

# Garden Bird Survey takes flight

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The country's cold snap could see record numbers of birds recorded in the annual New Zealand Garden Bird Survey.

The citizen science project, organised by Landcare Research associate Eric Spurr, kicks off tomorrow and runs until Sunday 5 July.

The survey, in its ninth year, aims to monitor population trends of common garden birds by getting people to note the birds they see in their garden in one hour.

Last year, more than 100,000 birds were recorded.

However, mild weather was believed to be responsible for record lows for several species including silvereye, blackbird, song thrush, chaffinch, greenfinch and goldfinch.

Harsh conditions typically force the birds into gardens in search of food.

As a result, Spurr is expecting even more birds recorded this year.

He said the survey was important as it acted as an “early warning system” to detect if any garden bird populations were up or down.

As well as anticipating record bird numbers, Spurr hoped more people would take part in the survey this year. About 3200 gardens were surveyed last year.

“The more people that take part in the survey, the more accurate the information will be.”

He hoped participation would eventually equal the UK version, on which the survey is modelled. About 250,000 gardens are surveyed each year in the UK. The equivalent in New Zealand would be 15,000 gardens, Spurr said.

A Facebook page (NZ Garden Bird Survey) has been set up to allow people to share their stories and photos. Here, people are also asked to rank their favourite NZ Garden Bird Survey logo out of eight proposed designs produced by various organisations.

Full instructions on how to take part in the survey, including an online survey form and bird identification guides, are available on the Landcare Research website.

The NZ Garden Bird Survey is supported by Forest & Bird, Birds NZ, Topflite and Stuff.