



## **SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2019 TO MARCH 2020**

### **The Survey Recorders**

In this survey, which commenced on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019, records were received from forty-four survey members. The number of contributors has decreased by three compared to the last survey, with four leaving and one joining. Twelve 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 eighteen people in total have taken part.

***Table 1***

<b><u>Reg. No.</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Reg. No.</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>
8501	Hilary Clowes	1825	Kate Whittles
8502	Bryan Perkins	1727	Mike Tonks
1804	Geraldine Gadsden	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	0430	John Goulding
1306	Roy Broughton	8731	John P. Barker
0107	Christine Howarth	1533	David Cookson
0409	Marie Turner	0334	Bill Bellamy
1010	John Nixon	9636	Geoff Yarwood
8511	Alan Soper	1537	Heather Smith
1912	Anne Davies	0838	Richard Howells
9813	John Thompson	0639	Chris Parry
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0240	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
1919	David Sandall	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0720	Rachel Heath	1348	Graham Bailey
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1351	Ray Broughton
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	0853	David Bromont
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
0024	Derek Owen	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright

### **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**

<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>Bird Species</u></b>	<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>Bird Species</u></b>
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-four participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1144 bird/week records (44 x 26 =1144). 1087 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just fifty-seven 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 1087</u> [1183]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 44</u> [47]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Wood Pigeon	1016 [1131]	44 [47]	39 [15]	0639
2 [4]	Blue Tit	1028 [1068]	44 [47]	14 [15]	1351
3 [3]	Robin	1020 [1075]	44 [47]	9 [8]	1351
4 [2]	Blackbird	995 [1100]	44 [47]	12 [15]	1315, 0720
5 [5]	Dunnock	867 [893]	43 [43]	14 [9]	1351
6 [7]	Great Tit	824 [776]	43 [45]	11 [14]	1351
7 [9]	Goldfinch	750 [721]	42 [39]	50 [54]	0758
8 [8]	House Sparrow	710 [760]	40 [41]	25 [28]	8731
9 [6]	Magpie	697 [786]	42 [45]	14 [13]	8511
10 [10]	Chaffinch	576 [609]	41 [40]	18 [16]	1306
11 [11]	Starling	561 [554]	40 [41]	51 [200]	9921
12 [14]	Collared Dove	554 [515]	35 [37]	9 [5]	0136
13 [13]	Coal Tit	542 [527]	40 [43]	6 [6]	1351
14 [15]	Greenfinch	457 [447]	35 [34]	12 [9]	1537
15 [12]	Jackdaw	453 [528]	29 [32]	41 [80]	1306
16 [18]	Long-tailed Tit	429 [339]	43 [37]	15 [15]	1351
17 [17]	Wren	422 [372]	42 [40]	3 [2]	1351
18 [16]	Crow	347 [406]	35 [36]	5 [4]	1306
19 [19]	Nuthatch	190 [197]	21 [18]	5 [4]	8511
20 [21]	Song Thrush	129 [126]	26 [24]	6 [3]	0409
21 [22]	Sparrowhawk	120 [125]	26 [29]	3 [2]	0838
22 [20]	GS Woodpecker	112 [147]	14 [22]	3 [2]	1351

Brackets thus [ ], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2018/19] survey for comparison. (See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

There were no dramatic 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 remained in the most common slot and recorded a very high single count. Blue tit came back to second place. Great spotted woodpecker visits declined. The number of gardens visited by each species showed little change, with wood pigeon, blackbird, robin and blue tit once more having a presence in every garden in the survey.

It may be of interest to make a comparison with this year’s single day annual RSPB Big British Birdwatch top ten birds which were, 1, house sparrow, 2, starling, 3, blue tit, 4, wood pigeon, 5, blackbird, 6, goldfinch, 7, great tit, 8, robin, 9, long-tailed tit, 10, magpie.

**The “Listed Species” (continued)**

Most of the species included are the same as in our survey, though the order varies. The major differences are that our top ten includes dunnock and chaffinch, though not in theirs and they include long-tailed tit and starling, but not ours.

