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Short webinars for environmental policy-makers and practitioners

Garden Bird Survey: Tweet Tweet... We're making our birds count

The following questions were asked during our live webinar with Angela Brandt, Gradon Diprose and Nicolette Dellow but due to time restrictions, we were unable to answer these in the session.

Why is the survey done in Winter? are birds not more abundant in other seasons?

This is a good question, and frequently asked by participants so we've included it in the FAQ on our webpage (<https://gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz/faq.html>). The main reason is that winter is a time that many birds, especially native species, will come to gardens looking for food. It would certainly be interesting to run surveys every season, though! - Angela

Love this survey! Have you considered working with NZ bird photographers on Instagram? Those with lots of followers might be able to generate more engagement with the survey

Excellent idea! We have worked with a few to source images but not for promotion. We will keep this in mind for next year, thank you! - Nicolette

Why does 2018 have more surveys than other years?

After a few years of gathering data on promotional approaches and resources that participants found useful, a new suite of resources was produced, and a more intensive promotional campaign launched in 2018 (e.g. the NZGBS Facebook page was launched). A manuscript is currently in preparation analysing the promotional campaigns from 2012-2019 compared to survey returns in those years. - Angela

Does this data feed into the conservation threat status portal? Would you consider using threat categories like "threatened" or "at risk" to tell us the state of garden birds? Although acknowledging that exotic birds might be treated differently?

To my knowledge the data are not currently used for that purpose and our reporting of trend alerts follows that used by the British Trust for Ornithology, and is meant to avoid confusion with conservation listings that rely on more comprehensive information (e.g. species population sizes and

full distributions; MacLeod et al 2018 (<https://datastore.landcareresearch.co.nz/dataset/nzgbs-2018-trend-analysis-methods>). We do encourage using the trends to highlight species and areas that might require a closer look or to aid in monitoring conservation and management efforts at various scales. - Angela

Any plans to extend this further to rural NZ, especially farmlands? Farmers are focused on environmental sustainability and may relish an opportunity to participate.

The NZ Garden Bird Survey is open to all New Zealanders, including rural NZ. This is a good idea for next year, to extend our direct communications with rural communities. To clarify, the current methods apply to gardens and parks in rural as well as urban areas, rather than fields, orchards, vineyards, or paddocks, which would be excellent to assess in a nationwide survey as well in future. - Nicolette and Angela

Are the trends calibrated on a small scale anywhere in New Zealand as a kind of review of the surveys accuracy?

That is something we have considered and would be keen to do with proper resourcing to determine the best approach. For example, comparisons with existing data sets might be valuable but too variable in methods to provide a complete or robust picture. - Angela

Seasonal food sources in the garden can influence bird numbers and species. Are the survey results influenced by this?

By running the survey at the same time each year, we aim to avoid the influence of this covariate on our trend results. The modelling of trends does take into account whether participants feed birds in their garden. - Angela

Have trends been related to any environmental drivers (e.g. weather / mast years / regional pest control)?

We have yet to do further analysis on potential drivers of the trends we're seeing but are certainly keen to do so, and we know several community groups, land managers and landscape restoration projects who would like to use the data to evaluate pest control efforts and habitat planting, in particular. We hope to explore this opportunity more in the near future. - Angela

Love this information! Do we know why the Silvereye declined (e.g. was it one bad winter???)

We haven't yet further explored the 'why' of any of the trends we're seeing, but a single year's data shouldn't influence the trends we report to that degree with the approaches used (MacLeod et al 2018 <https://datastore.landcareresearch.co.nz/dataset/nzgbs-2018-trend-analysis-methods>). Also, the long-term declines in silvereyes have been showing in the data for the past several years. It's possible that generally warmer winters over time mean fewer silvereyes come into gardens, but we haven't yet tested that speculation. - Angela