



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2004 TO MARCH 2005

The Survey Recorders

The number of participants in our latest survey increased yet again, from forty in the last survey to forty-four in this. One of the previous year's recorders relocated into central Europe and is no longer able to record, but happily five new contributors joined. Six contributors are not SECOS members, one more than last year, so the SECOS membership continues to provide the predominant source of input. Again, it is most encouraging and a big thank-you is extended to all contributors new and old. I hope that the sustained high level of SECOS membership will result in the survey attracting fifty contributors eventually. *Table 1* below lists the recorders for this survey together with their registration number.

Table 1

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8501	Hilary Clowes	0024	Derek Owen
8502	Bryan Perkins	0025	Alan & Linda Battersby
9703	John & Wendy Smith	0026	Charles Hull
9704	Janet Grice	0227	Andrew & Doreen Bailey
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	0128	Gordon Fleet
0406	Glyn Jones	0229	Paddy Bennion
0107	Christine Howarth	0430	John Goulding
0208	Stan Wildig	8731	John P. Barker
0409	Marie Turner	0432	Avril Watkins
0110	Christopher Price	0333	Alan Robson
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	0334	Bill Bellamy
8712	Joan Tilbrook	9635	Ron & Doreen Jones
9813	John Thompson	9636	Geoff Yarwood
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0237	Derek Leigh
0115	Megan McKelvey	0238	Tony Coomer
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0239	Paula Birchall
9817	Lorna Pickstock	0240	Cynthia Cadman
8518	Ann Pym	0341	Howard Nixon
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0342	Brian Sankey
9820	Bill & Betty Brookes	0343	John Fuller
9921	Barbara Hubbard	0444	Carole Barclay
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0347	Sylvia Jarvis

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-three different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. This list has had no additions since last year.

Table 2

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
1	Black-headed Gull	5	Brambling
2	Blackbird	6	Bullfinch
3	Blackcap	7	Buzzard
4	Blue Tit	8	Chaffinch

Table 2 (continued)

No.	Name	No.	Name
9	Chiffchaff	42	Meadow Pipit
10	Coal Tit	43	Merlin
11	Collared Dove	44	Mistle Thrush
12	Common Gull	45	Moorhen
13	Corn Bunting	46	Mute Swan
14	Crow	47	Nuthatch
15	Duncock	48	Pheasant
16	Feral Pigeon	49	Pied Wagtail
17	Fieldfare	50	Red-headed Bunting
18	Goldcrest	51	Red-legged Partridge
19	Goldfinch	52	Redpoll (Lesser)
20	Great Spotted Woodpecker	53	Redwing
21	Great Tit	54	Reed Bunting
22	Green Woodpecker	55	Robin
23	Greenfinch	56	Rook
24	Grey Heron	57	Siskin
25	Grey Wagtail	58	Skylark
26	Herring Gull	59	Snipe
27	House Martin	60	Song Thrush
28	House Sparrow	61	Sparrowhawk
29	Jackdaw	62	Starling
30	Jay	63	Stock Dove
31	Kestrel	64	Swallow
32	Kingfisher	65	Tawny Owl
33	Lapwing	66	Tree Sparrow
34	Lesser Black-backed Gull	67	Treecreeper
35	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	68	Water Rail
36	Linnet	69	Willow Warbler
37	Little Owl	70	Woodcock
38	Long-tailed Tit	71	Wood Pigeon
39	Magpie	72	Wren
40	Mallard	73	Yellowhammer
41	Marsh/ Willow Tit		

The Current Survey

Forty-four participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1144 bird/week records (44x26 =1144). Due to people being not available to record at various times, for reasons like holidays and sickness, the actual number of bird/week records produced was reduced to a highly commendable 1057.

The “Listed Species”

In *Table 3* below the species entered on the “listed species” section of the input forms “A1” & “A2” are listed in descending order of number of bird/week record occurrences, as a measure of their commonality within this survey.

Also shown in the table is the highest single count recorded for each species and the registration number of the member(s) who made the highest recording.

