



## SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2005 TO MARCH 2006

### The Survey Recorders

The number of participants in the survey has just reached the magic fifty as I hoped it might in the last report. The last survey had forty-four contributors and this time eight new recorders joined with two contributors not responding and presumed to have dropped out. Nine contributors are not SECOS members, three more than last year. Again, it is most encouraging and a big thank-you is extended to all contributors new and old.

*Table 1* below lists the recorders for this survey together with their registration number. Please note your number for the next survey.

**Table 1**

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8501	Hilary Clowes	0227	Andrew & Doreen Bailey
8502	Bryan Perkins	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
9703	John & Wendy Smith	0229	Paddy Bennion
9704	Janet Grice	0430	John Goulding
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	8731	John P. Barker
0406	Glyn Jones	0432	Avril Watkins
0107	Christine Howarth	0333	Alan Robson
0208	Stan Wildig	0334	Bill Bellamy
0409	Marie Turner	9635	Ron & Doreen Jones
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	9636	Geoff Yarwood
8712	Joan Tilbrook	0237	Derek Leigh
9813	John Thompson	0238	Tony Coomer
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0240	Cynthia Cadman
0115	Megan McKelvey	0341	Howard Nixon
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0342	Brian Sankey
9817	Lorna Pickstock	0343	John Fuller
8518	Ann Pym	0444	Carole Barclay
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0546	Peter & Sally Hough
9820	Bill & Betty Brookes	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
9921	Barbara Hubbard	0548	Anne & Chris Furness
0522	David Braithwaite	0549	Andy Newall
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0551	Jane Freer
0024	Derek Owen	0552	Lillian Shufflebottom
0025	Alan & Linda Battersby	0555	Joe Avery
0026	Charles Hull	0556	Bill & Jan Fox

### The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-four different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. There has been one addition since last year, the raven, recorded in two gardens, one in Audlem and one in Winterley.

**Table 2**

<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>
1	Black-headed Gull	4	Blue Tit
2	Blackbird	5	Brambling
3	Blackcap	6	Bullfinch

**Table 2 (continued)**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>
7	Buzzard	41	Marsh/ Willow Tit
8	Chaffinch	42	Meadow Pipit
9	Chiffchaff	43	Merlin
10	Coal Tit	44	Mistle Thrush
11	Collared Dove	45	Moorhen
12	Common Gull	46	Mute Swan
13	Corn Bunting	47	Nuthatch
14	Crow	48	Pheasant
15	Duncock	49	Pied Wagtail
16	Feral Pigeon	50	Raven
17	Fieldfare	51	Red-headed Bunting
18	Goldcrest	52	Red-legged Partridge
19	Goldfinch	53	Redpoll (Lesser)
20	Great Spotted Woodpecker	54	Redwing
21	Great Tit	55	Reed Bunting
22	Green Woodpecker	56	Robin
23	Greenfinch	57	Rook
24	Grey Heron	58	Siskin
25	Grey Wagtail	59	Skylark
26	Herring Gull	60	Snipe
27	House Martin	61	Song Thrush
28	House Sparrow	62	Sparrowhawk
29	Jackdaw	63	Starling
30	Jay	64	Stock Dove
31	Kestrel	65	Swallow
32	Kingfisher	66	Tawny Owl
33	Lapwing	67	Tree Sparrow
34	Lesser Black-backed Gull	68	Treecreeper
35	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	69	Water Rail
36	Linnet	70	Willow Warbler
37	Little Owl	71	Woodcock
38	Long-tailed Tit	72	Wood Pigeon
39	Magpie	73	Wren
40	Mallard	74	Yellowhammer

**The Current Survey**

Fifty participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1300 bird/week records (50x26 =1300). 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 by 58 to 1242.

**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 number of gardens visited, the highest single count recorded for each species and the registration number of the member(s) who made the highest count.

