



## SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2010 TO MARCH 2011

### The Survey Recorders

In this survey the number of registered participants was fifty-six. In the 2010 part of the survey records were received from fifty-two, with fifty-three received for the second session in 2011. The number of contributors remained substantially the same as in the last survey, with five new recorders joining and three previous contributors not continuing. Nine survey members are not members of SECOS. Again the level of support is most encouraging and the usual thank-you is extended to all contributors new and old.

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

**Table 1**

<b>Reg. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Reg. No.</b>	<b>Name</b>
8501	Hilary Clowes	0430	John Goulding
8502	Bryan Perkins	8731	John P. Barker
9703	John & Wendy Smith	0432	Avril Watkins
9704	Janet Grice	0333	Alan Robson
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	0334	Bill Bellamy
0107	Christine Howarth	9635	Doreen Jones
0208	Stan Wildig	9636	Geoff Yarwood
0409	Marie Turner	1037	Roslyn Walmsley
0610	John Nixon	0838	Richard Howells
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	0639	Chris Parry
0612	Alan Straw	0240	Cynthia Cadman
9813	John Thompson	0341	Howard Nixon
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0342	Brian Sankey
0915	Mike Williams	0343	John Fuller
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0844	Dave O'Hara
1017	Mick Ball	0946	Jack Bower
8518	Ann Pym	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0548	Anne & Chris Furness
9921	Barbara Hubbard	0849	Howard and Phyllis Yates
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	0552	Lillian Shufflebotham
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0754	Brian Burke
1025	John Varty	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
0026	Charles Hull	0757	Gordon and Valerie Squire
0227	Andrew Bailey	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy	0759	Rachel Minshull
1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury		

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

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-seven different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. Waxwings have been added to this year's list with several gardens being blessed by visits from this stunning bird.

**Table 2**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Bird Species</b>
1	Black-headed Gull	40	Magpie
2	Blackbird	41	Mallard
3	Blackcap	42	Marsh/ Willow Tit
4	Blue Tit	43	Meadow Pipit
5	Brambling	44	Merlin
6	Bullfinch	45	Mistle Thrush
7	Buzzard	46	Moorhen
8	Chaffinch	47	Mute Swan
9	Chiffchaff	48	Nuthatch
10	Coal Tit	49	Pheasant
11	Collared Dove	50	Pied Wagtail
12	Common Gull	51	Raven
13	Corn Bunting	52	Red-headed Bunting
14	Crow	53	Red-legged Partridge
15	Dunnock	54	Redpoll (Lesser)
16	Feral Pigeon	55	Redwing
17	Fieldfare	56	Reed Bunting
18	Garden Warbler	57	Ring-necked Parakeet
19	Goldcrest	58	Robin
20	Goldfinch	59	Rook
21	Great Spotted Woodpecker	60	Siskin
22	Great Tit	61	Skylark
23	Green Woodpecker	62	Snipe
24	Greenfinch	63	Song Thrush
25	Grey Heron	64	Sparrowhawk
26	Grey Wagtail	65	Starling
27	Herring Gull	66	Stock Dove
28	House Martin	67	Swallow
29	House Sparrow	68	Tawny Owl
30	Jackdaw	69	Tree Sparrow
31	Jay	70	Treecreeper
32	Kestrel	71	Water Rail
33	Kingfisher	72	Waxwing
34	Lapwing	73	Willow Warbler
35	Lesser Black-backed Gull	74	Woodcock
36	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	75	Wood Pigeon
37	Linnet	76	Wren
38	Little Owl	77	Yellowhammer
39	Long-tailed Tit		

## The Current Survey

Fifty-three participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1352 bird/week records (52 x 26 =1378). People are not available to record at various times, for reasons like joining the survey after it has commenced, holidays and sickness, consequentially the actual number of bird/week records produced was reduced by 83. This exceptionally high level of commitment achieved 1295 bird/weeks of records.

