to 99 (83%) last year. It was present in about half the gardens during the summer and is likely to have bred near many of them.



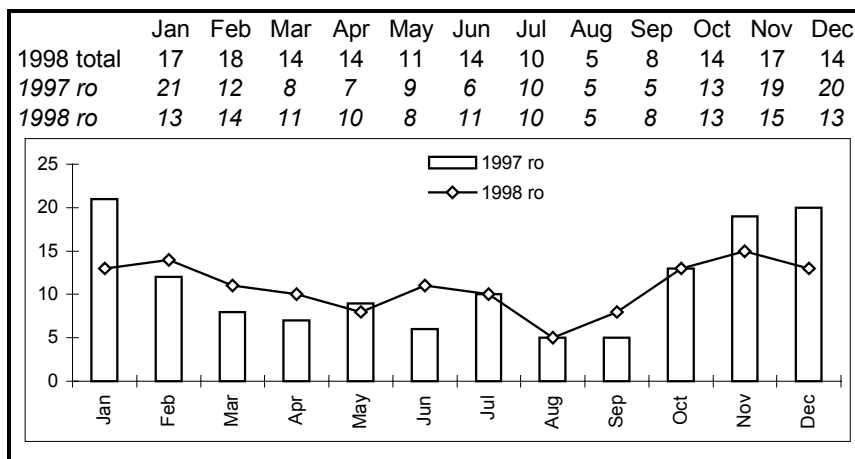
The map shows that, although the distribution is still patchy in the north of Croydon, Greenfinches have occupied most of the south of the borough.

Although it is difficult to assess accurately, there appears to be a slight upward trend in the monthly occurrence figures as shown on the graph below which gives the figures for 1996, 1997 and 1998.



## Goldfinch

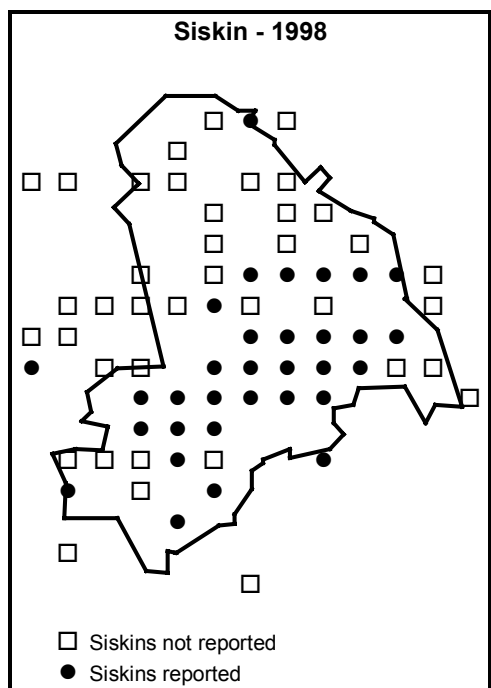
Reported from 56 gardens (38%) during the year against 54 (45%) in 1997. Although numbers were down on 1997 during the winter months, they were generally higher for the rest of the year.



They were also found at 12 other sites with birds present throughout the year at both South Norwood Country Park and Meadow Hill.

### Siskin

1998 was by far the best year to date for Siskins visiting Croydon's gardens, at least if you live in the south of the borough. Birds were present in about 41% of gardens during January to April with many gardens reporting them for extended periods. Groups of up to 15 birds were found in several gardens. This is in great contrast to last year when there were few records with a spike in March suggesting a brief passage. The BTO garden bird feeding survey also showed a great increase from 40% of gardens in the winter 1996-7 to 68% in 1997-8<sup>1</sup>.



The rather polarised distribution during the first half of the year is shown on the map, which gives those areas where Siskins were seen and those where none of the participating gardens had any records. This distribution must surely be related to the habitat, such as the nature of people's gardens and the presence of woods, *etc* in the

neighbourhood.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	39	51	40	14	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1
1997 ro	4	6	17	3	0	1	0	0	1	5	2	8
1998 ro	30	38	30	10	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	1

Most records are in the first part of the year with intriguing summer records from Rylandes Road, Selston in June and August, Keston Avenue in July and Bushey Road, Shirley in August.

