



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2020 TO MARCH 2021

The Survey Recorders

In this survey, which commenced on Sunday 4th October 2020, records were received from forty-eight survey members. The number of contributors has increased by four compared to the last survey. Fifteen take part in the survey who 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 twenty-two 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	0430	John Goulding
8502	Bryan Perkins	8731	John P. Barker
2104	Arthur Abbott	0432	Avril Watkins
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	1533	David Cookson
1306	Roy Broughton	0334	Bill Bellamy
0107	Christine Howarth	9636	Geoff Yarwood
0409	Marie Turner	1537	Heather Smith
1010	John Nixon	0838	Richard Howells
8511	Alan Soper	0639	Chris Parry
1912	Anne Davies	0240	Cynthia Cadman
9813	John Thompson	0341	Howard Nixon
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0342	Brian Sankey
1215	Louise Adams	0343	John & Wendy Fuller
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0844	Dave O'Hara
1017	Mick Ball	2046	John Kay
8518	Ann Pym	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
1919	David Sandall	1348	Graham Bailey
0720	Rachel Heath	2049	Martin Watson
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1351	Ray Broughton
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	0853	David Bromont
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	2055	Wray Douglas
1825	Kate Whittles	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
2026	Andy Newall	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
1727	Mike Tonks	2059	Graham Dodd

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, eighty-two different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. One new species has been added to the list by this survey, the grey partridge.

Table 2

<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>
1	Black-headed Gull	42	Long-tailed Tit
2	Blackbird	43	Magpie
3	Blackcap	44	Mallard
4	Blue Tit	45	Marsh/ Willow Tit
5	Brambling	46	Meadow Pipit
6	Bullfinch	47	Mealy Redpoll
7	Buzzard	48	Merlin
8	Chaffinch	49	Mistle Thrush
9	Chiffchaff	50	Moorhen
10	Coal Tit	51	Mute Swan
11	Collared Dove	52	Nuthatch
12	Common Gull	53	Pheasant
13	Corn Bunting	54	Pied Wagtail
14	Crow	55	Raven
15	Duncock	56	Red-headed Bunting
16	Feral Pigeon	57	Red-legged Partridge
17	Fieldfare	58	Redpoll (Lesser)
18	Garden Warbler	59	Redwing
19	Goldcrest	60	Reed Bunting
20	Goldfinch	61	Ring-necked Parakeet
21	Greater Black-backed Gull	62	Robin
22	Great Spotted Woodpecker	63	Rook
23	Great Tit	64	Siskin
24	Green Woodpecker	65	Skylark
25	Greenfinch	66	Snipe
26	Grey Heron	67	Song Thrush
27	Grey Partridge	68	Sparrowhawk
28	Grey Wagtail	69	Starling
29	Hawfinch	70	Stock Dove
30	Herring Gull	71	Swallow
31	House Martin	72	Tawny Owl
32	House Sparrow	73	Tree Sparrow
33	Jackdaw	74	Treecreeper
34	Jay	75	Water Rail
35	Kestrel	76	Waxwing
36	Kingfisher	77	White Wagtail
37	Lapwing	78	Willow Warbler
38	Lesser Black-backed Gull	79	Woodcock
39	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	80	Wood Pigeon
40	Linnet	81	Wren
41	Little Owl	82	Yellowhammer

