



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2015 TO MARCH 2016

The Survey Recorders

In this survey records were received from forty-nine survey members in the first session and fifty in the second session, from the fifty-one members taking part. The number of contributors has increased by one compared to the last survey. Fifteen 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. Since the first survey in 1985, a hundred and twelve people in total have taken part.

Table 1

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8501	Hilary Clowes	0227	Andrew Bailey
8502	Bryan Perkins	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
9703	John & Wendy Smith	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
1104	Ken & Beverley Jones	0430	John Goulding
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	8731	John P. Barker
1306	Roy Broughton	0432	Avril Watkins
0107	Christine Howarth	1533	David Cookson
0208	Stan Wildig	0334	Bill Bellamy
0409	Marie Turner	9635	Doreen Jones
1010	John Nixon	9636	Geoff Yarwood
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	1537	Heather Smith
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	1345	Martin Langhorn
0720	Rachel Heath	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1348	Graham Bailey
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	1351	Ray Broughton
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
1025	John Varty	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
1426	Teri Small		

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, eighty different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. Greater black-backed gull has been added to the list for the first time this year.

Table 2

No.	Bird Species	No.	Bird Species
1	Black-headed Gull	41	Magpie
2	Blackbird	42	Mallard
3	Blackcap	43	Marsh/ Willow Tit
4	Blue Tit	44	Meadow Pipit
5	Brambling	45	Mealy Redpoll
6	Bullfinch	46	Merlin
7	Buzzard	47	Mistle Thrush
8	Chaffinch	48	Moorhen
9	Chiffchaff	49	Mute Swan
10	Coal Tit	50	Nuthatch
11	Collared Dove	51	Pheasant
12	Common Gull	52	Pied Wagtail
13	Corn Bunting	53	Raven
14	Crow	54	Red-headed Bunting
15	Duncock	55	Red-legged Partridge
16	Feral Pigeon	56	Redpoll (Lesser)
17	Fieldfare	57	Redwing
18	Garden Warbler	58	Reed Bunting
19	Goldcrest	59	Ring-necked Parakeet
20	Goldfinch	60	Robin
21	Greater Black-backed Gull	61	Rook
22	Great Spotted Woodpecker	62	Siskin
23	Great Tit	63	Skylark
24	Green Woodpecker	64	Snipe
25	Greenfinch	65	Song Thrush
26	Grey Heron	66	Sparrowhawk
27	Grey Wagtail	67	Starling
28	Herring Gull	68	Stock Dove
29	House Martin	69	Swallow
30	House Sparrow	70	Tawny Owl
31	Jackdaw	71	Tree Sparrow
32	Jay	72	Treecreeper
33	Kestrel	73	Water Rail
34	Kingfisher	74	Waxwing
35	Lapwing	75	White Wagtail
36	Lesser Black-backed Gull	76	Willow Warbler
37	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	77	Woodcock
38	Linnet	78	Wood Pigeon
39	Little Owl	79	Wren
40	Long-tailed Tit	80	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 =1326). 1242 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just eighty-four fewer 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 are 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 1242</u> [1211]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51</u> [49]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Wood Pigeon	1176 [1147]	51 [48]	24 [20]	0639
2 [3]	Blue Tit	1125 [1102]	51 [49]	17 [13]	0838
3 [2]	Blackbird	1104 [1140]	51 [49]	22 [23]	0612
4 [4]	Robin	1091 [1078]	50 [49]	5 [6]	1351
5 [5]	Great Tit	937 [950]	50 [48]	9 [12]	1351
6 [6]	Dunnock	889 [912]	49 [49]	6 [6]	0838, 0342
7 [8]	House Sparrow	818 [799]	46 [42]	25 [25]	8731
8 [7]	Magpie	783 [801]	51 [49]	9 [9]	1351
9 [13]	Coal Tit	754 [567]	48 [45]	8 [6]	0639
10 [10]	Goldfinch	690 [675]	46 [45]	30 [36]	8505
11 [9]	Collared Dove	629 [718]	45 [47]	9 [13]	8731
12 [11]	Chaffinch	606 [672]	45 [43]	30 [32]	1306
13 [15]	Jackdaw	593 [446]	38 [28]	66 [23]	1306
14 [14]	Wren	554 [487]	51 [48]	8 [4]	0612
15 [12]	Starling	478 [591]	41 [41]	63 [70]	0208
16 [18]	Long-tailed Tit	439 [356]	46 [45]	14 [15]	1351
17 [16]	Greenfinch	433 [439]	36 [37]	15 [15]	0612
18 [17]	Crow	365 [373]	37 [40]	4 [19]	#1
19 [19]	Nuthatch	257 [239]	24 [19]	3 [3]	1351
20 [20]	GS Woodpecker	189 [210]	22 [24]	3 [3]	0612, 0758
21 [20]	Sparrowhawk	177 [161]	33 [32]	2 [2]	1010, 0639
22 [21]	Song Thrush	118 [119]	26 [28]	3 [3]	1029

#1 Members No. 8511, 0119, 0433, 1537, 0639

Brackets thus [], denotes the corresponding ranking or count in the previous survey for comparison.

