



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019

The Survey Recorders

In this survey, which commenced on Sunday 7th October 2018, records were received from forty-seven survey members. The number of contributors has decreased by two compared to the last survey, with five leaving and three joining. Fifteen survey members are not members of SECOS. As ever, 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 seventeen 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	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
8502	Bryan Perkins	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
1804	Geraldine Gadsden	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 Soper	1537	Heather Smith
9813	John Thompson	0838	Richard Howells
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0639	Chris Parry
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	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0720	Rachel Heath	1348	Graham Bailey
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1351	Ray Broughton
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	1352	Lorna Pickstock
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
1825	Kate Whittles	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
1727	Mike Tonks		

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, eighty-one different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. No new species has been added to the list by this survey.

Table 2

No.	Bird Species	No.	Bird Species
1	Black-headed Gull	42	Magpie
2	Blackbird	43	Mallard
3	Blackcap	44	Marsh/ Willow Tit
4	Blue Tit	45	Meadow Pipit
5	Brambling	46	Mealy Redpoll
6	Bullfinch	47	Merlin
7	Buzzard	48	Mistle Thrush
8	Chaffinch	49	Moorhen
9	Chiffchaff	50	Mute Swan
10	Coal Tit	51	Nuthatch
11	Collared Dove	52	Pheasant
12	Common Gull	53	Pied Wagtail
13	Corn Bunting	54	Raven
14	Crow	55	Red-headed Bunting
15	Duncock	56	Red-legged Partridge
16	Feral Pigeon	57	Redpoll (Lesser)
17	Fieldfare	58	Redwing
18	Garden Warbler	59	Reed Bunting
19	Goldcrest	60	Ring-necked Parakeet
20	Goldfinch	61	Robin
21	Greater Black-backed Gull	62	Rook
22	Great Spotted Woodpecker	63	Siskin
23	Great Tit	64	Skylark
24	Green Woodpecker	65	Snipe
25	Greenfinch	66	Song Thrush
26	Grey Heron	67	Sparrowhawk
27	Grey Wagtail	68	Starling
28	Hawfinch	69	Stock Dove
29	Herring Gull	70	Swallow
30	House Martin	71	Tawny Owl
31	House Sparrow	72	Tree Sparrow
32	Jackdaw	73	Treecreeper
33	Jay	74	Water Rail
34	Kestrel	75	Waxwing
35	Kingfisher	76	White Wagtail
36	Lapwing	77	Willow Warbler
37	Lesser Black-backed Gull	78	Woodcock
38	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	79	Wood Pigeon
39	Linnet	80	Wren
40	Little Owl	81	Yellowhammer
41	Long-tailed Tit		

The Current Survey

Forty-seven participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1222 bird/week records (47 x 26 =1222). 1183 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just thirty-nine fewer than is actually possible.

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 1183</u> [1203]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 47</u> [49]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
1 [3]	Wood Pigeon	1131 [1141]	47 [49]	15 [45]	8501, 1533, 0639
2 [4]	Blackbird	1100 [1121]	47 [49]	15 [15]	1351
3 [2]	Robin	1075 [1144]	47 [49]	8 [7]	1351
4 [1]	Blue Tit	1068 [1152]	47 [49]	15 [16]	0838
5 [5]	Dunnock	893 [967]	43 [48]	9 [6]	1351
6 [7]	Magpie	786 [821]	45 [47]	13 [7]	0024
7 [6]	Great Tit	776 [891]	45 [49]	14 [14]	1825
8 [8]	House Sparrow	760 [764]	41 [42]	28 [30]	8731
9 [11]	Goldfinch	721 [641]	39 [45]	54 [37]	0853
10 [9]	Chaffinch	609 [723]	40 [43]	16 [22]	1306
11 [12]	Starling	554 [626]	41 [42]	200 [100]	1804
12 [16]	Jackdaw	528 [520]	32 [30]	80 [80]	1306
13 [10]	Coal Tit	527 [703]	43 [47]	6 [7]	1351
14 [13]	Collared Dove	515 [563]	37 [38]	5 [6]	#1
15 [17]	Greenfinch	447 [470]	34 [33]	9 [9]	0844
16 [18]	Crow	406 [402]	36 [39]	4 [5]	#2
17 [15]	Wren	372 [532]	40 [46]	2 [6]	#3
18 [14]	Long-tailed Tit	339 [549]	37 [49]	15 [22]	1351
19 [19]	Nuthatch	197 [212]	18 [26]	4 [6]	0639, 1351
20 [20]	GS Woodpecker	147 [185]	22 [25]	2 [5]	#4
21 [21]	Song Thrush	126 [174]	24 [33]	3 [3]	1352
22 [22]	Sparrowhawk	125 [128]	29 [27]	2 [2]	1348, 1351

