



New Zealand GARDEN BIRD SURVEY



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

Teacher Resource

What is the New Zealand Garden Bird Survey?

The NZ Garden Bird Survey is a simple bird-watching activity that connects children with the outside environment. It teaches children how to recognise different bird species commonly found in their gardens, schools or parks. The survey is New Zealand's longest running citizen science project and involves thousands of children and their families from around the country every year.

The survey is run by Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, a Crown Research Institute.

Want to know more? Visit our website – check out our video too! gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz

Last year



139

Bird species recorded

>335,000

Birds counted

>10,000

Citizen scientists took part

Why is it important?

The New Zealand Garden Bird Survey uses garden birds to tell us about the health of the environment. Manaaki Whenua has seen powerful results over the last 15 years this survey has been running. Data shows trends in populations of numerous species – whether they are increasing or declining around the country, signalling significant changes in our environment.

Getting children involved with the Garden Bird Survey helps them learn about:

- How species respond to environmental changes
- How different species are suited to different habitats
- Grouping birds into science-based classifications
- Changes in species population with certain birds in NZ now extinct

What does Manaaki Whenua do with the results?

Students record numbers of the highest bird count they see at any one time. The scientists at Manaaki Whenua use this information to determine whether a bird species is increasing or declining. Our scientists use this data about changes in bird populations to paint a bigger picture around climate change, predator control or other significant changes in our environment, which can be the result of human or natural causes.

There is a team of scientists at Manaaki Whenua who analyse the results. This includes ecologists, social science researchers and data scientists. The results take a long time to process because there are so many multi-year data points to analyse. This is done using the help of super computing power at NeSI (www.nesi.org.nz).

What we learn from the survey helps determine how we care for our environment. If we can see changes in bird populations – we can take action to protect our environment for future generations.

How can your school take part?

The survey requires participants to take an hour out of their day on any one day between 26 June – 4 July 2021. We recognise it may not be practical to have your students outside counting birds for an hour, so we have developed simple models to make it easier to take part. You can split the time into 10, 20 or 30 minute periods.

Students can work together in small groups and have different roles assigned to them; bird spotter, bird counter, bird identifier and results recorder. While one group is outside counting birds, the rest of your class can do other activities, until the next group takes over, and so on. Do whatever works for your class but remember to only send in one form for each one-hour survey.

More info available at gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz/teachers

How does GBS fit into the NZ curriculum?

The Garden Bird Survey fits into two strands across years 1-13 in the NZ Curriculum: The Nature of Science and The Living World. By turning your students into citizen scientists for the day, they will:

- Learn how scientists carry out investigations
- Make links between scientific knowledge and everyday decisions and actions
- Understand how birds interact with their environment
- Learn how species can evolve, or species populations can change over time due to natural or human impact
- Undertake activities that will broaden their understanding of science: animal classification, population studies, hypothesis testing, data gathering and analysis

Activities to complement the survey

We have a number of resources available on our website to complement the survey within the classroom. From videos looking at how to identify birds and understanding where they like to feed, to colouring and craft activities.

Students can also earn the DoC Kiwi Guardian medal if they complete a survey [www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/toyota-kiwi-guardians/take-action/toa-manu--garden-bird-survey].



Special project for schools – sign up

We are planning a special project for schools to take part in! It will be a platform you can use to monitor birds at any time of the year and run your own class experiments. If you are interested in knowing more about this project, please sign up via our website: gardenbirdsurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz/teachers

QR code



SCAN ME

Join us



@NZGardenBirds