

UK garden bird avian pox virus spreading

August 4 2011, by Deborah Braconnier

A team at the Zoological Society of London, led by Dr. Becki Lawson, is tracking an increased spread of an avian pox virus that is rapidly moving through the UK and affecting the great tits. Researchers are asking the public to help them track the spread of this virus.

The virus was first discovered in the UK in 2006 but before then had been confined to [birds](#) in Austria, Czech Republic, Scandinavia and Slovakia. Until this year, the virus had stayed contained to south-east England but is now spreading to the north and west.

Avian pox causes wart-like tumor growths on the birds, predominately around the eyes and beaks. Researchers do not know if the tumors are fatal or not but they do affect the bird's ability to see and eat, leaving them more vulnerable to predators and starvation.

Avian pox can be transmitted via insect bites, direct contact with other birds or indirect contact in places where multiple birds frequent, such as bird feeders, bird baths and garden perches. The researchers explain that the virus can remain in the environment for weeks or months.

They are recommending that homeowners with bird baths and feeders keep them disinfected on a regular basis in order to try and reduce the spread of the [virus](#). They are unable to give medicine to free-range birds and are hoping to find a way to prevent the transmission.

Avian pox has also been noted in birds such as the dunnock, house sparrow, starling and wood pigeon however, it seems to affect these

birds in a much milder form than it does the great tits.

The RSPB has asked that residents report possible sightings of birds displaying symptoms of the avian pox to the RSPB Wildlife Enquiries Unit at 01767 693690.

© 2010 PhysOrg.com

Citation: UK garden bird avian pox virus spreading (2011, August 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-08-uk-garden-bird-avian-pox.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.