Find a splash of colour to help scientists understand how birds survive in Birmingham's concrete jungle

Posted on Wednesday 18th February 2009

Residents across Birmingham are being asked to help researchers with a major project that aims to understand how some of our best loved garden birds survive in Birmingham's urban jungle.

Working with the City Council, teams from the University of Birmingham's Schools of Geography and Biosciences are ringing twelve common garden bird species including blue tit, great tit and chaffinch. Now they need people across the city to spot the colour-ringed birds. This will give vital data about how far birds travel across the city.

Emma Rosenfeld who is running the project comments: "There has been a lot of work over the years on long distance migration, but we know very little about how birds move around large cities to feed and survive.

By getting people to look for the colour rings, we will be able to get a picture of how far the birds in your garden move to feed and what areas they use most often.

Although the birds were originally ringed in Shire Country Park and Sutton Park individuals could turn up anywhere across the city."

The research is part of the national Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) project, which aims to encourage people to explore, study, enjoy and protect their local environment. It has received a grant from the Big Lottery Fund to help bring communities and scientists closer together. Other studies in Birmingham will look at bees, moths and bats.

If you spot a ringed bird, you can log the sighting through the project website, or by e-mail or by post. The kind of information the team needs includes:

- What species you have seen.
- The colour of ring.
- Where you have seen it, i.e. the name of the road or postcode if it's in a garden, or the name of the place if it's in a park or in a tree somewhere.
- What the bird was doing? Was it eating from a feeder, was it singing? etc.
- As much other detail as possible (e.g. time of day etc).

Dr Jon Sadler adds: "Much of Birmingham doesn't seem very promising habitat for small birds, but they have adapted to survive and flourish. What we really want to know is how much birds move around from green oases like parks into our gardens to feed. This will help us know what areas in a city are important for keeping our garden birds healthy.

But for us to get the best possible picture of how our garden birds behave we really need people to help. So we would encourage everyone to get their binoculars out and get spotting."

The full list of species being studied is:

- Great Tit (Parus major)
- Blue Tit (Cyanistes caeruleus)
- Long Tailed Tit (Aegithalos caudatus)
- Coal Tit (Periparus ater) Willow Tit (Poecile montanus)
- Goldcrest (Regulus regulus)
- Bullfinch (Pyrrhula pyrrhula)
- Chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs) Greenfinch (Carduelis chloris)
- Robin (Erithacus rubecula)
- Blackbird (Turdus merula)
- Dunnock (Prunella modularis)

We need your help to find out where these colour-ringed birds are.

Let us know via the **website (http://www.opalwestmidlands.org/) , (http://www.opalwestmidlands.org/)** by email **team@opalwestmidlands.org (mailto:team@opalwestmidlands.org)** or by post.

Postal Address for records: Emma Rosenfeld, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Science, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT.

For further information contact: Ben Hill, Press Officer, University of Birmingham, Tel 0121 41415134, Mobile 07789 921163, email**b.r.hill@bham.ac.uk (mailto:b.r.hill@bham.ac.uk)**

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Notes to Editors

For more information about the project please check out our website:

OPAL West Midlands **website (http://www.opalwestmidlands.org/)** :

OPAL National **website (http://www.opalexplorenature.org/)** :

Images of bird species with colour rings attached are available on request.

The Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) network is a new nation-wide partnership initiative that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environments. It aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by stimulating interest through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and relevant to anyone who wants to take part

OPAL will provide the skills and materials needed for the first community-led study of the world around us.

The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment. Imperial College London (the leading OPAL partner) was awarded a £11,760,783 Changing Spaces grant in August 2007

The Big Lottery Fund, the largest of the National Lottery good cause distributors, has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since its inception in June 2004. It was established by Parliament on 1 December 2006. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the **website (http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/)** :

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