## 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 recorded the highest count.

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

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 1295 1216)</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 53 [49])</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Blackbird	1243 [1179]	53 [49]	15	8518
2 [2]	Blue Tit	1203 [1100]	53 [49]	12	1029 & 0639
3 [3]	Robin	1176 [1095]	53 [49]	7	9923
4 [4]	Wood Pigeon	1175 [1090]	53 [49]	35	0639
5 [6]	House Sparrow	1060 [1042]	51 [46]	45	0759
6 [5]	Dunnock	1028 [1050]	53 [49]	6	0342
7 [7]	Collared Dove	1004 [877]	51 [47]	9	0844
8 [8]	Great Tit	989 [872]	53 [48]	12	0026
9 [10]	Chaffinch	913 [774]	53 [45]	24	8518
10 [9]	Starling	822 [867]	52 [46]	200	0026
11 [12]	Coal Tit	812 [645]	51 [44]	8	9923 & 0838
12 [11]	Goldfinch	771 [666]	47 [46]	35	0240
13 [14]	Magpie	626 [580]	48 [45]	9	8511
14 [15]	Greenfinch	570 [577]	44 [37]	32	9923
15 [16]	Long-tailed Tit	465 [429]	50 [44]	17	9813
16 [13]	Wren	452 [589]	48 [47]	3	0639
17 [20]	Crow	310 [269]	37 [26]	7	0026
18 [18]	Nuthatch	305 [321]	31 [24]	3	9923 & 0838
19 [19]	Jackdaw	300 [292]	29 [25]	40	0026
20 [17]	Song Thrush	259 [342]	45 [45]	4	8511
21 [21]	Pied Wagtail	203 [156]	39 [26]	3	0208
22 [22]	Sparrowhawk	164 [146]	38 [39]	2	#1

#1 Members No. 0208, 0838 & 0757

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

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

A comparison with the previous survey shows that the rankings within the table show remarkably little change from the previous survey. Seven species had a presence in every garden of the survey. Great tit and chaffinch joined the blackbird, blue tit, robin, woodpigeon and dunnock as ever presents in the last survey. Starlings were only missing from one garden and collared dove and coal tit from two. As is usual, the same species occupied the top ten list with minor juxtapositions in order. Greenfinch records showed no change and provided no sign of a recovery following the decline in the last survey.

Crows ventured into more gardens, no doubt in response to the harsh winter conditions. Song thrush counts were greatly reduced, but at least had a presence in the same number of gardens as previously. Fourteen contributors from the total of fifty-two recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. Two members recorded the highest count for four species, two members for three species and three 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 thirty-seven species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-nine species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-nine} from the seventy-seven in the “all-time” list (*Table 2*). Any species recorded in the last survey, but not recorded in this survey, are 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 651 [584])</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 53 [49])</u></b>
1 [2]	Bullfinch	212 [145]	24 [15]
2 [1]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	204 [205]	26 [23]
3 [11]	Goldcrest	87 [46]	17 [23]
4 [3]	Jay	86 [116]	15 [11]
5 [10]	Black Headed Gull	77 [67]	15 [8]
6 [7]	Pheasant	74 [101]	7 [6]
6 [24]	Siskin	74 [8]	18 [3]
8 [15]	Reed Bunting	54 [31]	11 [4]
9 [12]	Lesser Redpoll	52 [46]	12 [12]
10 [9]	Blackcap	51 [69]	15 [16]
11 [8]	Tree Sparrow	50 [73]	7 [5]
11 [14]	Rook	50 [34]	7 [8]
13 [20]	Brambling	46 [14]	14 [8]
14 [15]	Stock Dove	40 [31]	5 [2]
14 [23]	Treecreeper	40 [11]	14 [15]
16 [6]	Mistle Thrush	39 [103]	12 [17]
17 [5]	Fieldfare	38 [105]	11 [13]
17 [13]	Grey Wagtail	38 [41]	8 [13]
19 [4]	Redwing	32 [108]	14 [10]
20 [15]	Tawny Owl	30 [31]	2 [4]
21 [19]	Mallard	18 [21]	3 [7]
22 [26]	Moorhen	17 [6]	4 [1]
23 [19]	Grey Heron	14 [21]	6 [6]
24 [22]	Kestrel	10 [12]	5 [4]
25 [*]	Feral Pigeon	8 [0]	1 [0]
26 [27]	Chiffchaff	6 [5]	3 [2]
27 [*]	Waxwing	5 [0]	4 [0]
28 [18]	Buzzard	4 [23]	3 [3]
28 [30]	Herring Gull	4 [1]	2 [1]
28 [30]	Raven	4 [1]	2 [1]
31 [30]	Green Woodpecker	2 [1]	2 [1]
32 [28]	Yellow Hammer	1 [2]	1 [1]

