

Assessment Report of Woking Garden Wildlife Watch April 2012

1. Background of previous Woking surveys

1.1. Gardening For Life project

In 1998 Woking Local Agenda 21 (LA21) in partnership with Woking Borough Council (WBC) set up the Gardening For Life (GFL) project to promote environmentally friendly gardening. The project has continued ever since with the main aims:

- Reduce water use in the garden
- Cut down on the use of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers
- Use alternatives to peat
- Compost garden and kitchen waste
- Attract wildlife and create habitats.

1.2. Garden Wildlife Surveys

Wildlife garden surveys have been an important part of the GFL project. The first was the Garden Profile Survey in April 1999 followed by monthly surveys of 12 named species and later all birds. Based on these results yearly surveys in April were started in 2007. A full assessment report for 2007 is available on the GFL pages of <http://wokingla21.wordpress.com> which gives a summary of earlier reports and their main findings before presenting detailed results of the 2007 survey.

The 2008 results were very similar to 2007 results and so only a short report was prepared which is also on the web pages as well as an abridged version of 2009 results and a full report for 2009. In 2009 Section D of the questionnaire questions on the composition of gardens were included so that a comparison could be made with the composition reported 10 years previously. For years 2010 and 2011 full and abridged versions are also on the web pages.

2. Garden Wildlife Watch (GWW) 2012

2.1. Garden Wildlife Watch design

This was simplified this year as resources of volunteers were limited. In order to continue the data of wildlife in Woking Borough we continued the bird survey but only for the birds of greatest interest seen since last May 2011 (Part B) but we retained the selected animals and insects seen over the last year (Part A). However we omitted any questions on environmentally friendly gardening practices as it was felt any new information would be unlikely to be found and this could possibly be returned to in the future.

A single page form (see Appendix 1) was printed in the centre of *Woking Magazine* which is sent to all householders by Woking Borough Council. Copies of the form were available in public libraries, at the Lightbox gallery and distributed at LA21 and Surrey Wildlife Trust activities. The form could also be downloaded from the LA21 website where there were also pages on identification, garden tips and other information.

As part of the analysis of results comparison between years has been presented in the tables. Statistical tests were carried out to check the probability the difference was due to chance. The different levels of significance have been denoted in the tables by * 5%, ** 1% and ***0.1%. The lower the probability of a result being

due to chance the greater the likelihood there is a genuine significant change. Generally a 5% level is the maximum considered as significant.

3. Analysis of Garden Wildlife Watch 2012

3.1. Respondents

Table 1 gives the numbers of respondents over the last six years since the yearly surveys began and the break down of previous participation for those taking part in 2012. It was disappointing that there was a reduction in participation to 130 compared to the previous lowest in 2009 of 275 and 2010 the highest of 405. There were 71 completely new participants and 59 had taken part in any previous year but only 8 in all years.

Clearly we have found it difficult to recruit more participants and to maintain long term interest but over all the years 1016 households have been involved in the surveys.

Table 1 – Respondent analysis relative to previous years

	TOTAL
Total 2012	130
Total 2011	251
Total 2010	405
Total 2009	275
Total 2008	330
Total 2007	374
2012 Previously in 2007	31
2012 Previously in 2008	38
2012 previously in 2009	33
2012 previously in 2010	37
2012 previously in 2011	35
2012 previously in all years	8
2012 previously in any year	59
2012 New	71
Total unique 2007-2012	1016