Table 3 – ‘Ranking of Listed Species’

Rank No.	Species	Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 1057)	Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 44)	Highest Single Count	
				Count	Reg. No.
1[2]	Blue Tit	984	44	18	0110
2[3]	Robin	969	44	4	#1
3[1]	Blackbird	968	44	11	0208
4[6]	House Sparrow	885	43	38	9923
5[4]	Collared Dove	843	43	24	0342
6[7]	Dunnock	805	43	5	9923
7[5]	Great Tit	802	43	25	0110
8[10]	Wood Pigeon	771	44	13	0237
9[8]	Starling	742	41	150	0026
10[11]	Greenfinch	683	40	40	8505
11[9]	Chaffinch	672	42	22	8518
12[13]	Magpie	575	41	10	9820
13[14]	Wren	570	44	2	#2
14[15]	Goldfinch	447	29	34	8502
15[12]	Coal Tit	425	37	6	0237
16[19]	Long-tailed Tit	371	37	14	0208 & 0025
17[16]	Song Thrush	259	36	3	9923 & 0444
18[17]	Jackdaw	226	19	30	0026
19[18]	Crow	215	28	6	0239
20[20]	Nuthatch	118	11	4	0119
21[22]	Pied Wagtail	70	13	2	#3
22[21]	Siskin	10	6	2	0238

[] Denotes the corresponding ranking in the previous survey for comparison.

(See *Table 1* for correlation of registration No. to members’ names.)

#1(Robin) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0208, 9921, 0025, 0026, 0444, 0347.

#2(Wren) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 9704, 0107, 0208, 0110, 0015, 0026, 0229, 0430, 0432, 0333, 9636, 0237, 0238, 0239, 0342.

#3 (Pied Wagtail) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0208, 8511, 0334, 9636.

Once more there was very little change in order of commonality in this survey, save for the usual minor adjustments in relative position, which is a normal occurrence.

Siskin records were dramatically reduced from those of the last survey (2003/04) with only 10 records against 104 for the previous year and the highest recorded count down from 15 to 2 with records from only 6 gardens compared to 20. This trend was established and noted in the previous report for 2003/04, when the highest siskin count of fifteen was reduced from the fifty-three in the 2002/03 survey when 135 records were made and 25 gardens were visited. Hopefully this may be attributed to milder winters making southern movements to warmer conditions unnecessary, rather than a declining population.

On the positive side long-tailed tits continue to be more frequent garden visitors with twice as many records when compared to the last survey.

No fewer than twenty-seven contributors from the total of forty-four recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. Two members recorded the highest count for four species and two members for two species.

The “Other Species”

In *Table 4* below the species entered on the “Other Species” section of the input forms “A1” & “A2” are listed in descending order of number of bird/week record occurrences, as a measure of their commonality within this survey. A further twenty-eight species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-two} from the seventy-three in the “all-time” list (*Table 2*). Any species recorded in the last survey, but not recorded in this survey, is included for reference.

Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 420)</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 44)</u>
1[2]	Sparrowhawk	140 [133]	27 [28]
2[1]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	111 [136]	10 [17]
3[5]	Mistle Thrush	87 [57]	14 [13]
4[4]	Pheasant	78 [61]	8 [4]
5[17]	Redwing	61 [11]	15 [5]
6[3]	Jay	47 [92]	6 [15]
6[6]	Tree Sparrow	47 [54]	5 [4]
8[7]	Bullfinch	38 [48]	12 [9]
9[19]	Fieldfare	37 [10]	11 [5]
9[17]	Goldcrest	37 [11]	12 [8]
11[10]	Black Headed Gull	35 [29]	8 [7]
12[12]	Treecreeper	32 [24]	7 [8]
13[8]	Blackcap	29 [35]	10 [11]
13[11]	Rook	29 [35]	4 [6]
15	Feral Pigeon	18 [0]	3 [0]
15	Tawny Owl	18 [0]	3 [0]
17[14]	Stock Dove	13 [13]	4 [3]
18[24]	Chiffchaff	12 [7]	3 [5]
18[9]	Grey Wagtail	12 [33]	4 [9]
20[28]	Moorhen	10 [3]	1 [1]
21[13]	Grey Heron	9 [16]	2 [5]
21[19]	Kestrel	9 [10]	4 [3]
23[14]	Marsh/Willow Tit	7 [13]	3 [2]
24[24]	Mallard	6 [7]	1 [2]
25[23]	Brambling	1 [9]	1 [4]
25	Common Gull	1 [0]	1 [0]
25[13]	Lesser Redpoll	1 [23]	1 [5]
25	Red-legged Partridge	1 [0]	1 [0]
25[19]	Reed Bunting	1 [10]	1 [5]
[29]	Buzzard	0 [2]	0 [2]
[30]	Herring Gull	0 [1]	0 [1]
[27]	Little Owl	0 [4]	0 [1]
[26]	Merlin	0 [6]	0 [1]
[30]	Yellow Hammer	0 [1]	0 [1]

