



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2012 TO MARCH 2013

The Survey Recorders

Once more, in this survey the number of registered participants was fifty-three. Records were received from fifty-one survey members in session one and fifty in session two. The number of contributors remained substantially the same as in the last survey, with three new recorders joining and two previous contributors lapsing. Fourteen 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

Reg. No.	Name	Reg. No.	Name
8501	Hilary Clowes	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
8502	Bryan Perkins	0430	John Goulding
9703	John & Wendy Smith	8731	John P. Barker
1104	Ken & Beverley Jones	0432	Avril Watkins
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	0333	Alan Robson
0107	Christine Howarth	0334	Bill Bellamy
0208	Stan Wildig	9635	Doreen Jones
0409	Marie Turner	9636	Geoff Yarwood
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	1037	Roslyn Walmsley
0612	Alan Straw	0838	Richard Howells
9813	John Thompson	0639	Chris Parry
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0240	Ron & Cynthia Cadman
1215	Louise Adams	0341	Howard Nixon
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0342	Brian Sankey
1017	Mick Ball	0343	John & Wendy Fuller
8518	Ann Pym	0844	Dave O'Hara
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0946	Jack Bower
1220	Tony Dickenson	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
9921	Barbara Hubbard	0849	Howard Yates
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	1249	Chris & Sheila Borrows
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
1025	John Varty	0757	Gordon & Valerie Squire
0026	Charles Hull	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
0227	Andrew Bailey	0759	Rachel Minshull
0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy		

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-eight different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. No new species have been added during this survey.

Table 2

No.	Bird Species	No.	Bird Species
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	Duncock	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	White Wagtail
35	Lesser Black-backed Gull	74	Willow Warbler
36	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	75	Woodcock
37	Linnet	76	Wood Pigeon
38	Little Owl	77	Wren
39	Long-tailed Tit	78	Yellowhammer

The Current Survey

Fifty-one participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1326 bird/week records (51 x 26 =1300). 1273 bird/weeks records were produced, just fifty-three less than is actually possible . The usual high level of commitment was maintained.

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 1273 [1221]</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51 [50]</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Blackbird	1215 [1121]	51 [50]	19 [20]	8518
2 [2]	Blue Tit	1140 [1055]	51 [50]	20 [12]	0612 & 9814
3 [4]	Wood Pigeon	1131 [1017]	51 [49]	16 [35]	0838
4 [3]	Robin	1104 [1045]	51 [50]	5 [10]	1104
5 [5]	Dunnock	1008 [1005]	50 [49]	7 [11]	1104
6 [6]	House Sparrow	979 [978]	49 [48]	60 [70]	0759
7 [8]	Great Tit	974 [779]	50 [48]	19 [15]	1104
8 [7]	Collared Dove	896 [836]	51 [48]	14 [11]	0759
9 [9]	Chaffinch	847 [723]	50 [48]	32 [23]	8518
10 [11]	Magpie	761 [696]	49 [47]	6 [12]	8511
11 [14]	Coal Tit	759 [553]	49 [42]	17 [7]	1104
12 [10]	Goldfinch	645 [719]	43 [35]	30 [31]	8501
13 [12]	Starling	616 [637]	45 [44]	150 [80]	0026
14 [13]	Greenfinch	507 [570]	43 [42]	18 [30]	9923
15 [15]	Wren	495 [446]	50 [47]	2 [3]	#1
16 [17]	Long-tailed Tit	467 [327]	47 [45]	15 [17]	9814
17 [16]	Jackdaw	417 [341]	33 [30]	40 [40]	0026
18 [18]	Crow	349 [291]	36 [35]	6 [4]	8518
19 [19]	Nuthatch	323 [231]	33 [20]	8 [2]	1104
20 [20]	Song Thrush	186 [168]	36 [30]	2 [3]	#2
21 [21]	Sparrowhawk	141 [124]	39 [34]	1 [2]	-
22 [22]	Pied Wagtail	100 [103]	23 [20]	3 [3]	9636

#1 Members No.1104, 0612, 1220, 1022, 1029, 0639 0342 0343 & 0853.

