



## SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2002 TO MARCH 2003

### The Survey People

The number of participants in our latest survey increased to an unprecedented level of thirty-nine from twenty-six in the last survey. It is now possible to take part without being a member of SECOS. In fact only five contributors are not members, so it would appear that a renewed interest coupled to an increased SECOS membership is responsible. Whatever the reason, it is most encouraging and a big thanks is extended to all contributors new and old. Already there are indications that even more members intend to take part in next year's survey. *Table 1* below lists the current participants together with their registration number. See page eight for location map.

**Table 1**

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8501	Hilary Clowes
8502	Bryan Perkins
9703	John & Wendy Smith
9704	Janet Grice
8505	David & Elaine Meakin
0107	Christine Howarth
0208	Stan Wildig
0209	Anne Davies
0110	Christopher Price
8511	Alan & Joan Soper
8712	Joan Tilbrook
9813	John Thompson
9814	Colin Lythgoe
0115	Megan McKelvey
9817	Lorna Pickstock
8518	Ann Pym
0119	George & Barbara Fisher
9820	Bill & Betty Brookes
9921	Barbara Hubbard
8722	Arthur Fisher

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts
0024	Derek Owen
0025	Alan & Linda Battersby
0026	Charles Hull
0227	Andrew & Doreen Bailey
0128	Gordon Fleet
0229	Paddy Bennion
0230	Jan Fox
8731	John P. Barker
0232	Hilda Johnson
9635	Ron & Doreen Jones
9636	Geof Yarwood
0237	Derek Leigh
0238	A.R.Coomer
0239	Paula Birchall
0240	Cynthia Cadman
0341	Howard Nixon
0342	Brian Sankey
0343	John Fuller

### The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985 seventy-four different species of birds have been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. Four species have been added by this survey: kingfisher, lesser black-backed gull, water rail and white wagtail.

**Table 2**

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
1	Black-headed Gull
2	Blackbird
3	Blackcap
4	Blue Tit
5	Brambling
6	Bullfinch
7	Buzzard
8	Chaffinch
9	Chiffchaff

10	Coal Tit
11	Collared Dove
12	Common Gull
13	Corn Bunting
14	Crow
15	Dunnock
16	Feral Pigeon
17	Fieldfare
18	Goldcrest

**Table 2 (continued)**

19	Goldfinch
20	Great Spotted Woodpecker
21	Great Tit
22	Green Woodpecker
23	Greenfinch
24	Grey Heron
25	Grey Wagtail
26	Herring Gull
27	House Martin
28	House Sparrow
29	Jackdaw
30	Jay
31	Kestrel
32	Kingfisher
33	Lapwing
34	Lesser Black-backed Gull
35	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
36	Linnet
37	Little Owl
38	Long-tailed Tit
39	Magpie
40	Mallard
41	Marsh/ Willow Tit
42	Meadow Pipit
43	Merlin
44	Mistle Thrush
45	Moorhen
46	Mute Swan

47	Nuthatch
48	Pheasant
49	Pied Wagtail
50	Red-headed Bunting
51	Red-legged Partridge
52	Redpoll
53	Redwing
54	Reed Bunting
55	Robin
56	Rook
57	Siskin
58	Skylark
59	Snipe
60	Song Thrush
61	Sparrowhawk
62	Starling
63	Stock Dove
64	Swallow
65	Tawny Owl
66	Tree Sparrow
67	Treecreeper
68	Water Rail
69	White Wagtail
70	Willow Warbler
71	Woodcock
72	Wood Pigeon
73	Wren
74	Yellowhammer

**The Current Survey**

Thirty-nine participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1014 bird/week records (39x26 =1014). Due to people being unavoidably not available to record at various times, for reasons like holidays and sickness, the actual number of bird/week records produced was reduced to a highly commendable 852.

**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 highest single count recorded for each species and the registration number of the member(s) who made the highest recording.