[] Denotes corresponding figures to the previous {2003/04} survey for comparison.

The “Other Species”(continued)

Tawny owls, feral pigeons, common gull and red-legged partridge were not recorded in the previous survey. Tawny owls actually visited the gardens of members No.8518, 0025, & 0026.

Marsh/willow tits, though reduced in occurrences in the database, made an appearance in three gardens rather than the two of last time. {Members No. 0015, 8518, & 0026.}

Sparrowhawks continue to have a presence in over half of the gardens in the survey and for this survey were the most common bird species in the “Other Species” list. There is probably a case for moving their entry into the “Listed Species” section to save recorders a bit of handwriting.

Mistle thrushes show a fifty per-cent increase in records, but the number of gardens visited was only incremented by one.

Redwings and fieldfares displayed a good recovery following a decline in garden visits last time. Goldcrest records also greatly increased compared to 2003/04.

Lesser redpoll registered one solitary record, whereas there were 23 records from 5 gardens in the previous survey. (Apologies for my ignorance in recording redpoll and lesser redpoll as separate species in the last survey; hopefully I’m learning. The figures just quoted have been corrected by amalgamation.)

Similarly brambling records, though never bountiful, were also restricted to one record against nine from four gardens last year.

Last survey’s records of buzzard, herring gull, little owl, merlin, and yellowhammer were not perpetuated in this survey.

News from the Comments Column (Section “A2” &”B2” of the input forms)

Several members recorded common bird nest building commencing in mid February. Species other than common tits observed feeding from hanging feeders include blackcap, bullfinch, chaffinch, collared dove, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, jackdaw, robin, siskin, starling, tree sparrow, willow tit and wren.

Many comments were made of sparrowhawks devouring prey, which included blackbird, sparrow, starling and long-tailed fieldmouse. Member registration No. 0110 lamented seeing the beautiful birds, which he had fed and watered throughout the year, falling prey, with a sad demise comment being recorded for most weeks of the survey. Member No. 0334 records seeing a starling being demolished on the roof of his car!

As in the last survey there are many references to soaring buzzards with their evocative calling from on high; surely one of the most delightful recent changes of sunny days in Cheshire. Though quite correctly they are not included in the survey count recordings since they did not actually visit a garden or show evident interest.

A few comments related to the slow uptake of goldfinch feeding on Niger seed. In our case patience was rewarded when after several weeks of no success, eventually we had consistent daily visits. Sunflower hearts seemed equally acceptable once the presence was established.

A further comment related to blackcaps feeding on garden flowers and mahonia berries.

Weather Conditions

Table 5 provides a brief overview of weather conditions for the twenty-six week period, which as usual is provided courtesy of John Barker's detailed records.