The Current Survey

Forty-eight participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1144 bird/week records (48 x 26 =1248). 1198 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just fifty 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</u>		<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 48</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
		<u>1198</u>	<u>[1097]</u>		<u>Count</u>	<u>Member’s Reg. No.</u>
1 [4]	Blackbird	1155	[995]	48 [47]	14 [12]	2026, 1351
2 [1]	Wood Pigeon	1130	[1016]	48 [44]	17 [19]	0639
3 [3]	Robin	1115	[1020]	48 [44]	7 [9]	1351
4 [2]	Blue Tit	1095	[1028]	48 [44]	18 [14]	0838
5 [5]	Dunnock	929	[867]	46 [43]	15 [14]	1351
6 [6]	Great Tit	862	[824]	47 [43]	11 [11]	1351
7 [9]	Magpie	838	[697]	48 [42]	9 [14]	0838
8 [8]	House Sparrow	821	[710]	46 [40]	30 [25]	8731
9 [7]	Goldfinch	754	[750]	46 [42]	45 [50]	0844
10 [13]	Coal Tit	646	[542]	44 [40]	6 [6]	9923
11 [11]	Starling	599	[561]	42 [40]	34 [51]	1727
12 [12]	Collared Dove	537	[554]	40 [35]	8 [9]	1351
13 [10]	Chaffinch	521	[576]	40 [41]	24 [18]	1306
14 [17]	Wren	486	[422]	46 [42]	2 [3]	#1
15 [15]	Jackdaw	482	[453]	33 [29]	36 [41]	1537
16 [14]	Greenfinch	454	[457]	35 [35]	16 [12]	0838
17 [16]	Long-tailed Tit	374	[429]	43 [43]	18 [15]	1351
18 [18]	Crow	364	[347]	33 [35]	5 [5]	8511
19 [19]	Nuthatch	215	[190]	20 [21]	3 [5]	0107, 1351
20 [22]	GS Woodpecker	169	[112]	25 [14]	2 [3]	#2
21 [21]	Sparrowhawk	145	[120]	34 [26]	2 [3]	#3
22 [20]	Song Thrush	97	[129]	19 [26]	2 [6]	#4

Brackets thus [], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2018/19] survey for comparison.

#1 – Members 8511, 9921, 9923, 0342, 0347, 1351, 0556, 0758.

#2 – Members 1919, 0838, 2055, 0758.

#3 - Members 9921, 0838, 1348, 1351.

#4 – Members 1306, 0430, 0342, 0758.

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

Woodpigeon has been the most common bird in surveys of recent years, but for this survey it was eased into second place by the blackbird with a surge from fourth place last time. Coal tit replaced chaffinch in tenth place, but otherwise there were only minor changes in the order of listing.

Blackbird, blue tit, magpie, robin and wood pigeon were recorded in every garden, great tit missing from only one garden, dunnock, house sparrow, wren and goldfinch from two, For comparison, the RSPB annual one hour/day national survey top ten garden birds list was 1 house

The “Listed Species”(continued)

sparrow, 2 blue tit, 3 starling, 4 blackbird 5 woodpigeon, 6 robin, 7 great tit, 8 goldfinch, 9 magpie, 10 long-tail tit.

Twenty-one members recorded a highest or joint highest count for one or more species with member 1351 again having a highest count for nine 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-one species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-three species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-one} 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>549</u>	<u>[483]</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>[44]</u>	<u>Count</u>		
1 [1]	Bullfinch	124	[104]	11	[16]	6	[6]	1351
2 [2]	Stock Dove	97	[98]	14	[12]	13	[16]	1306
3 [7]	Jay	96	[57]	10	[9]	5	[7]	0639
4 [3]	Pied Wagtail	95	[86]	17	[13]	3	[3]	#1
5 [6]	Feral Pigeon	94	[61]	9	[4]	12	[6]	0720
6 [5]	Rook	72	[68]	7	[4]	17	[35]	1306
7 [12]	Blackcap	71	[25]	16	[14]	2	[3]	#2
8 [9]	Black-headed Gull	68	[34]	11	[10]	20	[15]	9921
9 [4]	Pheasant	62	[80]	13	[8]	4	[3]	1919
10 [10]	Goldcrest	60	[32]	11	[8]	2	[2]	#3
11 [21]	Siskin	54	[7]	17	[4]	6	[3]	0853
12 [8]	Redwing	39	[38]	14	[15]	42	[18]	9923
13 [11]	Fieldfare	33	[27]	10	[12]	19	[12]	1017
14 [21]	Lesser Redpoll	31	[7]	8	[2]	7	[2]	0853
15 [15]	Buzzard	23	[11]	6	[2]	4	[2]	1351
16 [13]	Mistle Thrush	22	[22]	8	[6]	3	[3]	1533
16 [14]	Reed Bunting	22	[12]	4	[3]	3	[4]	1306
16 [24]	Tawny Owl	22	[4]	4	[1]	2	[1]	1537
19 [17]	Grey Wagtail	17	[10]	5	[4]	1	[1]	
20 [0]	Marsh/ Willow Tit	16	[0]	16	[0]	2	[0]	1919
21 [15]	Chiffchaff	13	[11]	10	[5]	1	[1]	
22 [20]	Mallard	12	[8]	5	[1]	3	[6]	0556
23 [17]	Treecreeper	11	[10]	7	[5]	1	[2]	
24 [17]	Brambling	9	[2]	4	[2]	5	[1]	9923
25 [19]	Grey Heron	7	[9]	2	[5]	1	[1]	
26 [0]	Moorhen	4	[0]	4	[0]	1	[0]	
27 [25]	Raven	1	[3]	1	[2]	1	[1]	
27 [26]	Tree Sparrow	1	[2]	1	[1]	1	[1]	
27 [28]	Lesser b-b Gull	1	[1]	1	[1]	1	[1]	
27 [0]	Grey Partridge	1	[0]	1	[0]	1	[0]	
27 [0]	House Martin	1	[0]	1	[0]	2	[0]	
0 [21]	Herring Gull	0	[7]	0	[3]	0	[3]	
0 [28]	Greater b-b Gull	0	[1]	0	[1]	0	[1]	