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

**Table 3 – ‘Ranking of Listed Species’**

<b>Rank No.</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 852)</b>	<b>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 39)</b>	<b>Highest Single Count</b>	
				<b>Count</b>	<b>Reg. No.</b>
1 [1]	Blue Tit	831	39	25	0025
2 [3]	Blackbird	811	39	12	8518
3 [4]	Robin	797	39	6	0025
4 [2]	House Sparrow	754	37	(80)	0110
5 [6]	Collared Dove	723	39	15	0230
6 [5]	Great Tit	706	38	40	0110
7 [9]	Starling	698	38	(300)	8712, 0026
8 [7]	Dunnock	632	36	5	0115, 9820
9 [8]	Chaffinch	594	39	18	8518, 0025
10[12]	Greenfinch	590	37	(75)	0110
11[11]	Wood Pigeon	570	36	12	0026
12[13]	Magpie	509	37	5	9820, 8722,9636
13[10]	Coal Tit	502	35	7	0115
14[14]	Wren	409	38	3	0115
15[15]	Goldfinch	319	28	30	8505
16[16]	Crow	227	22	4	9921, 0230
17[17]	Song Thrush	211	34	3	0115
18[20]	Siskin	135	25	53	9814
19[19]	Pied Wagtail	117	19	3	0026, 9636
20[18]	Nuthatch	116	11	2	#1
21[21]	Mistle Thrush	103	21	4	0238
22[22]	Black-headed Gull	30	6	20	8731

[ ] Denotes last year’s corresponding ranking for comparison.

( ) Denotes an estimated count figure.

#1 - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0015, 8518, 0025, and 0238

In the previous survey the coal tit ejected the greenfinch from the top ten most common garden birds. In this survey the positions have been reversed again with the greenfinch just rejoining at position ten. Other than that, the constituent species in the top ten remain the same with minor alterations to their ranking positions.

Once more siskin records increased disproportionately compared to last year. Bird/week records increased by 35% due to enlarged survey membership, but siskin records increased by 100%.

Member registration no. 9814 recorded a highest single count of fifty-three.

Fifteen contributors from the total of thirty-nine recorded the highest count for at least one bird species, with one member recording the highest count for five species, one member recording the highest count for four species and three members each recording the highest count for three species.

The roost of some three hundred starlings in conifers adjacent to Joan Tilbrook’s garden is still present and Charles Hull again recorded similar numbers actually in his garden.

### **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-two species were recorded, giving a total

number of fifty-four species recorded in this year's survey from the seventy-four in the "all-time" list (Table 2).

**Table 4 – 'Ranking of Other Species'**

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 852)</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 39)</u>
1 [3]	Long-tailed Tit	239	31
2 [4]	Jackdaw	146	14
3 [1]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	108	13
4 [5]	Sparrowhawk	68	19
5 [2]	Jay	63	6
6 [7]	Pheasant	61	4
7 [9]	Redwing	55	9
8 [6]	Tree Sparrow	53	7
9 [8]	Fieldfare	44	10
10 [15]	Bullfinch	33	10
11 [11]	Rook	28	3
12 [15]	Blackcap	25	9
13 [18]	Treecreeper	22	4
14 [21]	Goldcrest	21	7
15 [23]	Merlin	16	1
16 [14]	Kestrel	13	3
17 [12]	Mallard	12	2
17 [18]	Grey Wagtail	12	6
17	Kingfisher	12	1
20 [18]	Tawny Owl	11	1
21 [12]	Grey Heron	8	3
22 [17]	Brambling	6	2
23 [22]	Reed Bunting	5	3
24 [23]	Chiffchaff	3	2
24	Moorhen	3	2
26	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	2
26	White Wagtail	2	1
28 [10]	Redpoll	1	1
28 [23]	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1	1
28	Feral Pigeon	1	1
28	Water Rail	1	1
28	Woodcock	1	1
[26]	Little Owl	0	0
[27]	Common Gull	0	0
[27]	Stock Dove	0	0
[29]	Buzzard	0	0
[29]	Green Woodpecker	0	0
[29]	Herring Gull	0	0
[29]	Lapwing	0	0
[29]	Marsh/Willow Tit	0	0
[29]	Skylark	0	0

[ ] Denotes last year's corresponding ranking for comparison.



As in recent previous surveys, the species occupying the top nine ranking positions remain the same, with small variations in order. Long-tailed tits were common garden visitors again during this survey and they regained the top spot in the other species list, visiting thirty-one of the thirty-nine gardens. Sparrowhawks remain fairly common and occurred in nineteen gardens. Great spotted woodpeckers visited thirteen gardens and drop from number one in the last survey to rank number three in the “Other Species” table in this survey.

