



AWF research summary

Garden Bird Health *initiative* - collaborative study co-ordinated by the Institute of Zoology

Research period: 2005-2008

Grant: £19,500

A range of diseases was increasingly taking its toll on garden birds in Britain and AWF supported this collaborative initiative. Its aims were to develop and publish guidelines about how to best feed garden birds to maximize the benefits for their welfare and conservation; and to undertake a major garden bird health surveillance and research project.

The project was coordinated by the Institute of Zoology, with the collaboration of the Scottish Agricultural College, Liverpool University, the Wildlife Veterinary Investigation Centre, the British Trust for Ornithology, the RSPB and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, in collaboration with many other organisations.

Garden birds, particularly finch species and house sparrows, are susceptible to a variety of conditions including infection with *Salmonella* bacteria or the *Trichomonas* parasite. Clinical signs can be very similar for different diseases and post mortem examination is needed to confirm the cause of any garden bird mortality.

The GBHi hotline was launched in late April 2005 and approaching 1,000 volunteers were recruited from the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden BirdWatch scheme to record garden bird mortality incidents observed at feeding stations in gardens across Great Britain.

The results of this study were used as a basis for the development of best practice guidelines for the general public on feeding garden birds and these were published in 2006.