#1 Members Reg No. 8501 ,1306, 0024, 0432, 0844

#2 Members Reg No. 8511, 1029, 0844

#3 Members Reg No. 9813, 9814, 1825, 1537, 0639, 1351, 0556

#4 Members Reg No. 1306, 1825, 0838, 1351, 0758

Brackets thus [], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2016/17] survey for comparison. (See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

There were no significant changes in the listed bird table above to those from the previous survey. The normal variations occurred without any obvious crashes or surges compared to the last survey Wood pigeons regained the most common slot from blue tit, which slipped to fourth place. Long-tailed tits and song thrush records were most depleted and were absent from far more gardens. Despite goldfinches visiting far fewer gardens, the number of records was higher and the

maximum count was far higher. Similarly, the number of gardens visited by each species showed little change, with wood pigeon, blackbird, robin and blue tit having a presence in every garden in the survey.

Twenty-three members recorded a highest or joint highest count for one or more species with member 1351 having a highest count for no fewer than eight species.

The “Other Species”

In *Table 4* below the species entered on the “Other Species” section of the input forms are listed in descending order of number of bird/week record occurrences, as a measure of their commonality within this survey. A further thirty species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-two species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-three} from the eighty-one 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</u>		<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of</u>		<u>Highest Single Count</u>		<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
		<u>525</u>	<u>[695]</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>[49]</u>	<u>Count</u>		
1 [1]	Bullfinch	114	[210]	12	[21]	7	[6]	1351
2 [7]	Pheasant	98	[80]	7	[8]	14	[8]	1306
3 [9]	Rook	94	[69]	5	[6]	50	[100]	1306
4 [2]	Pied Wagtail	93	[131]	15	[19]	3	[5]	1306, 1351
5 [5]	Feral Pigeon	90	[83]	7	[5]	11	[6]	0208
6 [6]	Stock Dove	83	[82]	7	[7]	12	[12]	1306
7 [4]	Blackcap	69	[100]	17	[21]	3	[3]	0342
8 [8]	Jay	67	[79]	9	[6]	6	[9]	1351
9 [13]	Black-headed Gull	59	[53]	12	[11]	15	[15]	9921
10 [3]	Goldcrest	57	[122]	11	[21]	2	[3]	#1
11 [9]	Siskin	55	[69]	13	[15]	7	[8]	0853
12 [16]	Mistle Thrush	31	[32]	8	[11]	3	[2]	1017
12 [17]	Lesser Redpoll	31	[30]	7	[7]	6	[11]	8518
14 [12]	Fieldfare	29	[59]	6	[21]	12	[80]	1351
15 [11]	Redwing	22	[60]	9	[21]	9	[30]	1351
16 [22]	Mallard	18	[12]	2	[6]	4	[4]	0556
17 [14]	Brambling	15	[51]	5	[11]	9	[37]	1017
18 [23]	Herring Gull	14	[11]	1	[3]	2	[2]	0208
19 [19]	Tawny Owl	13	[22]	1	[2]	1	[2]	0639
19 [20]	Reed Bunting	13	[20]	3	[2]	6	[5]	8518
21 [15]	Grey Wagtail	12	[33]	7	[7]	1	[1]	#2
22 [24]	Lesser b-b gull	11	[10]	2	[3]	2	[2]	0208
23 [18]	Treecreeper	10	[27]	5	[11]	2	[1]	0556
24 [21]	Grey Heron	8	[14]	5	[5]	1	[1]	#3
25 [25]	Tree Sparrow	6	[9]	3	[4]	4	[4]	1351
26 [26]	Buzzard	2	[6]	2	[5]	3	[2]	1348
27 [27]	Chiffchaff	1	[3]	1	[2]	1	[1]	0556
27 [29]	Moorhen	1	[1]	1	[1]	1	[1]	0556
27 [0]	Raven	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[0]	0556
27 [0]	Red-leg Partridge	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[0]	9923
0 [28]	Hawfinch	0	[2]	0	[1]	0	[1]	
0 [29]	Willow warbler	0	[1]	0	[1]	0	[1]	
0 [29]	Common Gull	0	[1]	0	[1]	0	[1]	

#1 – Members Reg No 9814, 8518, 0838, 0639, 0347, 0556, 0758

#2 – Members Reg No 1306, 8511, 9921, 0024, 0844, 1351, 0758

#3 --Members Reg No 0107, 9921, 9636. 0639, 1348

Brackets thus [], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2016/17] survey for comparison.
(See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members' names.)

