

GARDEN BIRD SURVEY INTERIM REPORT for OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1998

The total number of participants for 1997/8 was fourteen. This year we have given out twenty-six sets of forms. Fourteen of those were returned in time for us to do a mid-session assessment.

Thirty seven species were recorded compared with forty two for the same period during 1997. Those missing were:- blackcap, treecreeper, house martin, redpoll, fieldfare, marsh/willow tit, heron and siskin. The additional ones were reed bunting, rook and brambling. The numbers are generally down with a few showing a slight increase, but the big 'plus' ones are goldfinch, redwing and tree sparrow. We must bear in mind that the last showed an exceptionally high count in one garden.

The following table gives the total of the highest count of species seen in all gardens within the survey returns. The numbers for last season are shown in brackets. In 1997 the chaffinch was seen in thirteen gardens and the wren in eleven.

Starling 547 (545): House sparrow 268 (280): Blue tit 99 (118): Chaffinch 73: (82): Collared dove 65 (62): Great tit 61 (58): Blackbird 53 (66): Coal tit 28 (27): Robin 20 (22): Wren 19.(16).

NOTES OF INTEREST

A robin was seen feeding from a nut feeder which must be a rarity. Black headed gulls circled several gardens but only landed in two. There was one report of a wren inside a house - no detail as to how it was removed.

In one garden niger seed, which is very small and which only goldfinches eat, increased their numbers from two to twelve within two weeks.

Grey and pied wagtails visited one garden from nearby Wistaston Brook. Another member reported blue tits house hunting during the week ending 12th December with them regularly visiting the nest box.

Sparrow hawks sent birds into a state of panic and thereby emptied the gardens in at least two reports. There was evidence in two cases of them being responsible for the demise of collared doves.

Squirrels and cats continue to be a nuisance. A neighbour's cat brought us a prize - in her eyes - of a wren! It was completely unmarked and we were able to see in detail the beautiful markings. We are glad to report that another wren has now moved into the area and is a regular visitor.

FEEDING STATIONS

Hanging: 1 - 5

Table: 1 - 2

Ground: 1 - 2

Garage roof: 1

FOOD OFFERED

Mixed seed, fruit, bread pieces, bread/cake crumbs, peanuts, black/striped sunflower seeds, food/fat balls and bars, sweet pastry balls, baked potato skins, cheese, suet, apples, niger seeds.

Overleaf is a list of all the birds seen in the gardens from October - December 1998.

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There were thirty seven species recorded:

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>MIN/MAX NUMBERS</u>	<u>No. of GARDENS</u>
Blue tit	1 - 18 -	14
House sparrow	1 - 50 -	"
Blackbird	1 - 14 +	"
Starling	1 - 80 -	"
Robin	1 - 3 =	"
Great tit	1 - 11 -	"
Chaffinch	1 - 16 +	"
Collared dove	1 - 14 +	"
Wren	1 - 3 +	"
Coal tit	1 - 5 -	"
Dunnock	1 - 3 -	13
Magpie	1 - 4 -	"
Greenfinch	1 - 36 -	"
Wood pigeon	1 - 5 =	12
Pied wagtail	1 - 3 -	7
Crow	1 - 3 +	"
Song thrush	1 -	6
Black headed gull	1 - 17 +	"
Goldfinch	1 - 12 +	"
Long tailed tit	1 - 8 -	"
Goldcrest	1 - 2 +	"
Sparrowhawk	1 -	"
Great spotted woodpecker	1 - 2 =	4
Jay	1 - 2 +	"
Nuthatch	1 - 2 =	3
Mistle thrush	1 -	2
Bullfinch	1 - 3 +	"
Tree sparrow	1 - 23 +	"
Grey wagtail	1 - 2 +	"
Brambling	1 - 2	"
Kestrel	1 =	1
Rook	8	"
Redwing	1 - 4 +	"
Jackdaw	1 - 4 +	"
Pheasant	1 =	"
Chiffchaff	2 +	"
Reed bunting	1	"

WEATHER

Winds were mainly from the NW for weeks 1 - 9 and 13, being very strong at times. During week 10 there were frosts every night and again on four nights during week 13. Fog was a problem in week 10. Rain was the main feature with sunny intervals. Most rain fell during weeks 3 to 5 and the total for the month of October was 5.16". The lowest temperature was recorded in week 10 when it was 21°F. At the end of week 7 rain had fallen on thirty seven consecutive days, but after that it became colder and drier with gales during week 13. Our thanks to John Barker for his detailed recording.

Our thanks to everyone who is taking part in the survey - long may you continue to do so!

Ren and Doreen Jones.

GARDEN BIRD SURVEY REPORT for OCTOBER 1998 to MARCH 1999

Out of 26 sets of forms distributed 19 sets were returned completed. During 1997/8 the number of species recorded for the whole session was 46. This year, 1998/9, there were 42 recorded. Species seen in 1997/8, but not in 1998/9 were:- house martin, redpoll, fieldfare, marsh/willow tit, heron and yellowhammer. Species seen in 1998/9 but not in 1997/8 were:- rook and feral pigeon.