The “Other Species” (continued)

#1 – Members Reg No 9813,9814, 0316, 8518

#2 – Members Reg No 1912, 1919, 9923, 1825, 0342, 2046.

#3 --Members Reg No 9923, 0838, 0639, 0556.

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

Thirty-one species were recorded from forty-eight gardens, compared to twenty-nine species from forty-four gardens last time. From the 1198 total number of bird-week records submitted, 549 other species entries recorded are included, compared to 483 for the previous survey, which represents a positive trend.

This time no herring or black-backed gulls were recorded, but grey partridge, not previously recorded in any survey and house martin, moorhen and marsh/willow tit. not recorded in the last survey were welcome entrants.

Bullfinch was comfortably the most common bird in this table once more, despite appearing in fewer gardens with stock dove retaining second place.

Records for jay, feral pigeon, blackcap, goldcrest, siskin, lesser redpoll, buzzard, reed bunting, tawny owl and brambling all increased significantly. Marsh/willow tit is a rare inclusion in the survey, but was a regular visitor in just one garden this time.

Siskins were recorded in good numbers in the 2018 survey, but few were seen in 2019, however, this time saw a surge in numbers and far more gardens visited.

Twenty-one members recorded the highest count for at least one species but member 9923 had the highest or joint highest count for four species.

The garden of member 0639 again was visited by sixteen “other species” followed by those of 1306 and 9923 with fourteen and 0556 with thirteen.

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.

Goldfinch took seed heads on laurel tree and lilac.

Blackbirds stripped cotoneaster and pyracantha berries rapidly in November.

Bullfinch, goldfinch and robin were noted on sunflower hearts and blackcap on kibbled nuts feeder

Rooks have developed the dexterity to hang on to fat ball feeders and rapidly demolish the contents showering blackbirds, starlings and jackdaws waiting below.

Feeders hung from trees were claimed to be more utilised than pole mounted feeders.

Bird seed as ground feed attracted chaffinch, as does bread for black-headed gulls.

A home security camera picked up a tawny owl with a field mouse.

Redwings taking holly berries were chased off by a blackbird.

A blackbird happily supplemented his live worm catch with offered mealworms.

Garden first events.

It was noted that various gardens recorded first visits for the following species during this survey: pied wagtail, grey wagtail and blackcap. The grey partridge has not been recorded in any of the previous surveys. An escapee Harris hawk visited a garden in November and returned in December. A song thrush taking holly berries had not visited one garden in the previous four years and similar for a crow for five years.

Sparrowhawk predatory events

Sparrowhawks were observed with feral and wood pigeon as prey. In one case the wood pigeon was too heavy to carry away resulting in repeated visits during the day for the continued feast. Another tried his luck with a rook, whose squawking attracted twenty-five of its brethren plus thirty-five jackdaws to mob the predator as the rook struggled to escape!

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

Elsewhere a sparrowhawk stalking a starling was thwarted by an attacking magpie. A juvenile sat on a fence for a large part of a day resulting in no bird recording. Finally one was recorded fighting with a crow.

Disruptions to recording.

The presence of a rat was deterrent to filling feeders

Observed bird behaviour.

A blue tit was noted checking out and roosting in a nest box in December. In the same month, a goldfinch was collecting nesting material. January saw wood pigeons displaying, tawny owls mating and a robin nest building. In February and March blackbird, long-tailed tit, magpie and blue tit were nest building and house sparrows were occupying nest boxes.

A robin was seen being aggressive to a dunnock and a long-tailed tit illogically and persistently was pecking at a window, perhaps not liking its own reflection.

Noted bird behaviour.