They were also found at ten other sites, again mainly at the beginning of the year. Autumn records came from just Addington Hills and Kenley Common (both in September).

### Linnet

<sup>1</sup> BTO News no 218, Sept-Oct 98

It was a good year for Linnets which were reported from seven gardens. Although most had records in only one or two months, they were present from May to August in Layhams Road. Rather surprisingly, three of the gardens were in the built up area in the north of the borough.

Pollards Hill South	August
Holmesdale Close, SE25	May
Pittville Gardens, SE25	January
Willis Court, West Wickham	June
Purley Downs Road	May
Courtwood Lane	May, December

There were also records from five open areas. Linnets were present all year at both Riddlesdown and South Norwood Country Park. The other sites were Kenley Common (during the summer), Sanderstead village (towards the end of the year) and South Norwood Lake in February and July.

### Twite

A bird was reported calling in a flock of about 50 Linnets at South Norwood Country Park on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

### Redpoll

Reported from ten gardens, an increase on previous years. All records were in the first quarter.

Other records came from four sites: Addington Hills (February), Croham Hurst (February), Riddlesdown (Feb, March and May) and South Norwood Country Park (January and November).

#### *1997 additional records*

Redpolls were also reported from Markfield, Courtwood Lane from September to December 1997 inclusive.

### Bullfinch

Reported from 44 gardens (30%) compared to 35 (29%) in 1997. Its position in Croydon's gardens has seen little change over the period of the survey.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1998 total	18	14	7	7	15	15	9	8	1	4	15	5
1998 ro	14	11	5	5	11	12	9	8	1	4	13	5
overall ro	10	7	6	5	9	11	8	8	2	3	10	8

## **Yellowhammer**

Reported from three gardens during the year, more than in the previous three years combined.

Riddlesdown Avenue	February
The Crossways, Old Coulsdon	February
Briton Hill Road	One over on August 7 <sup>th</sup> .

Elsewhere, Yellowhammers were present all year at Riddlesdown, where they bred. They were also found at Farthing Downs in June; a more complete survey of this site may well show that they are resident here as well.

## **Reed Bunting**

No garden records in 1998, but they were resident at South Norwood Country Park and they were present during both winter periods at Riddlesdown.

## **Corn Bunting**

Having seemingly been lost from South Norwood Country Park as a wintering species, Corn Buntings were found in small numbers at Riddlesdown in February to April and November, with unconfirmed records in July and August. There were also two over South Norwood Lake on October 25<sup>th</sup>.

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## **Escapes and other species**

There were unidentified **small waders** (probably Dunlin) at Kenley Common in January.

A **large bird of prey** (described as being twice the size of the Crows that mobbed it) flew over Woodcrest Road on April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Most of the escapes turned up at South Norwood Country Park and included a **Black Swan** in early January, records of **Bar-headed** and **Barnacle Geese** and a **Superb Parrot** that was present in October and November. A **Cockatiel** was at Meadow Hill in January.

## Appendix A Other Survey Reports

### **Garden Birdwatch Handbook**

ed. Andrew Cannon  
published by the BTO in 1998

This booklet gives details about the first three years of the BTO's Garden Birdwatch covering the period 1995 to 1997 which coincides with the first three years of our own garden survey. This is more than just a summary of their results, however, as it also includes details about the species covered plus some other useful information.

Unlike most BTO surveys, this one is similar to ours in that it involves simply noting the presence of a species during the relevant recording period. This survey has recording periods of one week whereas ours is split into months. Although this allows differences over very short periods to be monitored (for example Chaffinches and Greenfinches apparently have similar seasonal cycles which are slightly offset, and there is an apparent winter peak for Rooks at New Year) it is difficult to compare their percentages with ours for infrequent/irregular garden visitors. For such species the weekly figure is likely to be less than the monthly figure; a particular species may only be recorded once or twice a month and will only be shown in the data for some of the specific weeks during that period.