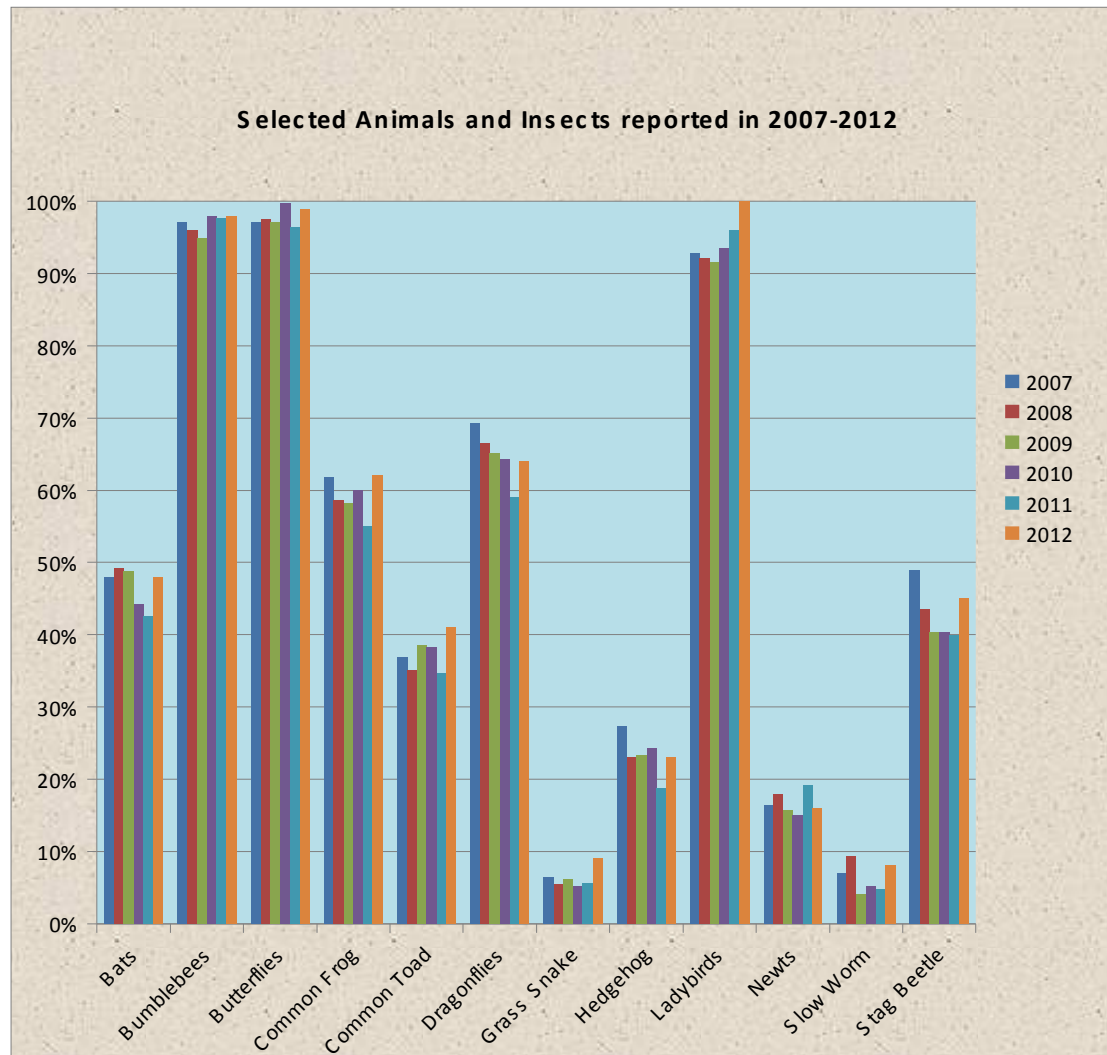
3.2. Part C - Selected animals and insects seen since May 2011

Bats, frog, toad, dragonflies were all reported at higher rates than in 2011 as shown in Table 2 and Figure 1. Hedgehogs which had demonstrated a significant drop in 2011 from the 27% in 2007 still showed a just significant drop (at 5% level) with 23% reported in 2012 from the 33% reported in 1999 survey.

Table 2 – Selected animals and insects reported in 2007-12 surveys

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bats	48%	49%	49%	44%	43%	48%
Bumblebees	97%	96%	95%	98%	98%	98%
Butterflies	97%	98%	97%	100%	96%	99%
Common Frog	62%	59%	58%	60%	55%	62%
Common Toad	37%	35%	39%	38%	35%	41%
Dragonflies	69%	66%	65%	64%	59%	64%
Grass Snake	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	9%
Hedgehog	27%	23%	23%	24%	19%	23%
Ladybirds	93%	92%	92%	94%	96%	100%
Newts	16%	18%	16%	15%	19%	16%
Slow Worm	7%	9%	4%	5%	5%	8%
Stag Beetle	49%	44%	40%	40%	40%	45%

One of our volunteers has been working with the nationwide Hedgehog project has been promoting awareness of being friendly to hedgehogs and been collaborating with WBC contractors for creating woodpiles so it is to be hoped that numbers of reports will increase over time. A student has also used the data to map the location of gardens seeing hedgehogs for her dissertation and so in the future we can see how the population distribution changes.

Figure 1 – Selected animals and insects reported in 2007-12 surveys

3.3. Part B - Bird species seen since 1 May 2011

The results of the common bird species which are of greatest interest in Woking are presented in Table 3. The national trends, of long-tailed tits and goldfinch increasing over time, were confirmed with significance being shown compared to 2007. Again the ring-necked parakeet increased further to 41%. Also it was good to find that song thrush numbers were reported by 79% of participants which was a very significant increase from the 63% of 2007 and the 42% in the 1999 survey. There was a highly significant increase in wood pigeons being reported in 99% compared to only 85% of gardens in 2007 which agrees with the BTO figures where an increase in breeding success recently particularly in the south east. This year there were significant increases in reports of great spotted woodpeckers and jays compared to 2007.