Twelve members recorded a highest or joint highest count for one or more species with member 1351 again having a highest count for 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 twenty-nine species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-one species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-two} 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>483</u>	<u>[525]</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>[47]</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Bullfinch	104	[114]	16	[12]	6 [7]	1351
2 [6]	Stock Dove	98	[83]	12	[7]	16 [12]	1306
3 [4]	Pied Wagtail	86	[93]	13	[15]	3 [3]	0240
4 [2]	Pheasant	80	[98]	8	[7]	3 [14]	1351
5 {3}	Rook	68	[94]	4	[5]	35 [50]	1306
6 [5]	Feral Pigeon	61	[90]	4	[7]	6 [11]	1348
7 [8]	Jay	57	[67]	9	[9]	7 [6]	1351
8 [15]	Redwing	38	[22]	15	[9]	18 [9]	1017
9 [9]	Black-headed Gull	34	[59]	10	[12]	15 [15]	9921
10 [10]	Goldcrest	32	[57]	8	[11]	2 [2]	#1
11 [14]	Fieldfare	27	[29]	12	[6]	12 [12]	9921
12 [7]	Blackcap	25	[69]	14	[17]	3 [3]	1017, 0342
13 [12]	Mistle Thrush	22	[31]	6	[8]	3 [3]	0758
14 [19]	Reed Bunting	12	[13]	3	[3]	4 [6]	8518
15 [26]	Buzzard	11	[2]	2	[2]	2 [3]	0334, 0639
15 [27]	Chiffchaff	11	[1]	5	[1]	1 [1]	#2
17 [21]	Grey Wagtail	10	[12]	4	[7]	1 [1]	#3
17 [23]	Treecreeper	10	[10]	5	[5]	2 [2]	0556
19 [24]	Grey Heron	9	[8]	5	[5]	1 [1]	#4
20 [16]	Mallard	8	[18]	1	[2]	6 [4]	0556
21 [11]	Siskin	7	[55]	4	[13]	3 [7]	8518
21 [12]	Lesser Redpoll	7	[31]	2	[7]	2 [6]	8518
21 [18]	Herring Gull	7	[14]	3	[1]	3 [2]	9921
24 [19]	Tawny Owl	4	[13]	1	[1]	1 [1]	0639
25 [27]	Raven	3	[1]	2	[1]	1 [1]	0639, 1351
26 [17]	Brambling	2	[15]	2	[5]	1 [9]	1215, 1537
26 [25]	Tree Sparrow	2	[6]	1	[3]	1 [4]	1010
28 [22]	Lesser b-b gull	1	[11]	1	[2]	1 [2]	9636
28 [0]	Greater b-b Gull	1	[0]	1	[0]	1 [0]	0334
[27]	Moorhen	0	[1]	0	[1]	0 [1]	
[27]	Red-leg Partridge	0	[1]	0	[1]	0 [1]	

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

#1 – Members Reg No 0838, 0639, 0347, 0556

#2 – Members Reg No 9813, 0838, 0639, 1351, 0556

#3 --Members Reg No 1306, 0342, 1351, 0556

#4 --Members Reg No 9921, 1022, 9636, 0639, 1348

Brackets thus [ ], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2018/19] survey for comparison. (See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

Twenty-nine species were recorded from forty-four gardens, compared to thirty species from forty-seven gardens last time. From the 1087 total number of bird-week records submitted, 483 bird-week records of other species are included, compared to 525 for the previous survey, once more a declining trend, even allowing for fewer gardens being recorded.

This time no moorhens or red-legged partridge were recorded, but one record of a greater black-backed gull turned up on this occasion but was missing from the last.

Bullfinch continued to be the most common bird in this table, with proportionate bird-week records to 2019, though they appeared in more gardens.

Stock doves were a close second, with records from more gardens than previously and comfortably deposing the pheasant from the second spot held last time.

Increased redwing records were matched with higher counts from more gardens than previously.

Fieldfares visited more gardens, but the number of records was about the same as last time.

Blackcap records were very common in the 2018 survey, declined in 2019’s and have fallen even further this time.

Siskins were comparatively abundant in 2019’s survey, but normality was restored this time.