**Table 3 – ‘Ranking of Listed Species’**

<b>Rank No.</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 1242)</b>	<b>Gardens Visited (Number of Out of 50)</b>	<b>Highest Single Count</b>	
				<b>Count</b>	<b>Reg. No.</b>
1[3]	Blackbird	1191	50	17	0025
2[1]	Blue Tit	1119	50	16	8518
3[2]	Robin	1114	50	5	0025
4[8]	Wood Pigeon	1008	50	20	0238
5[4]	House Sparrow	995	49	40	9923
6[6]	Dunnock	986	49	8	9636
7[5]	Collared Dove	922	50	12	8502
8[7]	Great Tit	905	47	15	8518
9[9]	Starling	812	49	130	0024
10[11]	Chaffinch	792	48	27	8518
11[10]	Greenfinch	766	46	16	8502
12[15]	Coal Tit	650	47	12	0555
13[13]	Wren	623	48	2	#1
14[12]	Magpie	615	45	12	0548
15[14]	Goldfinch	597	39	40	0238
16[20]	Nuthatch	321	25	4	0555
17[19]	Crow	289	35	5	8501 & 0237
18[17]	Song Thrush	276	31	3	#2
19[16]	Long-tailed Tit	274	41	15	9636
20[18]	Jackdaw	229	20	30	0026
21[22]	Siskin	192	27	30	0430
22[21]	Pied Wagtail	140	27	2	#3

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

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

#1(Wren) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 8501, 0208, 8511, 9813, 9814, 0015, 9820, 0522, 0026, 0227, 8731, 0432, 0233, 0342, 0347, 0552, 0555.

#2 (Song Thrush) ) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 9814, 0015, 0347, 0555.

#3 (Pied Wagtail) - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0409, 9814, 0015, 0026, 0334, 0342, 0552.

Five species, blackbird, blue tit, collared dove, robin and wood pigeon had a presence in every garden of the survey.

Wood pigeon records were more numerous proportionately than in the last survey and they leapt from eighth place to fourth in the table. The highest individual count was also up from 13 to 20.

Otherwise the top ten most common birds occupied similar positions as previously.

Coal tits and nuthatches were far more frequent garden visitors than in the last survey.

Siskins records recovered with 192 records from 27 gardens with a highest count of 30. In the last survey (2004/05) only 10 records were made from 6 gardens, with a highest count of 2. The declining trend had been evident since the 2002/03 survey when 135 records were made and 25 gardens were visited. There appears to have been a happy reversal this time.

Long-tailed tits continue to have a presence in most gardens but their visits were fewer than in the last survey.

No less than twenty-nine contributors from the total of fifty recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. One member recorded the highest count for four species and four members for three 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 thirty-four species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-six species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty} from the seventy-four 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’***

<b><u>Rank No.</u></b>	<b><u>Species</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 566)</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 50)</u></b>
1 [2]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	168 [111]	19 [10]
2 [1]	Sparrowhawk	141 [140]	29 [27]
3 [4]	Pheasant	117 [78]	8 [8]
4 [13]	Blackcap	105 [29]	18 [10]
5 [3]	Mistle Thrush	95 [87]	15 [14]
6 [6]	Jay	88 [47]	8 [6]
7 [9]	Goldcrest	76 [37]	23 [12]
8 [8]	Bullfinch	72 [38]	14 [12]
8 [6]	Tree Sparrow	72 [47]	4 [5]
10 [24]	Mallard	47 [6]	5 [1]
11 [11]	Black Headed Gull	37 [35]	7 [8]
12 [13]	Rook	33 [29]	4 [4]
13 [9]	Fieldfare	30 [37]	9 [11]
13 [5]	Redwing	30 [61]	4 [15]
15 [12]	Treecreeper	27 [32]	4 [7]
16 [15]	Feral Pigeon	25 [18]	1 [3]
17 [21]	Grey Heron	22 [9]	6 [2]
17 [18]	Grey Wagtail	22 [12]	7 [4]
19 [23]	Marsh/Willow Tit	18 [7]	1 [3]
20 [21]	Kestrel	17 [9]	5 [4]
21 [25]	Lesser Redpoll	14 [1]	3 [1]
22 [15]	Tawny Owl	14 [18]	4 [3]
23 [20]	Moorhen	8 [10]	2 [1]
23 [17]	Stock Dove	8 [13]	2 [4]
25 [25]	Brambling	7 [1]	5 [1]
25 [25]	Reed Bunting	7 [1]	3 [1]
27	Yellow Hammer	5 [0]	2 [0]
28	Little Owl	3 [0]	1 [0]
29	Raven	2 [0]	2 [0]
30	Buzzard	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [18]	Chiffchaff	1 [12]	1 [3]
30	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1 [0]	1 [0]
30	Meadow Pipit	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [25]	Red-legged Partridge	1 [1]	1 [1]
[25]	Common Gull	0 [1]	0 [1]

[ ] Denotes corresponding figures to the previous {2004/05} survey for comparison.