#2 Members No.9703, 1104, 0107, 1220, 9921, 9922, 0026, 0639 & 0556

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

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

Once more the rankings within the table show remarkably little change from the previous survey. Last year three species had a presence in every garden in the survey, this year there were five, blackbird, blue tit, robin, woodpigeon and collared dove. In 1953 collared doves first appeared in Britain and bird watchers were excited when they nested for the first time in 1956. No-one at that time would have dreamed that in the twenty-first century every garden would have one!

Wren, great tit and dunnoek were each missing from only one garden, house sparrow, magpie, and coal tit from two. The top ten list of birds saw the goldfinch relegated with the magpie taking its place in position ten, just ahead of the coal tit. Other than that the order was little changed. Greenfinch records have continued to decline since the 2009/10 survey with sixty-three fewer records compared to last year though they showed in one more garden. Coal tit records increased by thirty-seven per cent and great tit by twenty-three percent. Coal tits were recorded in nearly all gardens as mentioned. Pied wagtail records did not recover from the 2011 crash, remaining at a half of hitherto being present in roughly the same reduced number of gardens. Records and the number of gardens visited by nuthatches both showed a welcome near fifty per cent increase. Long-tailed tit, jackdaw and crow all showed significant increases in record counts. Twenty-one contributors from the total of fifty-one recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. One member recorded the highest or joint highest count for six 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-three species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-five species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-three} 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’

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 620</u> [521]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51</u> [50]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [2]	G S Woodpecker	184 [139]	21 [20]	3 [2]	0612
2 [1]	Bullfinch	135 [152]	21 [20]	4 [6]	#1
3 [5]	Jay	94 [70]	14 [6]	3 [3]	0639
4 [15]	Siskin	93 [33]	20 [11]	15 [4]	0333
5 [13]	Goldcrest	90 [39]	22 [11]	3 [3]	1017 & 0838
6 [3]	Pheasant	85 [92]	9 [7]	5 [4]	0612
7 [11]	Blackcap	81 [41]	14 [11]	2 [4]	9704
8 [16]	Rook	73 [29]	7 [4]	40 [40]	0026
9 [8]	Black Headed Gull	55 [52]	11 [11]	30 [20]	9921
10 [9]	Fieldfare	51 [48]	26 [16]	50 [50]	0026
11 [6]	Mistle Thrush	50 [59]	13 [10]	2 [3]	#2
12 [19]	Stock Dove	49 [26]	5 [4]	3 [4]	0107 & 0334
13 [24]	Brambling	40 [11]	13 [2]	6 [5]	8518
14 [10]	Reed Bunting	39 [45]	10 [6]	7 [7]	1022
15 [4]	Redwing	37 [81]	12 [24]	25 [60]	0026
16 [16]	Treecreeper	36 [29]	8 [9]	2 [1]	0612 & 0639
17 [7]	Tree Sparrow	35 [53]	5 [6]	8 [10]	0026
18 [11]	Tawny Owl	32 [41]	6 [5]	2 [2]	0639
18 [14]	Lesser Redpoll	32 [34]	10 [8]	4 [7]	8518 & 0639
20 [17]	Feral Pigeon	30 [29]	3 [3]	5 [30]	9813
21 [31]	Herring Gull	20 [1]	1 [1]	4 [1]	0208
22 [20]	Buzzard	19 [13]	4 [5]	1 [1]	#3
23 [23]	Mallard	17 [12]	6 [3]	4 [3]	56

Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’ (continued)

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 620</u> [521]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51</u> [50]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
23 [27]	Grey Heron	17 [6]	3 [6]	2 [1]	0639
25 [26]	Kestrel	7 [7]	2 [4]	1 [1]	0026
26 [20]	Raven	6 [13]	2 [2]	1 [2]	0026
27 [20]	Grey Wagtail	5 [13]	1 [2]	2 [1]	0026
28 [0]	Waxwing	4 [0]	3 [0]	7 [0]	9703
29 [28]	Moorhen	3 [3]	2 [1]	1 [3]	0838 & 0556
30 [25]	Chiffchaff	1 [8]	1 [5]	1 [2]	9813
30 [0]	Garden Warbler	1 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	9923
30 [0]	Lesser b-b gull	1 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	1017
30 [0]	Red-leg Partridge	1 [0]	1 [0]	2 [0]	0026
[29]	Green Woodpecker	0 [2]	0 [1]	0 [1]	-
[29]	Snipe	0 [2]	0 [1]	0 [2]	-

#1 – Members 1107, 1017, 1022, 1025 & 0639

#2 – Members 9703, 0612, 1017, 0639, 1250 & 0758

#3 – Members 8511, 0612, 9923 & 0026

[] Denotes corresponding figures to the previous [2011/12] survey for comparison

Thirty-three species were recorded from fifty-one gardens, compared to thirty-one species from fifty gardens last time. The number of less common records increased by twenty per cent, perhaps as a result of harsh winter conditions forcing birds to forage in gardens, when other sources became depleted.