(See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

Once more in general, there was little change in the ranking order, the number of gardens visited or the highest count for all species when compared to the previous survey. Wood pigeons retained their most common bird status, achieved in the last survey for the very first time. Coal tits records

were greatly increased. The highest count for jackdaws trebled, which does seem to reflect a perceived trend of higher garden populations.

Wood pigeon, blue tit and blackbird were recorded in every garden. Robin and great tit were each present in all but one. Great spotted woodpeckers were transferred to the listed bird table for this survey at the expense of the pied wagtail and justified the move by occupying the twentieth position in the table, though they were slightly less common than in the previous survey.

Fourteen 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, whilst another clocked up the highest count for four 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-one species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-three species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-three} from the eighty 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 576</u> [663]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51</u> [49]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [2]	Bullfinch	185 [163]	19 [15]	7 [7]	1426
2 [27]	Siskin	129 [3]	25 [3]	22 [2]	0758
3 [7]	Goldcrest	101 [79]	17 [15]	3 [2]	0639
4 [5]	Pheasant	97 [90]	7 [8]	6 [6]	0612
5 [3]	Jay	92 [106]	11 [15]	8 [7]	1351
6 [4]	Stock Dove	77 [96]	11 [9]	5 [6]	0844
7 [9]	Rook	76 [65]	10 [10]	54 [12]	1306
8 [17]	Lesser Redpoll	57 [21]	11 [5]	8 [4]	8518, 1351
9 [6]	Blackcap	50 [81]	12 [15]	4 [3]	1351
9 [15]	Redwing	50 [32]	15 [9]	100 [20]	0556
11 [10]	Reed Bunting	38 [57]	6 [9]	6 [4]	1306
12 [8]	Black Headed Gull	36 [75]	11 [12]	20 [30]	8501
11 [11]	Mistle Thrush	36 [48]	10 [10]	4 [3]	1533
13 [20]	Tawny Owl	34 [17]	3 [3]	2 [2]	0639
14 [30]	Brambling	31 [1]	5 [1]	4 [1]	1022
15 [17]	Treecreeper	30 [21]	9 [7]	2 [1]	0556
15 [19]	Tree Sparrow	30 [11]	5 [4]	4 [4]	1306
17 [14]	Grey Wagtail	25 [35]	9 [9]	2 [2]	0430
18 [11]	Feral Pigeon	23 [48]	4 [2]	4 [4]	1348
19 [22]	Herring Gull	20 [12]	4 [1]	2 [2]	0208
20 [17]	Fieldfare	17 [21]	4 [9]	5 [3]	1351, 0556
21 [13]	Grey Heron	15 [40]	5 [8]	1 [1]	#1
22 [21]	Mallard	12 [15]	4 [3]	2 [4]	#2
23 [6]	Pied Wagtail	11 [85]	3 [13]	2 [3]	0334
24 [24]	Lesser b-b gull	5 [5]	1 [1]	1 [1]	0208
25 [16]	Buzzard	4 [24]	2 [8]	1 [3]	0639, 0556
25 [29]	Chiffchaff	4 [2]	4 [2]	2 [1]	0838

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

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 576</u> [663]		<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 51</u> [49]		<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
						<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
27 [0]	Greater b b Gull	3 [0]		1 [0]		1 [0]	0208
28 [25]	Kestrel	1 [4]		1 [3]		1 [1]	9635
28 [0]	Linnet	1 [0]		1 [0]		1 [0]	1306
28 [0]	Raven	1 {0}		1 {0}		2 [0]	9923
28 [30]	Red-leg Partridge	1 [1]		1 [1]		2 [1]	9923
0 [25]	Moorhen	0 [4]		0 [2]		0 [1]	
0 [27]	Yellow Hammer	0 [3]		0 [1]		0 [1]	

#1 – Members 9921, 9636,, 0639, 1345.

#2 – Members 1306, 9921, 0334

Brackets thus [], denotes corresponding figures to the previous [2014/15] survey for comparison.