Individual chiffchaffs visited five gardens, compared to only one last time.

Brambling records resumed their normal rarity having been in relative glut proportions last time.

As previously, twenty members recorded the highest count for at least one species but member 1351 had the highest or joint highest count for six species.

The garden of member 0639 was visited by sixteen “other” species followed by those of 1351 with eleven and 1306 with ten.

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

This part of the input form is not well supported with only a minority of recorders providing comments.

#### **Feeding habits mentioned**

The following species were reported feeding on food sources below.

Mixed seed feeder – robin, bullfinch, chaffinch, greenfinch.

Sunflower hearts -blackbird, greenfinch, goldfinch. A rook managed to balance on pole mounted feeders and a collared dove performed a similar feat for sunflower hearts. In recent years sunflower hearts may well have evolved to be the most reliable food source for attracting a wide range of bird species.

The berries of a holly trees were stripped by redwing and fieldfares.

Goldfinch fed on the seeds of a lavender bush.

The emergence of tadpoles in a garden pool provided easy pickings for a heron.

Fat balls attracted blackcaps.

Broken peanuts and pyracantha berries were taken by blackbirds.

A jay stored acorns in a lawn overlooked by crows.

General hanging feeders – nuthatch, bullfinch, chaffinch, greenfinch.

Mixed seed as ground feed attracted stock dove amongst the wood pigeons.

A starling flock were attracted by mealworms.

#### **Predatory behaviour**

A cat climbed a tree and was scolded by crows and magpies.

A sparrowhawk was seen chasing a blackbird and had success with a goldfinch.

#### **Disruptions to recording.**

A grey squirrel caused damage to feeders resulting in the need for replacement

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

Noted bird behaviour.

A raven dis-lodged crows from the top of a cedar tree.

A buzzard perched extensively in a dead tree.

One recorder noted this survey as the first without a wren or dunnock being sighted.

A member administered to a juvenile collared dove which crashed into the bedroom window and suffered wing and leg damage. It was placed in a box with food, but failed to heal over a period of months. Eventual fate not recorded.

Re-locating a birdbath nearer to the garden feeding station resulted in increased use.

A few mentions were made of over-flying red kites.

A sparrowhawk was mobbed by black-headed gulls.

A robin and dunnock were observed disputing territory.

A blackcap displayed aggressive behaviour to a robin, dunnock and sparrow.

Similarly, a great tit would not tolerate blue tits.

A wren chose to roost under roof tiles.

A magpie shredded a coconut mat for nesting material.

A robin completed nest building in an open fronted box in just three days.