Four species made appearances in gardens which were not recorded in last year’s survey; waxwing, garden warbler, lesser black-backed gull and red legged partridge, green woodpecker and snipe were present last year but not this.

Three gardens were blessed with waxwings, probably the highlight of the year, certainly for the lucky individuals.

Numerous species were recorded far more frequently than previously. Herring gulls scored twenty hits against a single previous one, bramblings were up by a factor of four, siskins a factor of three, stock dove, goldcrest, rook and blackcap doubled their presence.

Strangely redwing presence was reduced to a half of the previous year.

Bullfinch counts held up well, but there was a resurgence in great-spotted woodpecker garden activity, which resulted in the bullfinch being relegated to second place in the table.

The garden reporting the highest number of species in this “Other Species” part of the survey was once more that of member No. 0026 with sixteen, followed by the garden of member No. 9923 with fifteen. Member 0026 also had the highest count for nine species.

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

Harsh winter conditions resulted in several recordings of species making their first ever visits to members’ gardens. Nuthatches made first time appearances in four gardens. In one case none had been recorded in the previous thirty-two years and suddenly two turned up. Fieldfare and brambling were also noted as firsts for single gardens and siskin for two gardens. Waxwings visiting three gardens probably had the same distinction.

As usual sparrowhawks featured greatly. One bounced off a window and retired to a tree for fifteen minutes to recover. Some sat patiently on fences for anything up to an hour waiting for an unwary visitor as prey. Another was seen to hide in foliage at ground level, whilst keeping a careful watch on feeders, whilst another was not so smart, actually sitting on the feeders. Their general presence was blamed for low bird counts. Success in taking prey was recorded for blackbird, sparrow and goldfinch, with great tit and robin near misses. In one case success was followed by persistent visits over the next two weeks. A juvenile was seen to attack a collared dove.

Species below were recorded on the following food sources.

Blackbird: seed feeder.

Blackcap: mahonia flowers, sunflower hearts, fatballs, RSPB cake, suet and insect cake and bread.

Blue tit: suet and insect cake.

Brambling: seed feeder.

Bullfinch: honeysuckle berries, seed feeder.

Great spotted woodpecker: fatballs, suet cake and peanuts.

Jackdaw: fatballs, suet cake, seed feeder.

Jay: fatballs,

Long-tailed tit: suet and insect cake, desiccated coconut.

Magpie: bread, mixed seed

Nuthatch: black sunflower seed.

Redpoll: nyjer seed feeder.

Robin: mixed seed feeder and fatballs.

Siskin: nyjer, mixed seed and sunflower heart feeders.

Starling: fatballs, mealworm, raisins.

Treecreeper: mixed seed feeder.

Wood pigeon: seed feeder. One used a low table to reach up to seed feeder above in order to empty it!

Random comments

A roost of some three thousand starlings was noted at Holmes Chapel.

Seventeen buzzards were seen circling high over one garden in February.

A heron perched in a cedar tree in an Alsager garden was mobbed by magpies. On another occasion it was displaced by a second heron. Jackdaws and jays mobbed a tawny owl on separate occasions. A blue tit was seen to be seeking a nest site in December.

Elsewhere a robin was seen to defend a feeder against goldfinch, but had to give best to more robust greenfinch.

For one garden at least, goldfinch counts was the lowest ever, whilst chaffinch count was highest.

Waxwings were noted in close proximity to dwellings, in one case they were very close to the window and on a nearby fence at another site.

It was observed that house sparrows roosting in a member's roof area, never fed from the garden feeders.

There were several comments which connected extensive nearby tree felling to a noticeable reduction in bird counts.