Thirty-one species were recorded from fifty-one gardens, as was the case last time from forty-nine gardens. From the 1,242 total number of bird week records submitted, 576 bird week records of other species are included, compared to 663 for the previous survey.

Greater black-backed gull, linnet and raven were present in this survey but not in the last.

Moorhen and yellow hammer recorded in the last survey were absent from this.

Bullfinch was the most common visitor in this table and was second only to the great spotted woodpecker last time.

There was an explosion of siskin records propelling them from the bottom of the table in the last survey to second in this. They cropped up in twenty-five gardens compared with only three previously, with a highest count of twenty-two, rather than two previously.

Goldcrest records also showed a significant increase.

Acorns continued to attract large numbers of jays though not quite in such profusion as before.

Brambling had a bounteous year by their standard, records increased from a solitary single count previously to thirty-one, from five gardens with a highest count of four.

Pied wagtails, now relocated for recording purposes in this, the other species table, suffered a monumental drop in record numbers and for this survey were surprisingly less common than their grey cousins, who may find the incessant wet conditions more to their liking.

Buzzard records also crashed this time round.

Tree creepers and tree sparrows produced significantly more records and visited the odd additional garden.

Nineteen members recorded the highest count for at least one species but one member had the highest count for four species (only species count greater than one qualify for inclusion in this exercise).

The gardens of member 1351 were visited by the highest number of "other species" with sixteen, closely followed by members 1306, 0639, and 0556 with fourteen.

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

Feeding habits

The following species were reported feeding on the following food sources.

Sunflower hearts - blackbird, robin, chaffinch, goldfinch, siskin, redpoll and rook.

Sunflower seeds - siskin, for one member the first siskin recorded in ten years.

Suet blocks - starling, tree sparrow and blackcap.

Fat balls - magpies, great-spotted woodpecker, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, long-tail tit and blackbird.

Peanut feeder - jay and blackcap.

Rowan berries - bullfinch.

Holly berries - blackbird and redwing.

Meal worm - starlings.

Frog from garden pond - heron.

Frogspawn from garden pond - rook, heron and mallard.

Mixed seed on ground - wood pigeon, jackdaw, collared dove, rook, crow, magpie, brambling and chaffinch.

Hanging seed feeder - redpoll, siskin, blackbird, wren, jackdaw, dunnoek, sparrow and starling.

Nijer seed - coal tit.

Silver birch catkins - redpoll.

One member had a rat invade her garden shed to feast from the bird food store and another had to give up feeding to deter rats in the garden.

Sparrowhawk Exploits

Sparrowhawk's feeding habits included taking house sparrow, dunnoek, siskin, blue tit, wood pigeon and blackbird.

A wood pigeon kill was seen to occupy two hours of feasting until dark, followed by a return the next morning for another two hour session before eventually flying off with the carcass. In another garden a pigeon only provided a one and a half hour feast.

Disruptions to recording.

Extensive road repair works over a prolonged period resulted in one garden having a shortage of birds.

Several reports of cats causing havoc were provided.

One member's car cooling fan started to make strange noises at speed and investigation revealed a dead wren in the enclosure (not counted for the survey).

Behaviour reports.

A dead blackbird chick was noted in early February.

A pair of robins were displaying in January and a robin hatched chicks in March.

Blue tits showed aggression to chase goldfinches from feeders.

Similar for robin v sparrows.

One member recorded a nuthatch for the first time in fifteen years.

Erecting a new feeder was rewarded by the first starling in recent times to the garden.

Two ravens took garden refuge from mobbing crows.

Many reports of extensive periods without bird activity for some resulting in disposing of deteriorated fat blocks.