**Table 4 (Ranking of Other Species {continued})**

32 [30]	Snipe	1 [1]	1 [1]
32 [30]	Swallow	1 [1]	1 [1]
32 [30]	Woodcock	1 [1]	1 [1]
32 [*]	Common Gull	1 [0]	1 [0]
32 [*]	Willow Warbler	1 [0]	1 [0]
32 [*]	House Martin	1 [0]	1 [0]
32 [*]	Water Rail	1 [0]	1 [0]
[25]	Linnet	0 [7]	0 [1]
[28]	Red-legged Partridge	0 [2]	0 [1]
[30]	Marsh/Willow Tit	0 [1]	0 [2]
[30]	Peregrine Falcon	0 [1]	0 [1]

[ ] Denotes corresponding figures to the previous [2009/10] survey for comparison

[\*] Denotes was not recorded in the previous survey.

Common gull, feral pigeon, house martin, willow warbler, water rail and waxwing were all recorded in this survey, but were missing from the last. Linnet, red-legged partridge, marsh/willow tit and peregrine were all recorded last time but not this.

A particular highlight of this survey was the recording of waxwings for the very first time. They visited no less than four different gardens. Of the five records, the highest single count was twenty-three birds with twenty appearing in a second garden. I hope that this sets a trend which will reward more of our diligent recorders in the future.

Brambling records increased by a factor of three, siskins by a factor of nine (having suffered a major population crash in the last survey) and treecreepers were up by a factor of four.

Reed bunting records continued the upward trend with a seventy-five percent increase, having increased their presence in the previous survey by a factor of three and bullfinch were up by thirty per cent.

On the down side, both fieldfare and redwing numbers were down by a third. Possibly they found Britain's harsh winter too similar to that in Scandinavia and travelled further looking for better conditions.

Mistle thrush records were also reduced to a third of those in the last survey.

Goldcrest records halved in the last survey, but in this survey they regained most of their losses but from fewer gardens.

After a glut in the previous survey, buzzard records returned to minimal figures.

The surge in bullfinch records relegated the great spotted woodpecker into being the second most common bird of the "Other Species" table.

The garden reporting the highest number of different species in this survey was that of member no. 0026 with forty-three, closely followed by member no. 9923 with thirty-six, the same gardens as in the previous survey.

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

For the second year, harsh winter conditions resulted in fewer common garden bird records.

Many contributors commented on species never previously recorded in their garden. Waxwing, brambling, pied wagtail, grey wagtail, raven, redwing, siskin and redpoll were mentioned in this context.

There were also near misses too; one member counted sixteen waxwings on a rowan tree nearby but his garden failed to attract them because blackbirds had already stripped the berries from his rowan tree. Similarly another member counted twenty in next door's garden. Elsewhere another garden attracted an amazing count of thirteen bramblings. Even the woodcock appeared as last year, taking food droppings from beneath a bird table. Reed buntings shared ground feeding with mixed finch flocks. In the conditions seven robins realised it was better to share a food source in one garden, rather than expend energy by indulging in their usual mutually aggressive behaviour.

Sparrowhawk hunting success was extensively recorded, with goldfinch being the most common prey, together with the odd sparrow and blackbird. One male sparrowhawk was observed persistently clambering over the mesh protecting cage of a bird feeder, trying to gain access to the sparrow within. The sparrow was surprisingly smart enough to stay inside.

A kestrel was seen to hover and swoop to take a small mammal, probably a mouse.

Chaffinches continue to suffer from a fungal infection on their legs, but surprisingly were recorded as surviving for extensive periods of time none- the-less. A robin was regularly noted to be using a bird bath after darkness fell.

A blackbird was recorded mounting a strong but ineffective defence, when two magpies destroyed its nest and off-springs. At a separate location the breeding potential of small birds was nil rated due to their being crows, magpies and sparrowhawks, all nesting in the orchard adjoining the garden.

The chimney roosting tawny owl which has been mentioned in previous reports, suffered mobbing by firstly three jays and later by a mixed flock of greenfinch and goldfinch

Seed feeders were reported to be used by blackbird, chaffinch, dunnoek, robin, bullfinch, redpoll, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and reed bunting,

Fatballs were attractive to blackcap, great spotted woodpeckers, blackbirds, starling, magpie and jackdaw. Blackcap also found crab apples to their liking in one garden.

