



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**8 November 2017**

# **Emerging threats to the health of our garden wildlife investigated**

## **Universities Federation for Animal Welfare awards grant to the Garden Wildlife Health Project**

In 2003, the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) set up a working group (the Garden Bird Health Initiative) to conduct an ongoing surveillance and research programme investigating garden bird diseases, ways to minimise the risk of their occurrence, and to advise on best practice for feeding garden birds.

The project was extremely successful, making it possible to learn a great deal about garden bird diseases and to identify practical measures that may help prevent or control outbreaks. In 2013, the project was expanded into the national Garden Wildlife Health project to include hedgehogs, reptiles and amphibians.

To help take the project to the next level, UFAW has committed a further £15,000 over the next three years. During this time, the project is looking to monitor trends, investigate emerging disease threats to garden wildlife, promote best practice to help safeguard the health of our garden wildlife and spread the word about its findings.

UFAW's Chief Executive Dr Robert Hubrecht said: "Gardens can provide a much needed refuge for wildlife and UFAW is pleased to provide further support to this important project which aims to help conserve our garden wildlife species. In order to do so, it is essential that we understand what is driving their declines. An important example is the marked decline of greenfinches that has occurred due to finch trichomonosis in the UK over the past decade."

Dr Becki Lawson from the Garden Wildlife Health Project at ZSL's Institute of Zoology added: "We are extremely grateful to UFAW for their continued support of this project. Gardens are habitats of increasing importance to wildlife and are often visited by a large number of species. Sometimes they are also the only places where we can catch a glimpse of their lives.

Our goal is to discover and assess the disease threats facing our native populations of wildlife and our work provides the public and policy makers with the information to help prevent population declines due to disease. To achieve this, we appeal to the public to

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Chief Executive and Scientific Director: Robert C Hubrecht OBE BSc PhD FSB

Secretary: Jane Moorman

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report signs of ill health in garden wildlife to us, via our website  
[www.gardenwildlifehealth.org](http://www.gardenwildlifehealth.org)".

Ends

### Further information

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### Note to editors:

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) is an internationally recognised, independent scientific and educational animal welfare charity. It works to improve knowledge and understanding of animals' needs in order to achieve high standards of welfare for farm, companion, research, captive wild animals and those with which we interact in the wild.

This work relies on the support of members, subscribers and donors. [www.ufaw.org.uk](http://www.ufaw.org.uk)

### Garden Wildlife Health

Garden Wildlife Health is a collaborative project between ZSL (Zoological Society of London), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Froglife and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), which aims to safeguard the health of British garden wildlife by conducting research into the causes and trends of diseases in a variety of species (garden birds, amphibians, reptiles and hedgehogs), and investigating their impacts on the affected populations ([www.gardenwildlifehealth.org](http://www.gardenwildlifehealth.org)). In addition to support from the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare, the project receives funding from the UK Department for the Environment Food & Rural Affairs and Welsh Government through the Animal & Plant Health Agency's Diseases of Wildlife Scheme Scanning Surveillance Programme (Project ED1600) and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

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