### **The “Other Species”(continued)**

Buzzard, lesser-spotted woodpecker, little owl, meadow pipit and yellow hammer were not recorded in the previous survey and as previously mentioned the raven has not been recorded in any of our previous surveys.

Blackcap numbers erupted with 105 records from 18 gardens with a maximum single count of 6. Their presence was constant from week 6 onward throughout the recording period. The last survey had only 29 records from 10 gardens.

Great-spotted woodpecker records recovered to previous levels following a comparative decline in the last survey and they regained the position of most common of the “other species” records. Goldcrest records doubled, as did the number of gardens having positive sightings.

Bullfinch records increased similarly, though only from roughly the same number of gardens as last time.

Mallard records increased eight fold from five locations rather than one.

Fieldfare and redwings were less common garden visitors than previously, which is surprising as they appeared to be present in good numbers on fields and meadows locally.

Grey wagtail records doubled in terms of records and gardens visited.

Lesser redpolls brightened the winter watching in three gardens with fourteen records occurring from week 9 through to the end of the survey period.

Five gardens were fortunate to have a brambling visit compared to only one last time.

Sparrowhawks continue to have a presence in over half of the gardens in the survey and for this survey were the second most common bird species in the “Other Species” list.

Mistle thrushes maintained the recovery witnessed in the last survey.

The one record of a common gull in the last survey was not perpetuated this time, proving they are misnamed.

### **News from the Comments Column (Section “B1” &”B2” of the input forms)**

There were many strong feelings expressed relating to garden cat intrusion. The most extreme came from member 0333 who has the misfortune of his three nearest neighbours hosting no less than ten cats between them. Measures taken to restrict ground feeding upon scattered seed from feeders had limited success. Bad weather had the most beneficial effect when the pussies sought the comfort of a fireside, Extreme measures now being considered include not attracting birds to the dangers of his garden or the purchase of a gun and risking a holiday in jail! Be sure to read next year’s episode.

Member 0208 recorded a wren collecting grasses and taking them into a roost pouch at the beginning of December; presumably nest building.

Member 0115 has recognised the benefits of adjacent farmland being allowed to slip from agricultural use into set-aside conditions. Starlings, fieldfares and redwings were all present in far greater numbers and many raptors are now present.

Starling roosts are mentioned by several contributors and member 8712 reported a roost of 75 birds, continuing a transient occurrence witnessed over recent years.

Member 9635 played host to a pheasant which layed six eggs in a nest beneath the hall window.

Soaring buzzards received many mentions, but member 9923 observed an unsuccessful attempt by a buzzard to take a rabbit from his lawn, matching his failed attempt with a telescopic sight.

Member 0229 watched 12 woodpigeons strip all of the berries from her holly bush.

Several members noted species making their first recorded visits to their gardens. Species included great-spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and blackcap.

There were the usual comments of sparrowhawks devouring prey, which included blue tit, collared dove, wood pigeon, starling and a near miss for a nuthatch. Member 0548 observed a woodpigeon taken in flight and the impetus resulted in the pair crashing into his bedroom window, which killed the pigeon. The sparrowhawk then proceeded to eat the pigeon five yards from the house.