Clearly if you are to have a chance with the next waxwing influx you need a rowan tree, which at least by default should ensure a good presence from the thrush family.

### **Weather Conditions**

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

**Table 5 – Weather Summary**

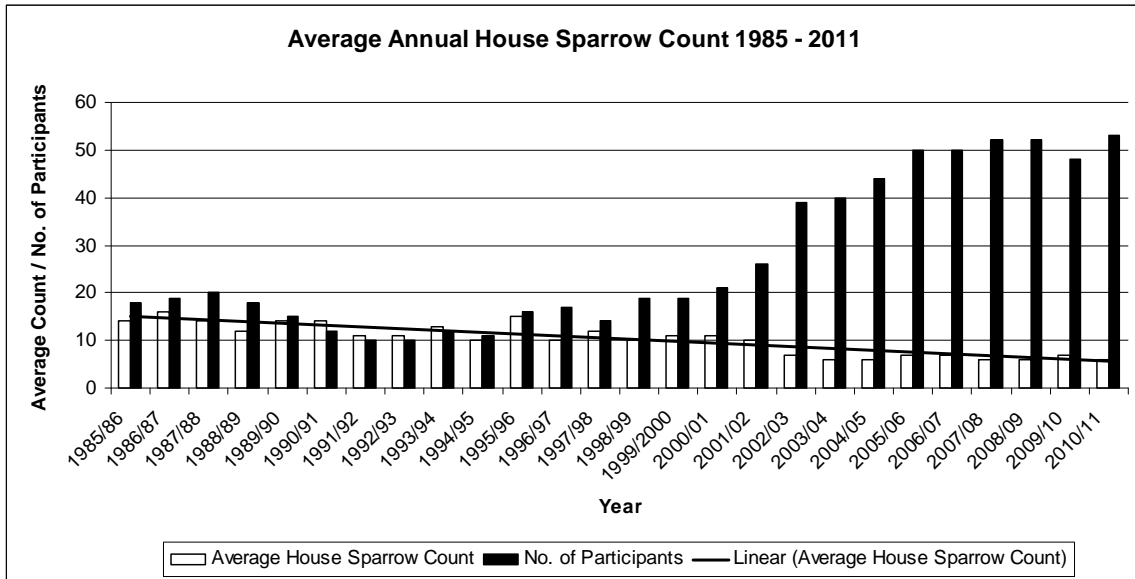
<b><u>Week No.</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Days</u></b>			<b><u>Inches of Rain</u></b>	<b><u>Temp. °F</u></b>		<b><u>Wind</u></b>		<b><u>One Word Notes</u></b>
	<b><u>Sunny Periods</u></b>	<b><u>Frost Snow Sleet</u></b>	<b><u>Wet cloudy</u></b>		<b><u>Max</u></b>	<b><u>Min</u></b>	<b><u>Direction</u></b>	<b><u>Strength</u></b>	
1	7	0	2	1.7	62	38	SW-SE	Moderate	Mixed
2	4	0	1	0.02	65	31	SW-SE	Light	Mixed
3	2	3	4	0.75	59	26	NW	Moderate	Mixed
4	3	1	4	0.63	57	25		Moderate	Cloudy
5	1	1	6	1.0	57	31	SW	Moderate.	Cloudy
6	0	3	5	0.85	54	27		Strong	Cloudy
7	1	3	6	0.35	44	26	SE	Light	Cloudy
8	4	5	3	0.09	41	13	SE-NW-NE	Light	Mixed
9	6	7F3S	3	0.27	36	12	NW-NE	Light	Sunny
10	2	6F	4	0.18	42	11	NW	Light	Mixed
11	1	7F	3	0.12	41	9	NE	Light	Cloudy
12	7	7F1S	0	0.00	41	19	NE	Light	Cloudy
13	0	3F	3	0.54	41	15	SE	Light	Cloudy
14	1	7F1S	3	0.59	41	22	Variable	Variable	Frosty
15	2	2F	4	0.79	50	26	SW	Light/Mod	Cloudy
16	5	6F	2	0.18	50	24	NW	Light	Mixed
17	2	5F	3	0.19	42	19	N-NE	Light	Cloudy
18	2	3F	5	0.26	50	21	SW	Light	Cloudy
19	1	2F	5	0.55	52	27	SW	Light	Sunny
20	2	3F	2	0.39	47	31	SW	Moderate	Cloudy
21	3	1F	6	1.07	54	31	SW	Moderate	Cloudy
22	3	6F	1	0.06	45	23	N-NE	Light	Mixed
23	4	5F	3	0.10	51	23	NW	Moderate	Sunny
24	2	3F	2	0.18	55	25	NW	Light	Mixed