Weather Conditions

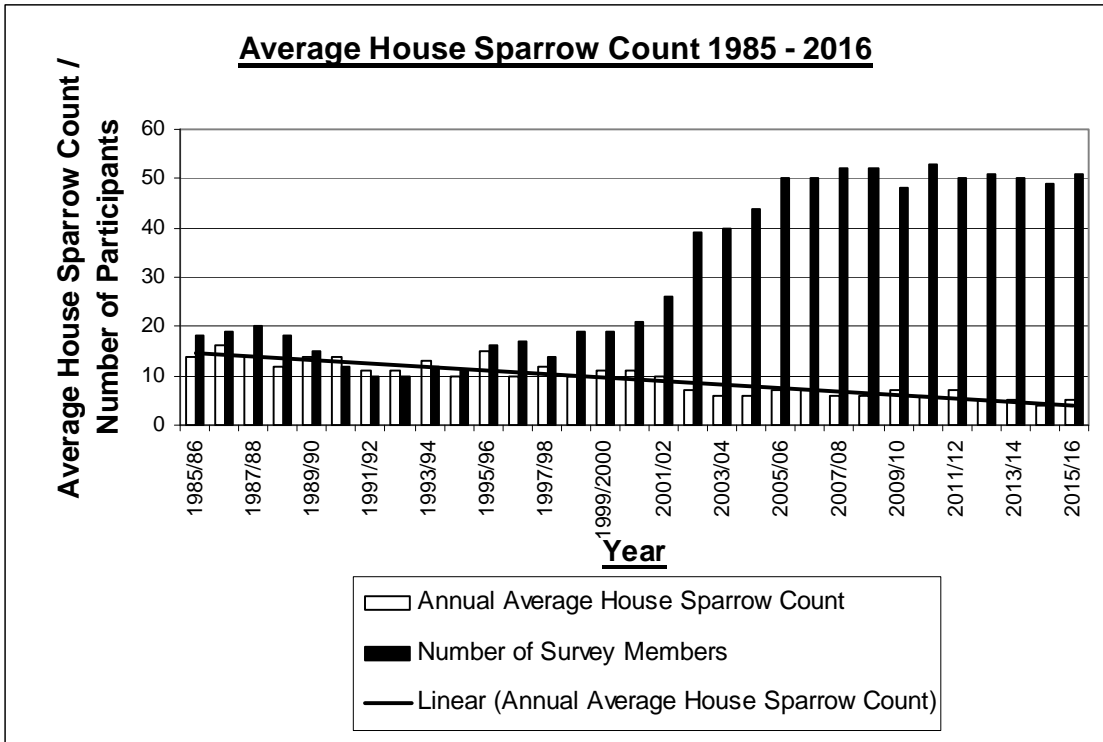
Table 5 provides a brief overview of weather conditions for the twenty-six week survey period, which, as usual, is provided courtesy of John Barker's detailed records.

Table 5 – Weather Summary

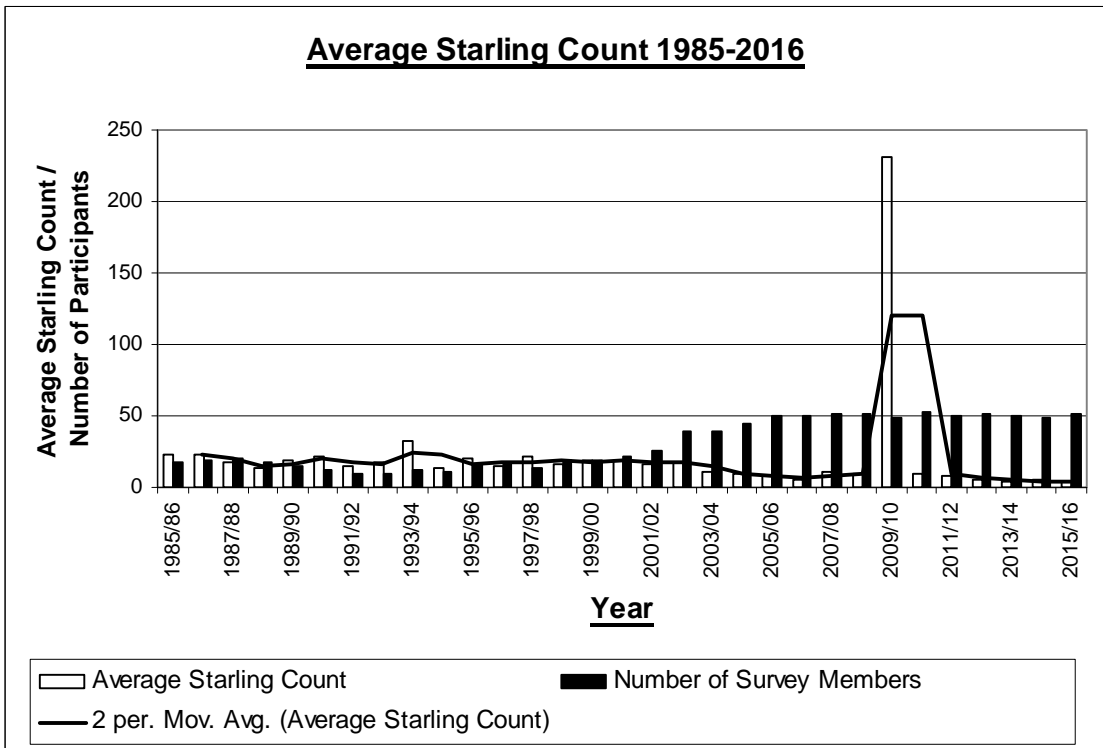
Week No.	Number of Days			Inches of Rain	Temp. °F		Wind		One Word Notes
	Sunny Periods	Frost Snow Sleet	Wet cloudy		Max	Min	Direction	Strength	
1	0	0F	3	0.29	67	38	S, SE, NW	Moderate	Cloudy
2	3	0F	0	0.00	58	31	NE	Light	Cloudy
3	0	0F	2	0.61	58	33	NW	Light	Cloudy
4	0	0F	5	0.43	59	35	SE, SW.	Moderate	Cloudy
5	0	0F	5	0.80	56	40	SW	Light	Mixed
6	0	0F	6	1.13	59	35	SW	Moderate	Cloudy
7	0	2F	7	0.49	51	32	SW	Variable	Cloudy
8	1	3F	7	1.03	52	23	N-NW	Light	Cloudy
9	0	0F	5	1.08	53	33	SW	Strong	Cloudy
10	1	2F	6	1.01	55	29	SW	Fresh	Cloudy
11	0	0F	6	0.25	54	33	SW	Moderate	Cloudy
12	2	1F	5	0.75	54	32	SW	Moderate	Mixed
13	2	2F	5	1.10	53	27	SW - SE	Strong	Cloudy
14	0	1F	6	1.53	44	29	NW - SE	Moderate	Cloudy
15	0	7F	7	1.20	42	22	NW	Moderate	Cloudy
16	1	5F	4	0.29	49	26	NW -SW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	3F	7	0.23	44	30	SW	Fresh	Cloudy
18	0	3F	6	0.93	53	26	NW/SW/S	Moderate	Cloudy
19	2	7F	4	0.55	46	24	Variable	Strong	Mixed
20	2	6F	4	0.85	47	22	Variable	Light	Mixed
21	4	6F	1	0.10	54	22	NW	Fresh	Light
22	0	2F	7	1.13	54	26	NW	Variable	Cloudy
23	0	6F	3	0.51	50	23	NW	Light	Cloudy
24	4	5F	0	0.00	55	26	SE-NE	Light	Sunny
25	2	1F	5	0.29	55	27	NE-SW	Light	Mixed
26	1	4F	5	1.41	57	28	SW	Moderate	Cloudy