Thirty species were recorded from forty-seven gardens, compared to thirty-one species from forty-nine gardens last time. From the 1183 total number of bird-week records submitted, 525 bird-week records of other species are included, compared to 695 for the previous survey, quite a substantial reduction for no obvious reason.

Raven and red-legged partridge had a solitary record in this survey, but hawfinch, willow warbler and common gull present last time were absent.

Though bullfinch retained its position of most common in this table, the bird-week records were greatly diminished, with only twelve gardens visited compared to twenty-one previously.

Though rooks only visited five gardens they still managed to leap to third place from a lowly ninth last time.

Blackcap and particularly goldcrest tumbled down the list from a position of previous prominence.

The winter thrush visitors, fieldfare and redwing, had a notably reduced presence and the relatively plentiful counts for brambling last time returned to more normal numbers.

Grey wagtails visited seven gardens as in the last survey, but their records were greatly reduced also.

Twenty members recorded the highest count for at least one species but member 1351 had the highest or joint highest count for seven species, closely followed by 1306 with five (only species count greater than one qualify for inclusion in this exercise).

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

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

Feeding habits mentioned

The following species were reported feeding on food sources below.

Dead flower heads mixed with suet and seed proved irresistible to blue tits.

Laurel seed heads goldfinch.

Damson tree buds – wood pigeons

Rowan tree berries – many birds, including redwing and fieldfare.

Mixed seed feeder – robin, dunnock,

Sunflower hearts -blackbird, greenfinch, siskin and blackcap.

Black sunflower seeds – coal tit, bullfinch, nuthatch and lesser redpoll

Suet blocks – starling, jackdaw, great tit, blue tit.

Fatballs –blue tits, house sparrows, blackcaps, blackbirds and great spotted woodpecker

Granular peanuts - starling

Baked potato skins – jackdaws.

General hanging feeders – magpie, jackdaw, lesser redpoll and siskin.

Predatory behaviour

Sparrowhawks, were as usual, very active hunters.

One was seen to catch a small rat, taking five minutes for it to die during the devouring process and another ten minutes to complete the meal..

Elsewhere another took a blackbird from a pyracantha bush and then spent a leisurely hour eating it.

Another made short-work of a goldfinch from a feeder.

A chaffinch was chased into a window crash situation before the sparrowhawk peeled away, elsewhere a bullfinch similarly chased was a casualty of a window crash.

Lastly one was seen to take a stock dove.

A cat was seen with a blue tit in its mouth.

Disruptions to recording.

The prevalence of adjacent new-build homes significantly reduced garden visits for some recorders due to general noise and vehicle activity.

Dominant grey squirrels pilfered food intended for birds.

Neighbour's cats and tree felling provided long-term impact.

First garden visit or unusual event reports.

A cold snap brought a record ten blackbirds to one garden.

Similarly, a scattering of snow brought some two hundred starlings to a garden at dusk.

A nuthatch was recorded for the first time on one garden feeder, closely followed by a great spotted woodpecker, only once previously recorded.

A pied wagtail was a first for another recorder.

Though not a first visit, a mallard chose to nest beneath a garden bush and laid twelve eggs.

Noted bird behaviour.

A blackbird chased off a song thrush from food source.

A jackdaw was noted breaking off birch twigs, probably as nest building material.

Robins were noted to be pairing in January.

A bullfinch contracted the white fungal leg infection, normally associated with chaffinch.

A spell of mild weather during the Christmas period resulted in a paucity of garden bird records.

A collared dove successfully drove off a wood pigeon from food source.

A siskin cropped up just in time for the RSPB great garden bird watch for one recorder.

A parakeet was noted in the vicinity of Weston.

In competition with a great tit, a blue tit won the day for occupancy of a nest box.

A nuthatch nested in the side of one member's house.

A chimney roosting tawny owl was mobbed by greenfinch, magpie and jackdaw.

