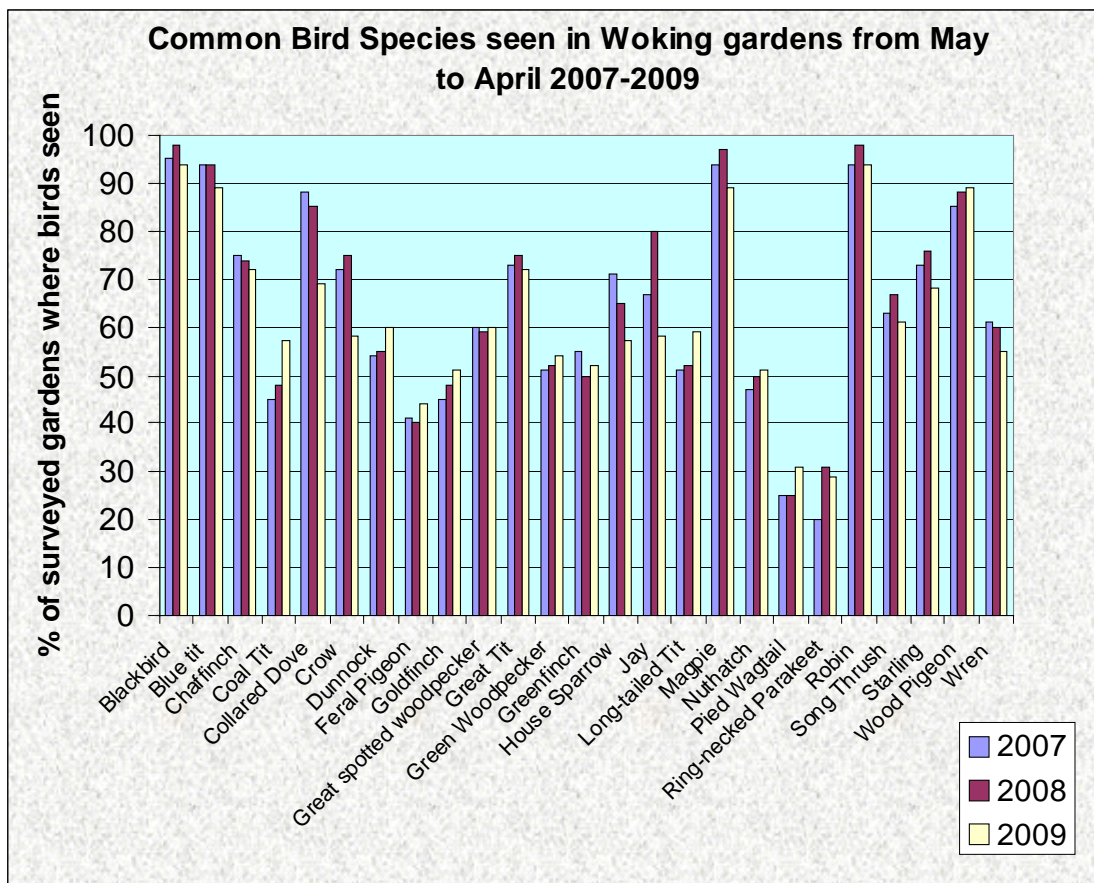


Woking Garden Wildlife Watch - Results 2009

Many thanks to those who took part in our third annual garden wildlife survey this April of which nearly one third participated for the first time. The bird species seen since May the previous year are shown in the figure. Many species have been seen in a similar percentage of Woking gardens surveyed, while others have shown more marked changes within the three years. Thus the house sparrow has declined from 71% of gardens in 2007 to 57% in 2009 which ties in with other reports of declines in urban and suburban areas. The song thrush has on average been reported in about 64% of gardens but this is a marked improvement from 42% we found in our first Woking Garden Profile survey in 1999.



Also in line with national surveys the wood pigeon is now one of the commonest garden visitors and long tailed tits and goldfinches have also increased. The selected animals and insects over the last year were reported in a very similar percentage of gardens to the 2008 survey except for the stag beetle, which dropped further to only 40% of gardens.

In 2009 a number of questions of the original Woking Garden Profile survey in 1999 were repeated to see how our gardens may have changed. The types of homes of the 275 respondents in 2009 were broadly similar to those of the 514 respondents in 1999. It was interesting that the garden composition had remained remarkably similar for most features. However, as can be seen in the Table there was a clear increase shown in the percentage of gardens with areas for vegetables and fruit bushes. This agrees with the national trend to grow your own produce and from the additional question around 30 more people want an allotment or to share garden space.

Percentage of average garden composition				
	1999		2009	
	% with feature	Average % cover	% with feature	Average % cover
		a		
Lawn	90.7	44	90.2	45.5
Flowerbeds	86.2	14	85.8	14.9
Shrubberies	62.3	7	65.1	11.0
Gravel or paving	85.0	13	83.6	16.6
Wooden decking	2.3	b	9.8	4.6
Vegetables	32.5	3	40.4	7.5
Fruit bushes	30.4	2	37.5	3.5
Hedges	54.5	4	56.4	7.4
Trees over 5m tall	61.7	5	70.5	7.2
Trees under 5m tall	55.8	3	64.0	5.4
Pond	29.6	1	32.7	2.9
Wild area	41.8	4	41.8	9.6
a - Recorded to nearest whole number				
b - Recorded in category of between 1-20%				

Wooden decking had increased from a low 2.3% to nearly 10% of gardens in 2009. Wild areas and ponds occurred at similar levels and it was encouraging to find that 49% of gardens reported growing wild flowers in 2009, which are more widely available but are illegal to remove from the countryside. There was around 8% more gardens in 2009 than 1999 with both small and larger trees. Where 2009 respondents knew the history of their large garden trees since 1999, losses were not reported and the average number of trees per garden was slightly greater. However, the survey would not have picked up where very large trees in old gardens may have been removed to build apartment blocks. In 2009 about 6% fewer gardens had fruit trees compared to 1999.

With regard to the popularity of growing specified food plants for wildlife the order was virtually the same and the actual percentage of gardens closely similar in many cases. There was however, a clear increase in the gardens with ivy, hawthorn, lavender and sedum which shows more gardeners encouraging wildlife along with their greater awareness of environmentally friendly gardening practices found in our other surveys compared to 1999.

We hope more Woking residents will take pleasure in observing wildlife throughout the year and join in our future surveys to help monitor species as the climate and habitats alter.