## **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**

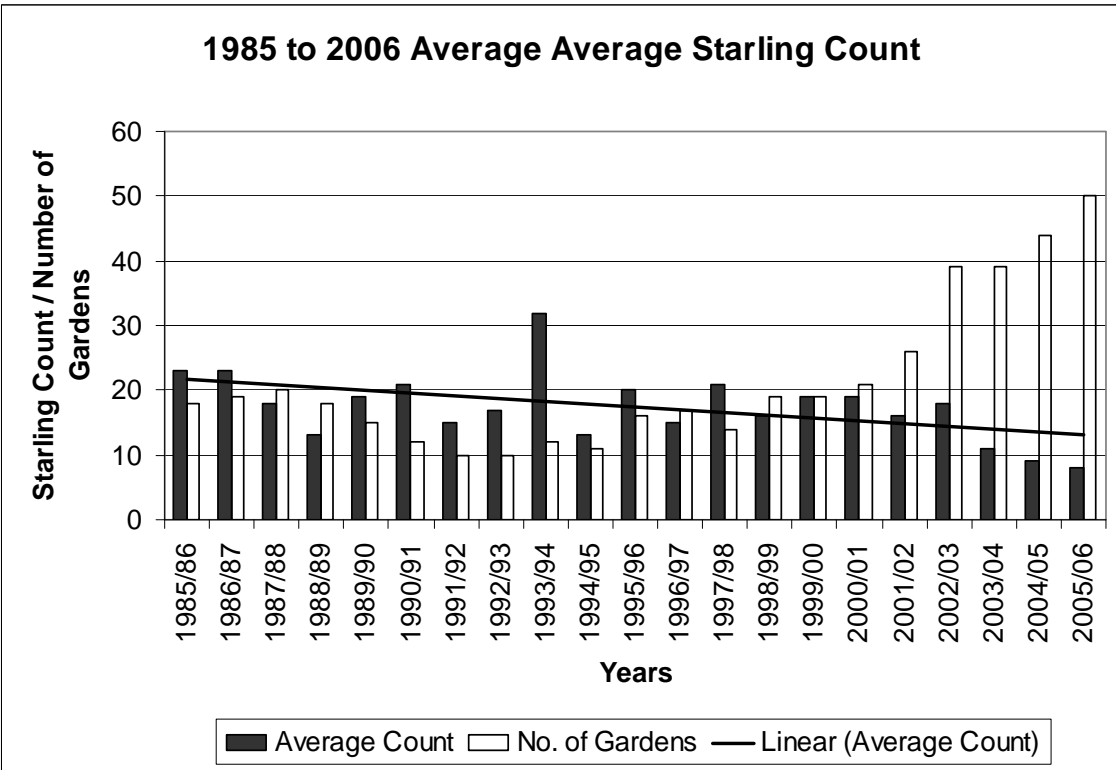
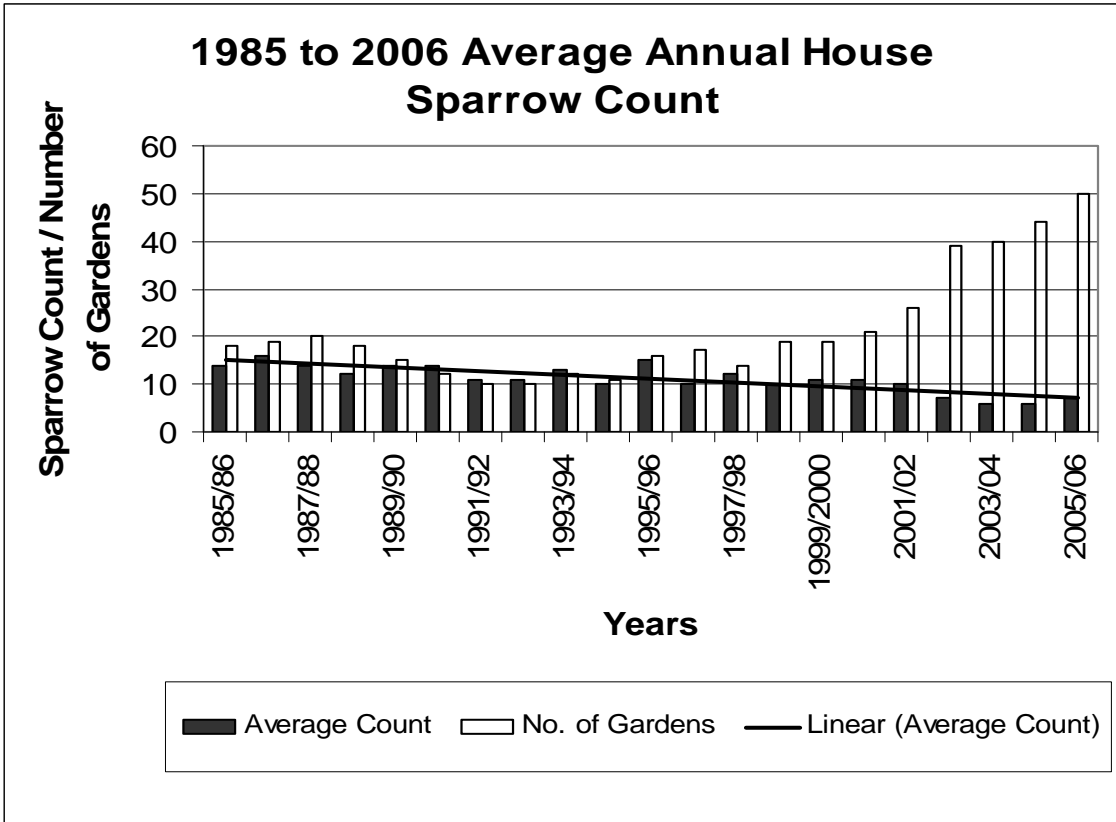
<b><u>Week No.</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Days</u></b>			<b><u>Inches of Rain</u></b>	<b><u>Temp. °F</u></b>		<b><u>Wind</u></b>		<b><u>One Word Notes</u></b>
	<b><u>Sunny</u></b>	<b><u>Snowy Sleetly</u></b>	<b><u>Wet cloudy</u></b>		<b><u>Max</u></b>	<b><u>Min</u></b>	<b><u>Direction</u></b>	<b><u>Strength</u></b>	
1	0	0	1	0.34	60	40	S	Light	Dull
2	5	0	4	0.35	65	40	SW	Moderate	Variable
3	2	0	5	0.73	63	44	SE	Moderate	Brighter
4	0	0	7	1.47	63	49	S-SW	Moderate	Wet
5	3	0	7	0.91	61	36	SW	Moderate	Wet
6	3	0	6	1.28	56	36	SW	Moderate	Wet
7	6	0	1	0.04	50	22	NW	Light	Sunny
8	0	1	2	0.16	44	24	NW	Light	Frosty
9	6	1	7	1.15	46	25	N-S	Light	Frosty
10	7	0	6	0.75	47	29	NW	Light	Variable
11	6	0	2	0.04	48	24	NW	Moderate	Sunny
12	1	0	6	0.2	49	26	NW	Light	Cloudy
13	3	1	1	0.57	42	18	NE	Light	Frosty
14	4	0	3	0.07	45	28	NW-SE	Light	Frosty
15	1	0	3	0.19	48	31	SE-SW-NW	Variable	Cloudy
16	0	1	4	0.42	50	30	S-NW	Variable	Cloudy
17	1	0	1	0.02	41	21	NE	Light	Frosty
18	1	0	0	0	39	26	NE	Light	Frosty
19	3	0	2	0.21	45	24	NW	Moderate	Frosty
20	5	0	5	0.88	51	27	NW	Light	Variable
21	6	0	6	0.41	43	27	NE	Light	Frosty
22	0	0	3	0.52	43	18	N-NW	Moderate	Frosty
23	0	0	6.	1.38	49	26	NW	Light	Frosty
24	1	0	5	0.65	51	28	SE-E	Light	Frosty
25	1	0	2	0.49	60	26	E-SW	Light	Cloudy
26	7	0	7	0.79	61	35	SW	Moderate	Wet

## **House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives**

The two bar charts used in previous reports have once more been updated to include the latest data from this survey and are presented on the next page. The charts show that both house sparrow's and starling's populations continue to decline as evidenced by the trendlines for both species.

Our survey in isolation does not provide hard scientific evidence due to the survey being comparatively small (though getting bigger and bigger) and the different gardens used to provide the data 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 perform more analysis.



### **The Next Survey**

As usual forms for the 2006/07 Winter Garden Bird Survey are included with the pre-season newsletter, together with this report, 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 the not inconsiderable task of analysing the data and preparation of the report to commence.

As usual, forms for any new recruits to the next survey will be available at the first club meeting in September. Please encourage others to join up, whether members or not, 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 far preferable being 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 2005/06 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 2003 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.  
15<sup>th</sup> May 2006*