Records of kingfisher by member registration no.0110, water rail by member registration no. 0025, woodcock by member registration no. 0343 and again of merlin by member registration no. 0110, are the most notable records in this survey.

A lesser-spotted woodpecker was recorded in only one garden in this survey.

Redpoll and bramblings were far less frequent garden visitors than in the last survey.

Lesser black-backed gull, moorhen, feral pigeon, water rail, white wagtail and woodcock were recorded in this survey unlike last. The woodcock, which appeared to be exhausted, rested for about ten minutes in the member’s Nantwich garden before departing.

Last survey’s records of buzzard, common gull, green woodpecker, herring gull, lapwing, little owl, marsh/willow tit, stock dove and skylark were not perpetuated in this survey.

### **News from the Comments Column (Section “A2” &”B2” of the input forms)**

Species other than tits observed feeding from hanging feeders include blackcap, bullfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, jackdaw, robin, siskin and tree sparrow. Species observed being devoured by sparrowhawks include blue tit, blackbird, collared dove and greenfinch. Member registration no. 0110 saw his resident merlin kill a blue tit.

Many contributors now record buzzards passing over and calling from on high.

### **Weather Conditions**

Table 5 provides a brief overview of weather conditions for the twenty-six week period, which once more 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</u></b>	<b><u>Snowy Sleetly</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	7	0	0	0.17	69	43	S/W	Variable	
2	5	0	2	0.58	55	37	S/E	Moderate	Mixed
3	2	0	5	0.69	51	31	N/E N/W	Blustery	Mixed
4	0	0	7	1.53	59	32	N/W	Moderate	Frost
5	0	0	7	1.06	55	37	S	Strong	Gales
6	0	0	7	1.48	57	40	N/W	Moderate	Dull
7	1	0	6	0.74	54	40	N/W E-S/E	Moderate	Cloudy
8	1	0	5	0.42	48	37	S-S/E	Moderate	Mixed
9	1	0	3	0.27	49	37	S-N/W	Moderate	Cloudy
10	1	0	7	0.73	49	36	N/W-S/E-N/E	Moderate	Thunder
11	0	0	2	0.05	40	31	S/E-E	Strong	Wintry
12	1	0	4	0.72	44	24	E-N/E-S/E	Moderate	Cold
13	1	0	5	1.09	52	36	N/W-S/W	Light	Cloudy