House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2016

Once more the two bar charts used in previous reports have been updated to include the latest data from this survey, which now extends over a thirty-one year period and are presented below. The average annual garden house sparrow count has continued to decline since the year 2002 and in this survey has increased to five compared to four last time. Six gardens failed to record a single house sparrow during the entire period of the survey. The trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow average count has declined from around fifteen in 1985 to four or five in recent years.



The average annual starling count for this survey dropped from five in the previous survey to four in this, whilst in 1985 the average stood at twenty-three. Ten gardens did not record a single starling during the survey. Once more the trend line shows a moving average one, rather than linear to accommodate the one-off distortion caused by a large roost in 2009/10. Sadly the overall trend continues to be one of decline.



This survey continues to show that there has been a rapid sustained decline in the population of both species.

The data is contained in two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, with pages for each year of the annual surveys, which 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 2016/17 Winter Garden Bird Survey, will eventually 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.

Do please inform me if you wish to discontinue taking part in the survey, which will avoid my contacting you needlessly at the end of the survey. I do need to know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms. I am not able to commence analysing the data and preparing the report until I know no more forms will be received. Equally please provide encouragement to anyone, SECOS member or not, who would like to join the survey. 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. Though we hope that survey members will be inclined to join SECOS, it is emphasised that it is not necessary to be a member of SECOS to take part in this survey. The benefits of membership however include a programme of illustrated lectures at our Ettiley Heath meeting room on the second Friday evening of each month from September to March. On the first Tuesday of the month local bird watching outings by car are arranged during roughly the same period and monthly Sunday outings currently by mini-bus to more distant reserves. Members also have access by arrangement to the club's bird hide on Rode Pool. Full details of the club's activities are maintained in an up-to-date state on the excellent web site secos.org.uk

For the survey, there are many benefits from using email communications, 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. My postal address and email address are both included on the survey guideline document issued with the survey forms. Please note that the survey forms are structured to allow easy (though lengthy) input into the database, consequently records cannot be used if provided and formatted in a different way.

Finally I include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2014/15 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), memory stick or CD-ROM.

Again, many thanks to all contributors.

Trevor Clowes.

10th May 2016