The BTO survey covers forty species plus one species pair (Marsh and Willow Tits) with some regular visitors being excluded because they are either difficult to identify; to decide if they are actually using a garden or, perhaps, because they visit gardens very early in the day. Our survey covers all species whether they use the garden or not. One surprising omission is that of Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. This is because they are often hard to distinguish between, but I presume they could have been treated as a species pair in the same way as the aforementioned tits.

One minor criticism concerns the report on Rooks and their identification. The caption accompanying a photograph reads "with practice, Rooks can be recognised even at a distance. Large black birds in a big flock like this will almost always be Rooks as Carrion Crows are much less sociable and Jackdaws are much smaller. If in doubt listen for their distinctive calls." This fits in with the old adage of 'one Rook is a Crow and many Crows are Rooks'. Unfortunately, in the Croydon area at least, Rooks are infrequent and large gatherings of up to 100 Crows are quite common. Indeed we may have some

records of Rooks made on this basis as there are conflicting reports from one site in particular where Crows congregate in large numbers.

Looking through the occurrence graphs, it is possible to carry out some comparison with Croydon's data. One immediately obvious difference relates to Magpies. Croydon has 100% penetration (*ie* it has been reported at least once from every participating garden) with monthly figures of around 95%. In the BTO survey which covers the whole of Britain the weekly figures are of the order of 40 to 60%. There are presumably many gardens in the country which are still Magpie free zones. With the continuing debate about the effect of Magpies on song bird populations, it might be worth comparing the survey data from gardens with a high occurrence of Magpies against those with a low occurrence to see if there are any significant differences in the song birds.

For House Sparrows, the BTO trend of occurrence during a year seems to be similar to ours but our survey shows a year on year decline, whereas the BTO one shows a more stable year to year comparison. What the BTO report also details is some of the previous treatment of this species. Did you know that in one experiment the stomachs of 8,004 birds were dissected to identify their food or that, in another, a good recovery rate of ringed birds was ensured by putting out poison?

I have not carried out any real comparisons between data for other species, but some of them at least appear to show generally similar trends.

Having read the handbook, if I could have a fairy godmother grant one wish it would be to have the ability to enter the data from our survey in the same way as the BTO. Their forms are put in through an optical mark recognition scanner. It would save all the computer key strokes but, then again, it would not be as much fun as reading all the forms.

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**ACCS Garden Wildlife Survey for 1997**  
ed. Malcolm Jennings (chairman of ACCS)

The Association of Croydon Conservation Societies (ACCS) has set about surveying all forms of wildlife using Croydon's gardens, as their commitment to Local Agenda 21. In this respect it parallels our own survey and they are using our species list for birds. There are significant differences apart from covering mammals, amphibians, reptiles and insects as well as birds. Their recording periods cover three month intervals, running from February to January. The highest count at any one time during each period is required for every species. In these respects they can monitor seasonal and long term population trends.

Analysis is carried out by dividing Croydon into eight areas with the boundaries running mainly along railway lines and major roads. In 1997 they had 43 participants divided across the borough although one area (which included central Croydon and Waddon) had the participants mostly concentrated in the 'central' area.

As with our survey, they found that House Sparrows (and Feral Pigeons) tend to favour the north of the borough, whereas Siskins (and Chiffchaffs) tend to favour the south.

One comment made by the editor is "the large number of birds in Sanderstead may be due in part to a number of expert bird watchers living in that area". It is more likely to be due to the habitat, or the possibility that the area lies on a natural 'flyway'. I would certainly agree, however, with the comment about the presence of large numbers of bird species. You only need to look at the distribution of Brambling records plus the scarce birds that have turned up. Apart from those that found their way to the oases in the north, many of them have been in the general locality around Sanderstead/Selsdon/Riddlesdown including Golden Oriole, Wryneck, Hoopoe and Ring Ouzel.

If you have a general interest in wildlife, the ACCS would welcome additional participants. Further details can be obtained from Malcolm Jennings. If you do decide to take part, don't forget to keep doing our survey as well.

Note, the 1998 ACCS report was published while this was being prepared and follows the same format as the one for 1997. The list of additional species includes several interesting birds such as Stork and Peahen (which I will not be following up) plus Ring Ouzel and a few others that I am trying to obtain details for.