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.

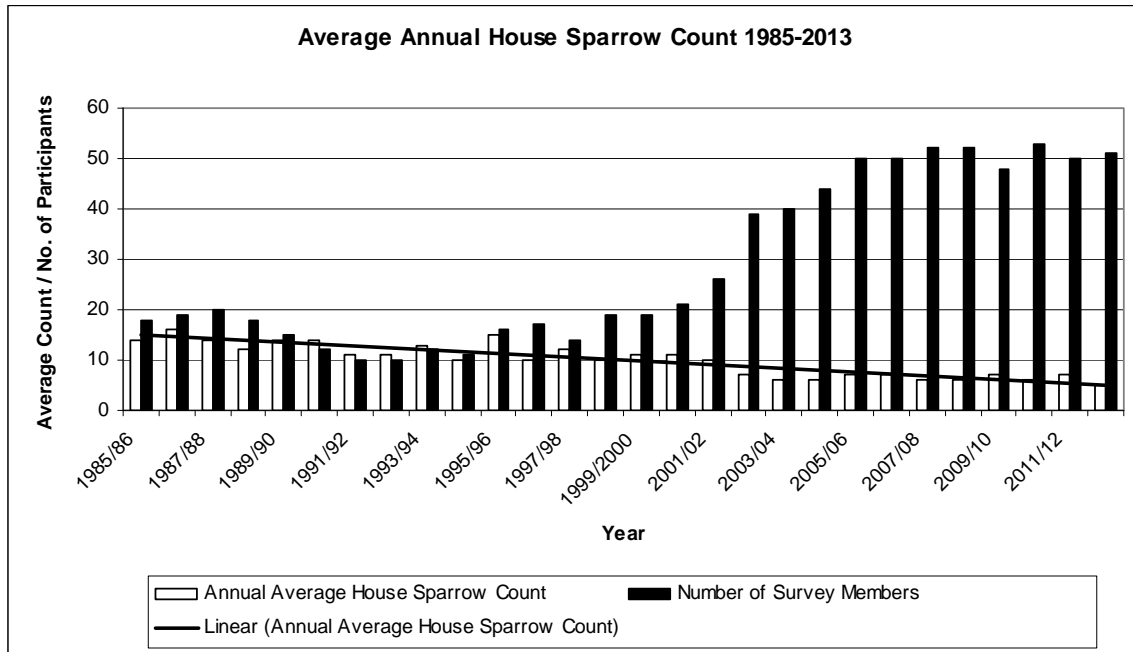
Table 5 – Weather Summary

<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 Periods</u>	<u>Frost Snow Sleet</u>	<u>Wet cloudy</u>		<u>Max</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Strength</u>	
1	3	3F	4	0.91	56	34	NW	Light	Mixed
2	4	1F	4	0.75	59	30	SW	Strong	Mixed
3	1	2F	2	0.08	56	29	SE	Light	Cloudy
4	1	6F	6	0.47	54	30	NW	Light	Cloudy
5	3	3F	2	0.12	51	24	NW-SW	Light	Mixed
6	0	2F	4	0.51	52	27	SW	Light	Cloudy
7	0	2F	6	1.12	56	28	SW	Variable	Cloudy
8	4	4F	4	1.10	44	22	NE-NW	Variable	Cloudy
9	0	7F	5	1.07	41	21	NW	Light	Cloudy
10	2	6F	3	0.65	44	18	NW	Light	Mixed
11	1	1F	7	2.10	50	27	NW/SW/SE	Variable	Cloudy
12	1	1F	7	1.10	48	21	SW	Light	Cloudy
13	0	1F	4	0.47	49	29	SW	Light	Cloudy
14	0	4F	5	0.46	49	22	S	Light	Cloudy
15	0	7F1S	4	0.49	37	20	NW-SE	Light	Cloudy
16	0	5F	6	0.49	43	21	SE	Light	Cloudy
17	1	4F	6	0.54	51	25	Sw-NW	Strong	Cloudy
18	0	5F	7	0.63	47	27	NW-N	Strong	Cloudy
19	3	7F	3	0.87	47	26	SE	Moderate	Mixed
20	3	7F1S	0	0	47	24	SE	Light	Mixed
21	0	6F	0	0	46	25	NE	Light	Cloudy
22	3	4F	4	0.59	50	24	SE	Light	Mixed
23	7	6F2S	4	0.80	45	19	NE-N-S	Variable	Mixed
24	0	7F3S	5	0.56	53	24	SE	V Strong	Cloudy
25	7	7F1S	0	0	43	19	SE	Light	Mixed
26	7	7F	0	0	50	21	SE-NE	Light	Sunny