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	4	0F	4	0.98	66	34	S-SW	Fresh	Mixed
2	0	1F	2	0.28	60	30	NW	Light	Cloudy
3	0	2F	1	0.30	66	29	NW	Light	Cloudy
4	0	5F	2	0.14	51	21	NW	Light	Sunny spells
5	0	0F	5	0.42	54	37	SE-SW	Light	Cloudy
6	0	0F	4	0.21	52	35	SW	Light	Mixed
7	0	4F	4	0.19	48	22	SE-SW	Light	Mixed
8	0	2F	5	0.53	54	25	SW	Light	Mixed
9	0	2F	6	1.52	42	21	NW-SW	Light	Cloudy
10	0	3F1S	3	0.95	44	24	NW-SE	Light	Mixed
11	0	2F	7	0.96	46	30	SW	Light	Cloudy
12	0	2F	2	0.46	50	31	SW	Light	Mixed

Table 5 – Weather Summary continued

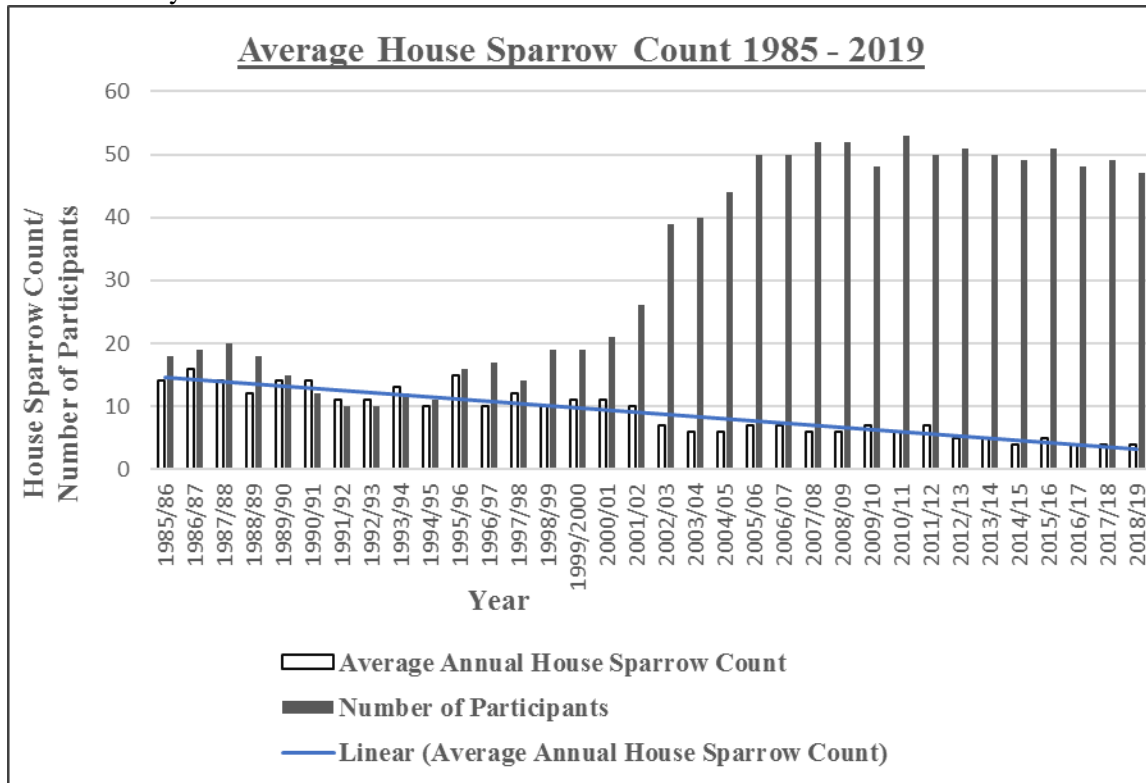
Week No.	Number of Days			Inches of Rain	Temp. °F		Wind		One Word Notes
	Sunny Periods	Frost Snow Sleet	Wet cloudy		Max	Min	Direction	Strength	
13	0	4F	1	0.02	46	21	NW	Light	Cloudy
14	0	3F	3	0.04	49	23	NW	Variable	Cloudy
15	0	4F	4	0.40	48	25	NW-SW	Strong	Cloudy
16	0	6F2S	6	0.60	48	24	SW-NW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	7F	3	0.48	39	18	NW-NE	Strong	Mixed
18	0	5F	5	0.78	49	21	NW	Light	Mixed
19	0	4F	1	0.15	56	30	NW-SW	Variable	Mixed
20	0	0F	4	0.26	55	33	NW	Light	Mixed
21	4	3F	3	0.40	63	29	SW	Light	Mixed
22	0	5F	6	0.81	54	27	SW-NW	Light	Mixed
23	0	1F	7	1.95	49	30	NW	Gales	Mixed
24	0	1F	2	0.21	65	29	NW-SW	Light	Mixed
25	0	4F	1	0.04	61	28	NW	Light	Mixed
26	0	3F	3	1.08	54	27	SE-NW	Light	Mixed

House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2019

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-four year period and are presented below.

