



## **Call for gardens with parakeets for feeding competition research:**

Project Parakeet at Imperial College London is researching competition for food between the UK's non-native population of parakeets and garden birds.

We are looking for people with bird feeders that are regularly visited by parakeets and who would be willing for us to put up a squirrel proof bird feeder in their garden for a yearlong observational experiment that will begin in November 2011

Garden owners are required to carry out 20 min weekly observations of birds feeding from sunflower seed feeders installed by the project. The main requirement of the experiment is that the garden has regular visits of parakeets to bird feeders.

Here's some information on what is involved:

### **Why are we carrying out this study?**

- The feeding experiment will allow us to investigate how much the parakeets are competing for food (how much they're actually consuming in comparison to the native birds) and how the presence of the parakeets on the feeders affects the diversity and numbers of species using the garden feeders.
- This experiment will complement a previous year long garden experiment that looked at the indirect effect of parakeet presence on feeding behaviour.

### **What will this involve for you?**

- Letting us install a squirrel proof feeder in your garden. We would organise a time and day to do this that is convenient for you (and then again 6months later to install another feeder).
- Keeping the feeders topped up with peanuts and sunflower seeds for a year. We would be able to refund expenses up to £70 for the year for the bird food if you can provide receipts.
- Not using the other bird feeders in your garden for the whole year. You could carry on feeding niger seed for the finches if the feeder was placed well away from the experimental feeders. You could also continue to feed the ground feeding birds.

- Spending 20mins per week observing the numbers and species of bird on the feeders and emailing or posting this information to us on a regular basis (a few weeks of missed observations here and there through the year would not be a problem). This simply involves writing down how many birds you see and what species they are.
- Keeping a record of the amount of food consumed by the birds per week.
- A pack will be provided with information and data sheets for all observations and records.

### **What is involved in the experiment?**

- We will be using a squirrel proof feeder (for sunflower seed) on a stand. After 6 months we will swap it round to a parakeet proof feeder to see what difference it makes to the use of the feeders by the other birds once the parakeets are unable to access the food. For half the gardens the parakeet proof feeders will be used for the 1st 6months and then switched to the normal feeders and the other way round for the other half. This is in order to take the effect of the time of year in to account.
- The data we collect from your garden will then be collated with data from 40 other gardens across London which also have regular parakeet visits. This will be analysed to see how much the parakeets are directly competing for food with the other birds on garden feeders and how this changes the use of the feeders by garden birds.

For information and questions contact Hannah at [parakeet@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:parakeet@imperial.ac.uk)

You can also find out more about the project at [www.projectparakeet.co.uk](http://www.projectparakeet.co.uk)

Kind regards,

Hannah Peck