25	4	2F	1	0.03	66	32	NW	Light	Mixed
26	0	1F	3	0.28	60	30	SW	Variable	Cloudy

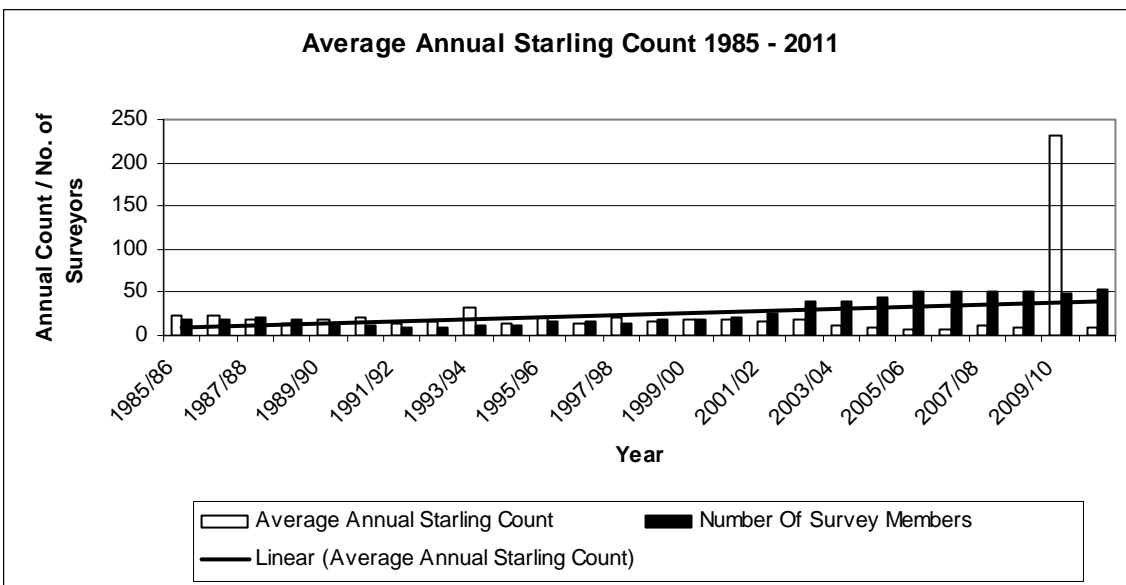
**House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2011**

The two bar charts used in previous reports have once more been updated to include the latest data from this survey and are presented below.

The average garden house sparrow count has stabilised at six or seven since the year 2002 and stands at six in this survey. The twenty-six year trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow population has declined from an average of around fifteen suggesting that the population has been reduced by sixty per cent over that period.



The average starling count for this survey returned to the more normal average of ten birds following the distortion introduced in the last survey by an enormous roost in one garden. As a consequence, the trend line still shows a recovery in numbers over the twenty six years, but the reality is a decline of about thirty per cent when last years distortion is included in the equation.



This survey continues to support the general concerns that a decline in both populations is under way. The data is contained in two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, with pages for each year of the survey so far, and can be made available to anyone who would like to perform more analysis.

### The Next Survey

In anticipation and hope of your continued support, forms for the 2011/12 Winter Garden Bird Survey will be provided to all present members of the survey team. Those who take email distribution will be in receipt by that medium and the remainder will receive forms with the pre-season newsletter.

I include my usual plea to be informed of anyone who wishes to discontinue supporting the survey, so that I know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms and able to commence analysing the data and preparation of the report. Please note that in the guidelines, I have now indicated that survey forms can no longer be accepted after the end of April, (one month after the end of the survey). At that time I need to be in a position to start the report production process without prolonged delay.

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 SECOS 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 include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2010/11 survey data than is contained in this report (or previous reports). I can make all of the data available to them as a copy of the databases in Microsoft Access 2003 format, either as an e-mail attachment, on a 3.5" floppy disk or CD-ROM.

*Again, many thanks to all contributors.*

*Trevor Clowes.*

*21<sup>st</sup> June 2011*