A raven dislodged 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.

Relocating 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

<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	0	0F	7	2.43	56	35	NW	Light	Cloudy
2	0	2F	4	0.28	55	30	NW/NE	Light	Cloudy
3	0	0F	5	0.46	61	34	SW,W,NE	Variable	Cloudy
4	0	0F	7	0.65	56	33	NW	Strong	Cloudy
5	0	3F	5	0.66	57	27	SW	Strong	Sunny spells
6	0	0F	6	0.50	54	37	SE	Light	Cloudy
7	0	1F	6	0.86	55	31	SW	Light	Cloudy
8	0	5F	2	0.26	49	26	S	Light	Mixed
9	0	6F	6	0.84	45	24	NW	Light	Cloudy
10	0	4F	7	0.73	46	25	SW	Light	Little sun
11	0	0F	6	1.36	50	33	SW	Light	Mixed
12	0	6F	5	1.15	48	20	SW-NW	Light	Mixed
13	0	5F1S	5	0.98	37	22	NW	Light	Cloudy

Weather Conditions (continued)

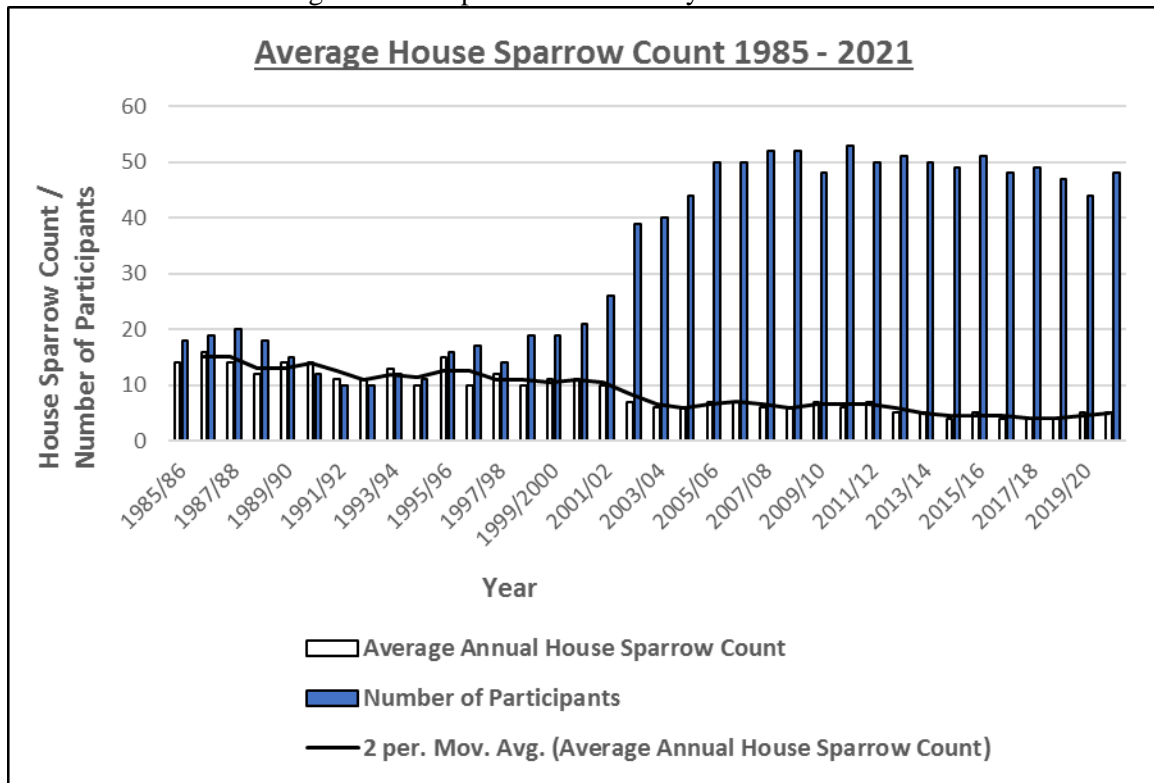
Week No.	Number of Days			Inches of Rain	Temp. °F		Wind		One Word Notes
	Sunny Periods	Frost Snow Sleet	Wet cloudy		Max	Min	Direction	Strength	
14	0	7F	4	0.22	36	18	NE	Light	Sunny
15	0	5F	5	1.64	42	24	NW	Light	Cloudy
16	0	6F2S	6	2.58	47	23	NW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	5F	5	0.97	48	19	NW	Light	Cloudy
18	0	5F	5	0.93	46	22	SE	Light	Sunny spells
19	6	7F	1	?	32	17	SE=NE	Fresh	Sunny
20	0	2F	5	0.60	50	30	NW-SW	Fresh	Cloudy
21	0	3F	4	0.31	53	23	SW	Fresh	Mixed
22	0	7F	1	0.03	51	22	SE-SW	Light	Mixed
23	0	4F	5	0.68	51	26	NE-NW	Strong	Cloudy
24	0	2F	3	0.30	49	30	NW	Light	Cloudy
25	0	2F	2	0.26	56	29	SE-SW	Light	Sunny
26	0	3F	1	0.04	69	28	SW/NE	Light	Mixed