**Weather Conditions**

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

***Table 5 – Weather Summary***

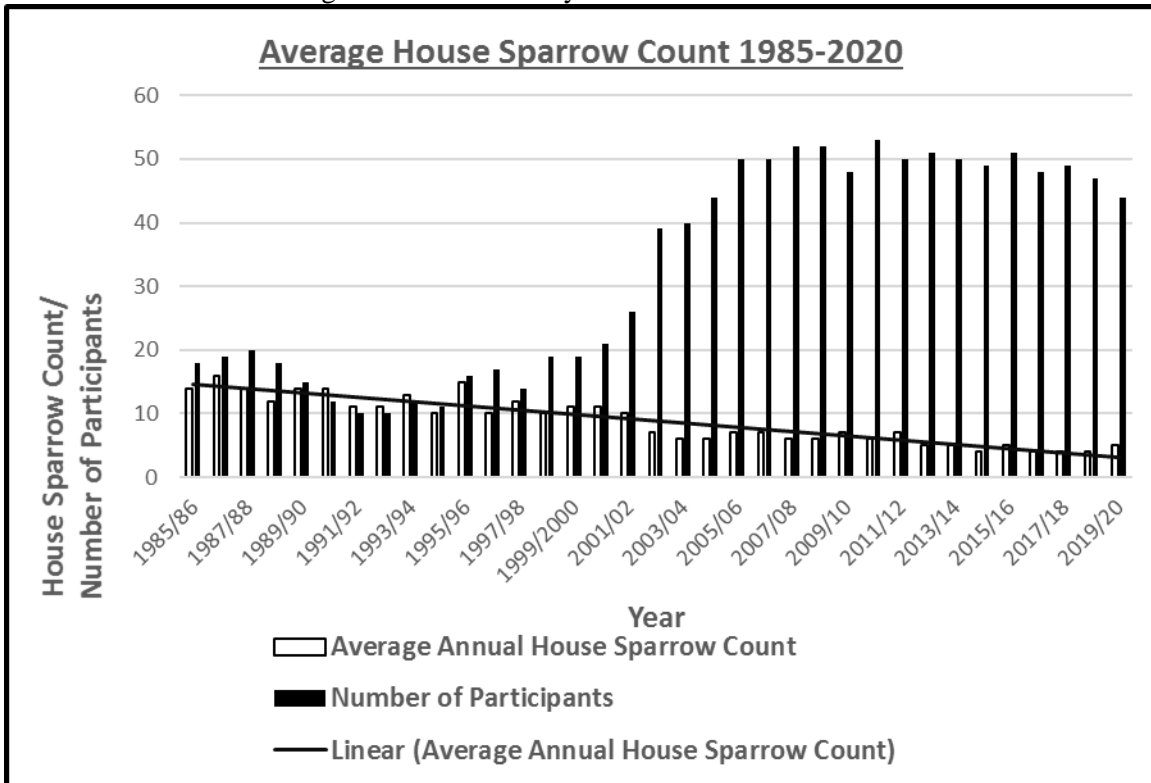
<b><u>Week No.</u></b>	<b><u>Number of Days</u></b>			<b><u>Inches of Rain</u></b>	<b><u>Temp. °F</u></b>		<b><u>Wind</u></b>		<b><u>One Word Notes</u></b>
	<b><u>Sunny Periods</u></b>	<b><u>Frost Snow Sleet</u></b>	<b><u>Wet cloudy</u></b>		<b><u>Max</u></b>	<b><u>Min</u></b>	<b><u>Direction</u></b>	<b><u>Strength</u></b>	
1	0	0F	7	1.16	58	38	NW-W	Light	Cloudy
2	0	0F	7	0.81	58	35	S	Light	Cloudy
3	0	1F	3	2.18	55	34	NW	Light	Cloudy
4	0	3F	3	0.49	54	25	NW-E	Fresh	Cloudy
5	0	2F	7	1.63	49	26	SE-SW	Light	Cloudy
6	0	1F	7	1.05	44	27	NW-W	Fresh	Cloudy
7	1	4F	4	0.51	45	24		Light/ Mod	Mixed
8	2	3F	5	0.59	50	21	SW	Light	Mixed
9	0	4F	2	0.24	46	20	SW-NW	Light	Sunny spells
10	0	5F	6	1.42	48	26	NW	Light/Mod	Little sun
11	0	4F	5	0.66	49	25	NW	Light/Mod	Cloudy
12	0	3F	5	0.53	49	30	NW-SE	Light	Cloudy
13	0	3F	2	0.08	45	31	NW-SW	Light	Cloudy
14	0	3F	5	0.56	50	32	NW-SW	Moderate	Cloudy
15	0	6F	6	0.82	48	23	SW	Mod/Fresh	Cloudy
16	0	7F	5	0.11	44	24	NW	Light	Mixed
17	0	5F	4	0.20	50	26	NW	Light	Mixed
18	1	7F	3	0.53	47	24	NW	Light	Mixed
19	0	7F	5	1.73	49	27	NW-SW	Strong/Mod	Cloudy
20	0	3F	6	1.08	47	28	SW	Moderate	Cloudy
21	0	7F	7	1.57	50	27	NW-SE	Mod-Fresh	Cloudy
22	0	7F	2	0.05	52	23	SW	Light	Mixed
23	0	3F	7	1.00	54	30	SW	Light	Mixed
24	0	4F	2	0.59	59	29	SW	Light	Mixed
25	0	5F	0	0.00	60	23	SE	Light	Sunny
26	0	3F	0	0.00	55	27	N-NE-NW	Light	Mixed

## House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2020

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 thirty-five years and are presented below.