We have shown the species recorded, the number of gardens visited and the lowest and highest counts with the differences in numbers from 1997/8 shown as +, - or =.

SPECIES	MIN	MAX		GARDENS
Blue tit	3	20	- 2	19
House sparrow	2	55	+15	"
Blackbird	2	14	+ 6	"
Starling	1	(80)	-30	"
Robin	1	3	=	"
Great tit	1	11	- 4	"
Chaffinch	2	28	+ 8	"
Coal tit	1	5	+ 1	18
Dunnock	1	4	=	"
Collared dove	2	14	+ 5	"
Magpie	1	4	- 2	"
Greenfinch	1	36	+ 1	"
Wood pigeon	1	11	+ 5	"
Wren	1	3	+ 1	17
Crow	1	4	+ 1	14
Song thrush	1	3	+ 1	"
Goldfinch	1	24	+ 5	"
Siskin	1	9	=	11
Sparrowhawk	1	2	=	"
Pied wagtail	1	2	- 2	10
Goldcrest	1	2	+ 1	"
Long tailed tit	1	21	- 4	9
Mistle thrush	1	2	-10	7
Blackheaded gull	1	20	+11	"
Jay	1	2	+ 1	"
Gt. spotted woodpecker	1	2	=	6
Nuthatch	1	2	=	5
Reed bunting	1	5	+ 2	4
Bullfinch	1	3	+ 1	"
Treesparrow	1	33	+24	3
Redwing	3	12	+ 9	"
Jackdaw	2	8	+ 2	"
Brambling		2	+ 1	2
Pheasant		1	=	"
Blackcap		1	- 2	"
Treecreeper		1	- 1	"
Grey wagtail		2	+ 1	1
Kestrel		1	=	"
Rook		1		"
Chiffchaff		2	+ 1	"
Lesser black backed gull		2	+ 1	"
Feral pigeon		1		"

OCTOBER 1998 + MARCH 1999 seen in all 19 gardens:-

Starling 710: House sparrow 371: Chaffinch 140: Blue tit 130: Blackbird 100:
Great tit 83: Robin 40.

WEATHER REPORT. Temperatures in Fahrenheit. (Week 14 to Week 26).

Wk. 14. 2.1.99 Rain on two days, 0.19" on 2nd. Jan. Winds S and strong at start of week. Fell to freezing 27th & 28th Dec. Maximum 48° on 29th & 30th December.

15. 9.1. Rain on six days - 0.33" Sunday, 0.59" Wed. Min. 23° Max. 54°.

16. 16.1. Frost on four days. Rain on five days, total 1.05". Strong SW winds. Maximum 49°.

17. 23.1. Frost and rain on five days. Winds SW. Min. 28° Max. 51°.

18. 30.1. Rain every day, total 1.26" with $\frac{1}{2}$ " on Thurs. Two frosts. Min. 30°. Winds SW to NW. Mainly cloudy, very little sun.

19. 6.2. Strong NW winds. Rain on two days, very little sun. Min. 29° Max. 55°.

20. 13.2. Very variable, sunny spells. Wind NW. Frost on four days. Cold spell with maximum only 43°. Skittering of snow on Sunday night.

21. 20.2. Wind still NW. Wet & windy. Rain on six days. Min. 34° Max. 52°.

22. 27.2. Two frosts, wind from NW to SW. Rain on six days. Maximum 50°.

23. 6.3. Rain every day, total 1.5". Winds SW to N. Frost one day 31°. Maximum 53°. Mostly dull and cloudy.

24. 13.3. Rain on six days and cooler. Winds N to S-SW mid-week. Two frosts. Min. 30° Max. 57°. Very little sun overall.

25. 20.3. Drier. Winds SW to NW. Warm spell from 14 - 18. Min 36° Max. 61°.

26. 27.3. Rain every day. Total 0.86". Wind NW. Little sun. Min. 35° Max. 59°.

RAINFALL: JANUARY 4.06" - 1.72" above average.
FEBRUARY 1.85" = average.
MARCH 1.05" above average by 27th March.

FEEDING STATIONS: Hanging 1 - 8: Table 1 - 2: Ground 1 - 2: Garage roof 1.

Food offered: Peanuts, sunflower seeds, niger seed, mixed seed, sunflower hearts, fat balls/bars, chopped beef, chicken skin, sliced apple, wholemeal bread, cheese, cake and scone crumbs, uncooked pastry balls and baked potato skins.

NOTES OF INTEREST

Several people reported robins, goldcrests, goldfinches and siskins feeding on peanuts. Two members commented on the increase in house sparrows and one had a visit from a pheasant which fed from the bird table. Squirrels and cats continue to be a nuisance, It was noted that berries remained longer on shrubs due to the mild winter, although redwings finished off holly berries during week 16 in one garden. Long tailed tits and reed buntings were especially welcome in one garden where the former had only been recorded once before and the latter was their highest count.

Our thanks again to all those people who have taken part and especially to John Barker for his detailed weather reports. May we stress the importance of filling in the B forms - they are the meat in the sandwich and make interesting reading. Unfortunately there were several missing this year so the interest notes are a little thin.