Table 5 – Weather Summary

<u>Week No.</u>	<u>Number of Days</u>			<u>Inches of Rain</u>	<u>Temp. °F</u>		<u>Wind</u>		<u>One Word Notes</u>
	<u>Sunny</u>	<u>Snowy Sleety</u>	<u>Wet cloudy</u>		<u>Max</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Strength</u>	
1	7	0	6	0.78	62	39	SW-NE	Blustery	
2	7	0	5	0.92	57	40	NE/NW	Light	
3	7	0	7	1.64	55	39	VARIABLE		
4	7	0	6	0.54	60	37	SE	Strong	
5	0	0	4	0.54	54	41	NE-NW	Light	
6	1	0	5	0.43	52	29	NW	Light	Frosty
7	1	0	4	1.04	53	27	NW	Light	Frosty
8	0	0	5	0.42	53	38	NW-SW	Light	
9	1	0	4	0.25	49	29	NE-NW	Light	Frosty
10	5	0	2	0.04	49	34	W-SW-E	Light	Sunny
11	0	0	4	0.69	48	31	SW-NW	Moderate	Cloudy
12	1	1	5	0.84	50	25	NW	Light	
13	1	0	6	0.70	51	22	NW	Blustery	Frosty
14	7	0	6	0.27	51	34	NW-SW	Strong	Sunny
15	3	0	5	0.14	52	33	SW-NW	Blustery	Cloudy
16	1	1	6	0.81	52	26	N-NW	Strong	Thunder
17	2	0	2	0.02	45	26	N-NW	Moderate	Cloudy
18	0	0	4	0.17	48	36	NW-SW	Moderate	Cloudy
19	1	0	5	1.06	51	33	SE-SW	Light	Cloudy
20	3	0	3	0.20	46	24	NW	Strong	Frosty
21	3	3	4	0.21	41	22	NE	Light	Frosty
22	0	1	6	0.33	45	26	N-NE	Light	Frosty
23	6	0	1	0.06	48	26	N-NW	Light	Frosty
24	2	0	1	0.04	66	29	NW-SW	Light	Frosty
25	0	0	5	0.45	64	43	S	Light	Cloudy
26	1	0	4	1.05	64	37	NE-SE	Light	Mixed

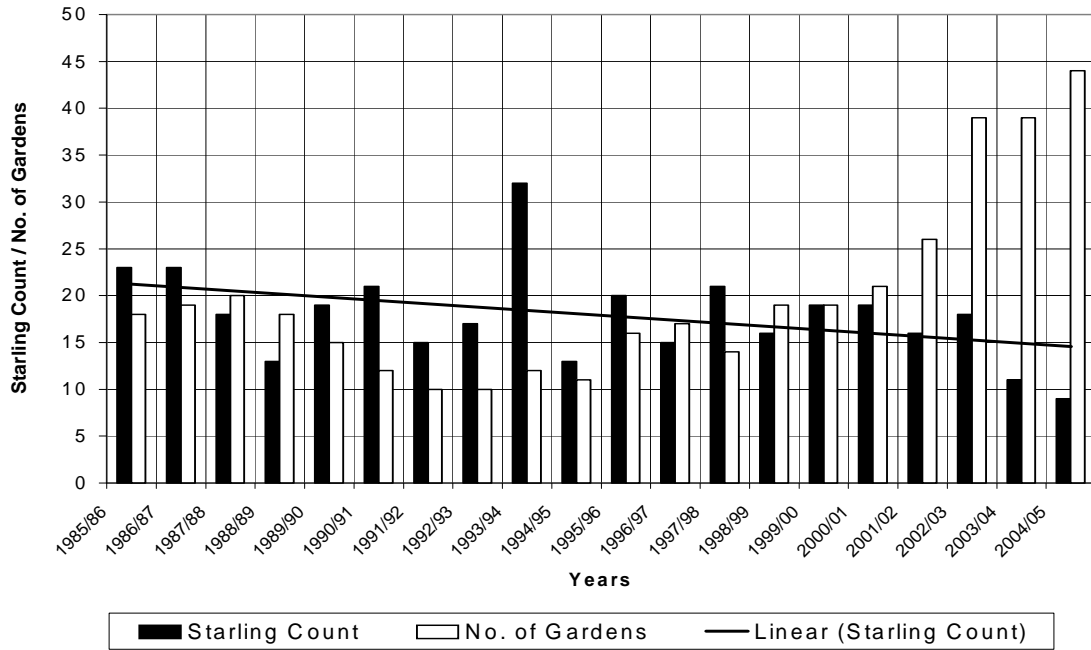
House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives

The two bar charts used in previous reports have been updated to include the latest data for this report and are presented on the next page. The charts show that both house sparrows and starlings populations continue to decline as evidenced by the trendlines for both species.