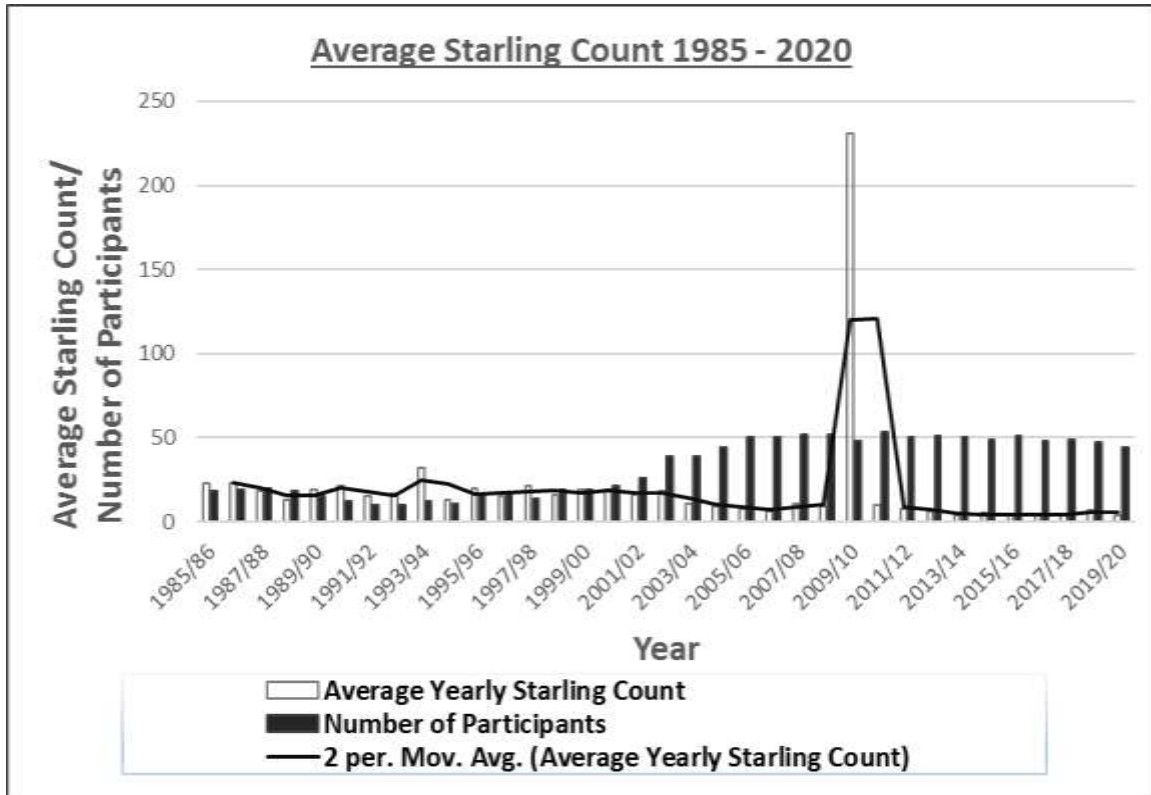
### House sparrows

The declining trend for the house sparrow population remains the same. The trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow average count has declined from around fifteen in 1985 to a consistent four or five in recent years, actually five in this instance. No sparrows at all were recorded in five members' gardens in this survey.



## Starlings

In 1985 the average starling count stood at twenty-three. Last time there seemed room for slight optimism with an increased average of seven following an average of four or five in recent years. The optimism has been instantly dashed by this survey's figure of four. 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. At least only four gardens didn't see a single starling this time compared to six in the previous survey.



The above 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 2020/21 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 normally include a programme of illustrated lectures at our Ettiley Heath meeting room on the second Friday evening of each month from September to March. Of course, the current corona virus situation will certainly impact on our 2020/21 booked programme of lectures, though the true extent is yet to unfold. Normally 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 are arranged, though these too are subject to similar impact. 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](http://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](mailto: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 2019/20 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.*

*16<sup>th</sup> May 2020*