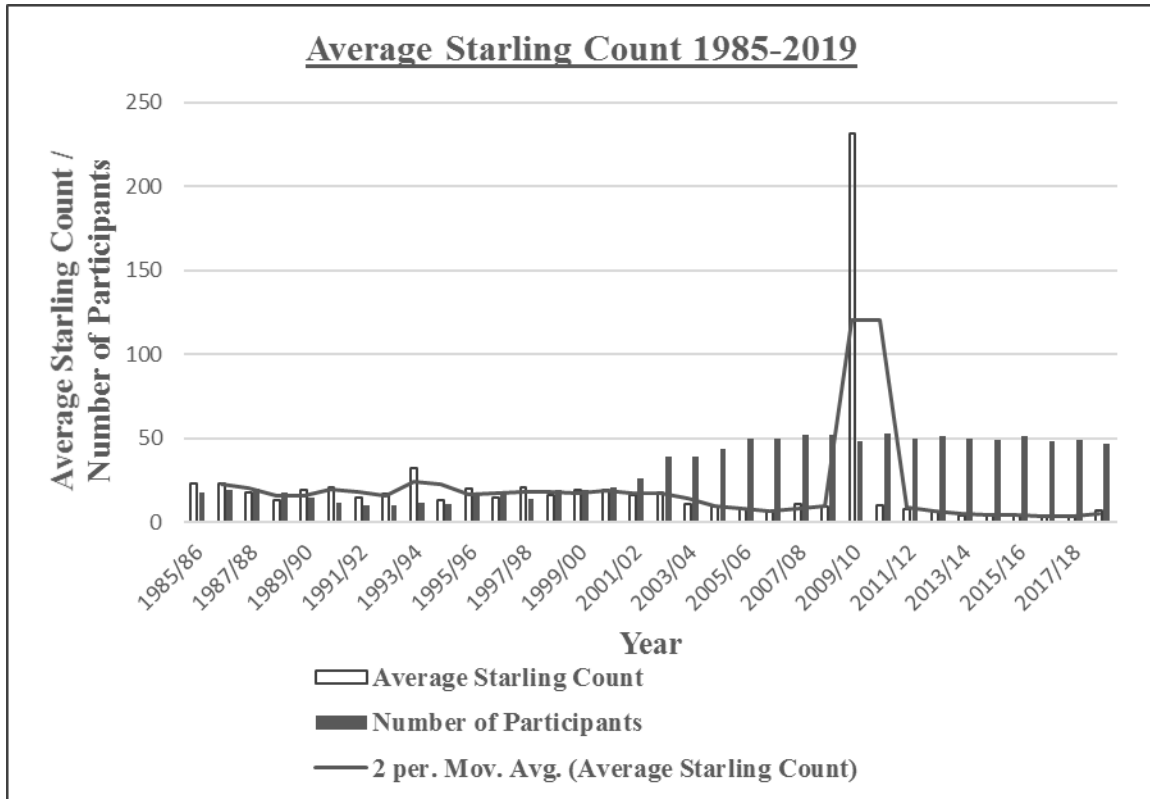
House sparrows

The declining trend for the house sparrow population remains the same with six gardens failing 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



Starlings

The average annual starling count for this survey showed a slight improvement compared to the previous survey of four, with an average count increasing to seven which is the highest achieved since 2011. However, in 1985 the average stood at twenty-three. Six 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. Overall the trend continues to be one of decline, but the slight improvement is welcome and hopefully will continue.



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 2019/20 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.

I repeat my plea for you to inform me if you no longer wish to take 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 birdwatching outings by car are arranged during roughly the same period and monthly Sunday outings, currently also by car, 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 2018/19 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, memory stick or CD-ROM.

Again, many thanks to all contributors.

Trevor Clowes.

9th May 2019