Table 3 – Common bird species seen in May to April 2007-12

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Blackbird	95%	98%	94%	98%	96%	98%
Chaffinch	75%	74%	72%	70%	68%	71%
Dunnock	54%	55%	60%	58%	65%	61%
Goldfinch	45% ^{AA}	48%	51%	46%	56%	61% ^{AA}
Gt spotted woodpecker	59% ^{AA}	59%	60%	55%	63%	72% ^{AA}
House Sparrow	71%	66%	57%	60%	65%	72%
Jay	78% ^{AA}	79%	78%	76%	78%	88% ^{AA}
Long-tailed Tit	51% ^{AAA}	51%	59%	61%	62%	77% ^{AAA}
Ring-necked Parakeet	20% ^{AAA}	30%	29%	29%	35%	41% ^{AAA}
Song Thrush	63% ^{AAA}	67%	61%	68%	66%	79% ^{AAA}
Starling	74%	76%	68%	64%	71%	70%
Wood Pigeon	85% ^{AAA}	88%	89%	86%	86%	99% ^{AAA}

Significant differences: *5%, **1%, ***0.1%

4. Concluding comments

We were again disappointed that the 2012 sixth Annual Garden Wildlife Watch had reduced participation to only 130 compared to 251 in 2011 and 405 in 2010. However over the six years a total of 1016 households have contributed to the surveys. The survey publicity in newspapers, LA21 websites and at various events all help to draw attention to **sustainable gardening practices**. Furthermore the garden at Oak Tree House, the Council's demonstration energy and water efficient property, has been an important aspect of visits to the house with information boards and also leaflets providing practical advice as well as GWW Survey forms. The publicity in 2012 was very limited and if we are to continue the surveys we need to reassess how to maintain and increase participation.

The original 1999 survey has provided a valuable baseline to compare how garden practices have changed. It was possible to demonstrate major changes in garden practices in 2007 compared to 1999. In a few years time we can carry out more surveys on sustainable gardening practices when more gardeners have moved into the Borough and more information has been presented. The **species data** collected this year, although of fewer bird species, and the selected animals and insects of previous years has provided consistent trends demonstrating significant changes during the six years. Removal of further questions on breeding behaviour and a chance to provide further comments may have contributed to less interest in 2012

5. Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Woking residents for their responses and the many people who have made essential contributions to the collection, collation, analysis and presentation of the garden surveys data. In recent years especial thanks to Tim Lowe, Mary Holdstock, Hilary Griffiths and Rob Palgrave.

6. Publications

This Full Report will be available on the Gardening for Life pages of the Woking LA21 web site (<http://wokingla21.wordpress.com>).

Appendix 1



Gardening For Life 2012

For many years, Woking Local Action 21's (LA21) Gardening For Life (GFL) project has been promoting gardening in an environmentally friendly way to attract more wildlife into our gardens.

Part of the project is the Woking Garden Wildlife Watch survey which helps monitor how species are being affected by our changing environment.

LA21 is now calling on gardeners to take part in the 2012 survey.

Area observed

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

How to take part

All you need to do is record the wildlife you have seen over the past year by completing the short survey below. Whether you observe your garden, communal garden, local open space, allotment, balcony or window box, it doesn't matter - anyone can take part.

For help in identifying species, gardening tips and further information, or to download the printable version of the survey, visit <http://sites.google.com/site/wokingla21/Home/gardening-for-life>

Part A: Selected animals and insects seen last year

Please tick all species or groups you have seen in your chosen area since 1 May last year. As some species are difficult to identify, we have listed general groups only.

Bats	☐	Common Toad	☐
Bumblebees	☐	Dragonfly	☐
Butterflies	☐	Grass Snake	☐
Common Frog	☐	Hedgehog	☐
		Ladybirds	☐
		Newts	☐
		Slow Worm	☐
		Stag Beetle	☐

Part B: Birds seen last year

Please tick any species that you remember seeing in your chosen area since 1 May last year.

Blackbird	☐	House Sparrow	☐
Chaffinch	☐	Jay	☐
Duncock	☐	Long-tailed Tit	☐
Goldfinch	☐	Ring-necked Parakeet	☐
Great Spotted Woodpecker	☐	Song Thrush	☐
		Starling	☐
		Thrush	☐
		Wood Pigeon	☐

Would you like to enter the 'Green Gardener' award of Woking in Bloom? Yes / No

Would you like to volunteer to help with LA21 projects? Yes / No

Please return this completed form without a stamp to: **Gardening For Life, Woking LA21, c/o Woking Borough Council, FREEPOST (G11690), Woking, Surrey GU21 6BR.**

All survey forms returned to the freepost address or completed online by **31 May 2012** will be entered into a free prize draw to win over £100 worth of prizes! The winner will be drawn at random and informed by 30 June 2012.

For further information about Woking LA21 activities, please contact us via email at la21@woking.gov.uk, phone 01483 743413 or visit <http://sites.google.com/site/wokingla21/>

www.woking.gov.uk | 01483 755855