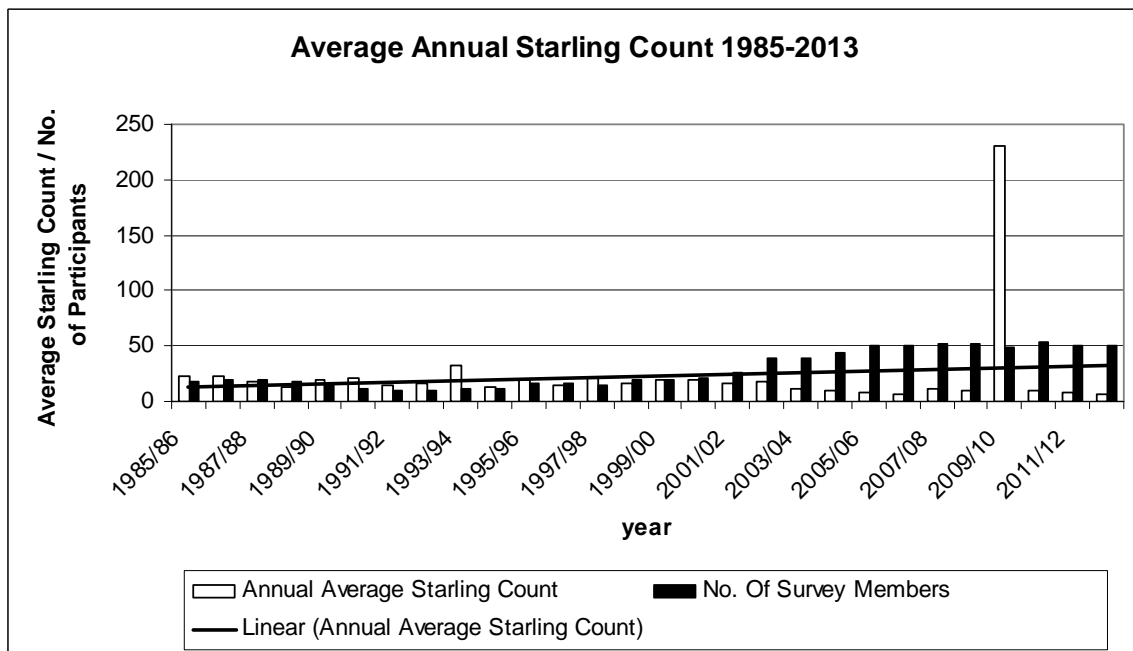
House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2013

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 continued to decline since the year 2002 and stands at a lowly five in this survey. The twenty-eight 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-six per cent over that period. Habitat loss appears to be a big factor, with Cheshire particularly blighted at present by irresponsible development proposals on the remaining green belt land.



The average starling count for this survey dropped once more from eight in the last survey to six in this. The trend line is still distorted by the large one-off roost of 2009-10. The reality is that numbers are still in decline.



Even more so, 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 2013/14 Winter Garden Bird Survey will be provided to all present members of the survey team. As before, 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 preparing the report. As usual forms for any new recruits to the next survey will be available at the first club meeting in September or at any time by email. Please encourage others to join up and emphasise the process is simple and undemanding.

Though SECOS always welcomes the support of new members, it is emphasised that it is not necessary to be a member of SECOS to take part in this survey.

There are many benefits from using email communications for this survey, including saving paper, printing costs, legibility of inputs and easier record storage. If any further members are willing to receive the forms, guidelines and reports as e-mail attachments rather than paper copies, please let me have your e-mail address. Where I have e-mail addresses I assume willingness for this form of transaction unless told to the contrary. My e-mail address is handt136@talktalk.net 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 2012/13 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 (if anyone other than me still uses them) or CD-ROM.

Again, many thanks to all contributors.

Trevor Clowes.

21st May 2013