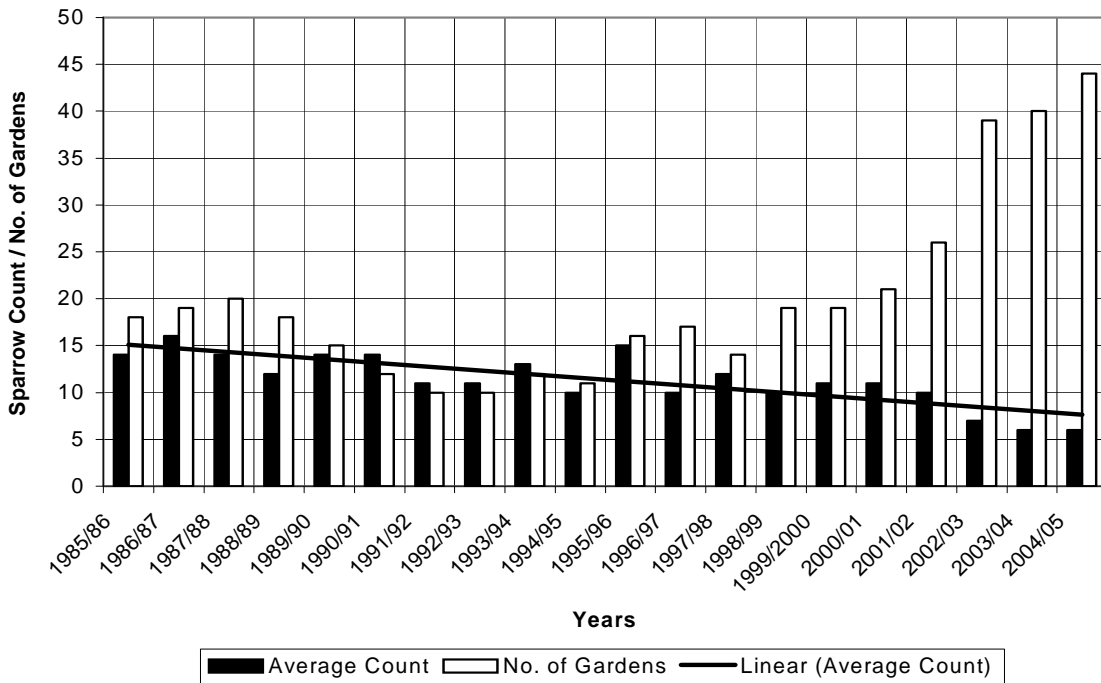
As usual our survey in isolation does not provide hard scientific evidence due to the survey being comparatively small (though getting bigger) and the variation in data source from year to year. However it does tend to reinforce the concerns expressed in other places.

The data is contained in two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, each with in excess of twenty pages and can be made available to any member who would like to explore the issue further.

1985 to 2005 Average Annual Starling Count



1985 to 2005 Average Annual House Sparrow Count



The Next Survey

As usual forms for the 2005/06 Winter Garden Bird Survey will be included with the pre-season newsletter for all present members of the survey team (except to those who receive e-mail attachment versions who should already be in receipt) in my anticipation and hope of your continued support. If anyone does not wish to continue, I would be grateful to be informed so that I know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms to allow analysis to commence.

I suspect that for the current survey one or two members of the survey team did not appreciate that following a request, the input forms for recording had been changed to be 'week commencing' rather than 'week ending' as was previously the case. Please note that this is now the case.

Again, forms for new recruits to the next survey will be available at the first club meeting in September. As previously mentioned, I would very much like to see the active membership rise to hit fifty, so please encourage other members to join up and emphasise the process is simple and undemanding.

If any further members are willing to receive the forms, guidelines and reports as e-mail attachments for the next Garden Bird Survey, please let me have your e-mail address. Where I have e-mail addresses I assume willingness for this form of transaction (it's quicker, more legible, greener, cheaper-saves photocopying costs to the club). My e-mail address is
for contact and returning your completed forms.

Finally I make the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2004/05 survey data than is contained in this report. I can make all of the data available to them as a copy of the database in Microsoft Access 97 format, either as an e-mail attachment, on a 3.5" floppy disk or CD-ROM.

The early production of this report was greatly facilitated by the prompt return of the survey forms.

Again, many thanks to all contributors.

Trevor Clowes.

14th May 2005