House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2021

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-six years and are presented below.

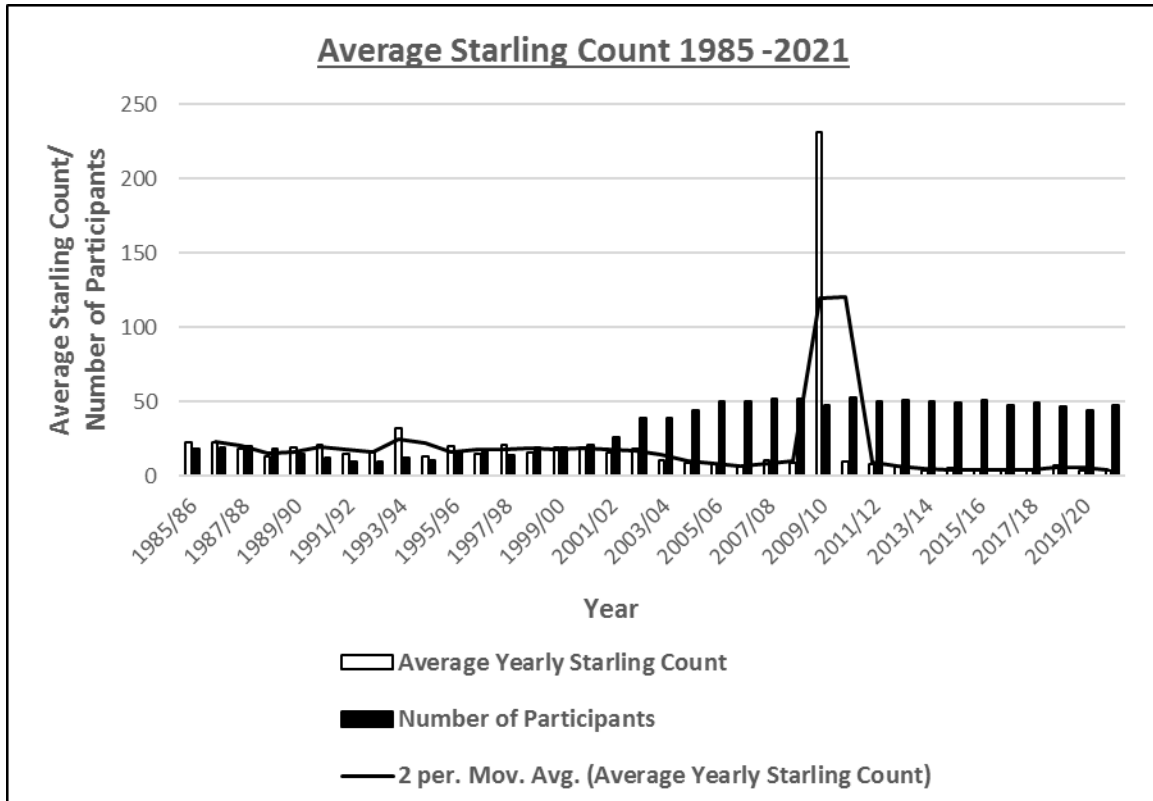
House sparrows

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 once more in this instance, but sparrows were recorded in all members' gardens except two in this survey.



Starlings

In 1985 the average starling count stood at twenty-three, in this survey as in the last it stands at 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. Six gardens didn't see a single starling this time.



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. Finally, I include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2020/21 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 2016 format, either as an e-mail attachment, memory stick or CD-ROM.

Again, many thanks to all contributors.

Trevor Clowes.

12th May 2021