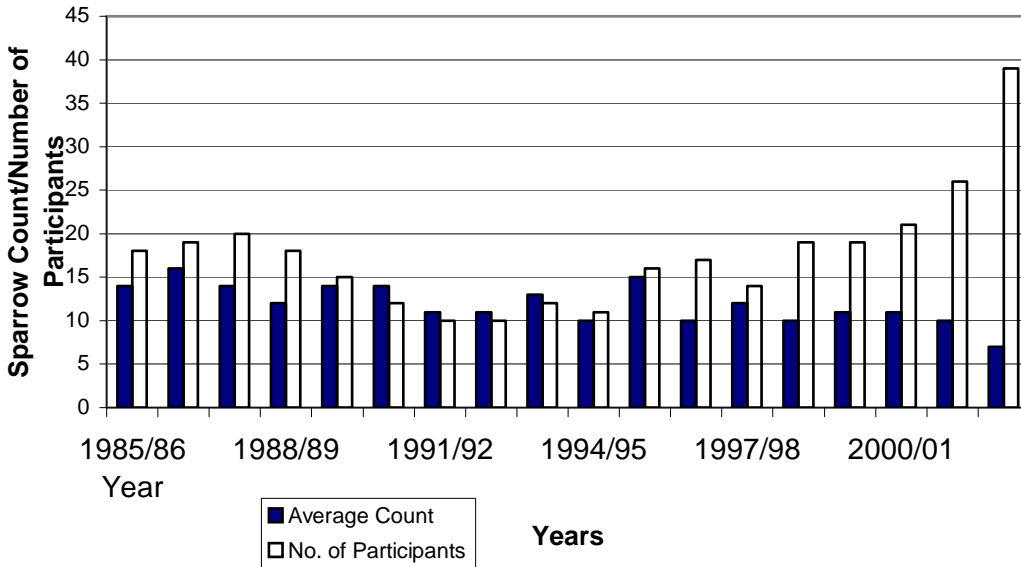
**Table 5 – Weather Summary continued**

<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</u>	<u>Snowy Sleetly</u>	<u>Wet cloudy</u>		<u>Max</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Strength</u>	
14	0	0	7	1.67	47	21	S/E-N/E	Light	Cloudy
15	6	1	1	0.01	38	21	N/E	Moderate	Frosty
16	0	0	5	0.32	48	34	S/W	Fresh	Cloudy
17	0	0	6	0.68	49	32	S/W-N/W	Moderate	Cloudy
18	0	1	7	0.41	52	21	N/W	Strong	Frosty
19	0	1	7	0.52	50	24	N/W	Light	Frosty
20	0	0	5	0.67	45	21	N/W	Moderate	Frosty
21	7	0	0	0	43	24	S/E	Moderate	Frosty
22	0	0	4	0.83	55	35	S/E	Moderate	Thunder
23	0	0	5	0.57	56	32	S/W	Moderate	Cloudy
24	2	0	3	0.11	56	29	S/W-N/W-S/E	Variable	Frosty
25	6	0	0	0	63	30	S/E	Moderate	Sunny
26	7	0	0	0	62	31	S/W	Moderate	Sunny

**Sparrow Research from SECOS Garden Bird Survey Archives**

Much conjecture is current regarding the perceived declining population of the humble house sparrow in certain parts of this country. This is highlighted by the current BTO, RSPB surveys and of course our own SECOS summer survey. After a gentle prod from our recorder we launched on a lengthy trawl through the SECOS garden bird surveys from 1985 to the present to see if any clear trend was evident in our local population. The overview bar chart below shows the house sparrow count when averaged across our garden survey group for each year. Also shown is the number of participants contributing in each year.

**1985 - 2003 SECOS Winter Garden Bird Surveys**  
**26 Week Group Average House Sparrow Counts**



From the above it can be seen that the average house sparrow count across the group for the current survey has fallen to seven, whereas in all previous surveys the average was between ten

and twenty. Over the eighteen years, however, it is rather inconclusive, but it would appear that generally house sparrows have fared rather better in South Cheshire than in other parts of the country. The sample size of our surveys is not large enough, however, to render firm conclusions, but at least through your efforts in our survey we can make a contribution. The data for the above has been inputted into an Excel spreadsheet containing nineteen worksheets (one for each year plus overview), which can readily be made available as an e-mail attachment upon request to enable anyone to perform more detailed analysis.

### **The Next Survey**

Forms for the 2002/03 Winter Garden Bird Survey will be included with the pre-season newsletter for all present members of the survey team (except to those who receive e-mail attachment versions and are already in receipt) in my anticipation and hope of their continued support. If anyone does not wish to continue, I would be grateful to be informed so that I know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms to allow analysis to commence.

The top two or three species in the "Other Species" table (*Table 4*) have regularly been more common garden visitors in recent surveys than a few of the species listed in the "Listed Species" section of our input forms "A1" & "A2" have been. For the convenience of contributors (less writing) I intend to change the input forms "A1" & "A2" to include long-tailed tit and jackdaw on the "Listed Species" section for the next survey and remove two of the less frequent visiting species: black-headed gull and mistle thrush.

Additional forms for new recruits to the next survey will be available at the first club meeting in September. The greater the number of records included in the survey serves to make it more representative and meaningful, so please encourage other members to join up and emphasise the process is simple and undemanding.

If any further members are willing to receive the forms, guidelines and reports as e-mail attachments for the next Garden Bird Survey, please let me have your e-mail address. Where I have e-mail addresses I assume willingness for this form of transaction (it's quicker, more legible, greener, cheaper-saves photocopying costs). If this is a problem to anyone please let me know. My e-mail address is \_\_\_\_\_ for contact and returning your completed forms.

Finally I make the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2002/03 survey data than is contained in this report. I can make the data available to them as a copy of the database in Microsoft Access 97 format, as an e-mail attachment or on a 3.5" floppy disk.

The early production of this report was greatly facilitated by the prompt return of the survey forms.

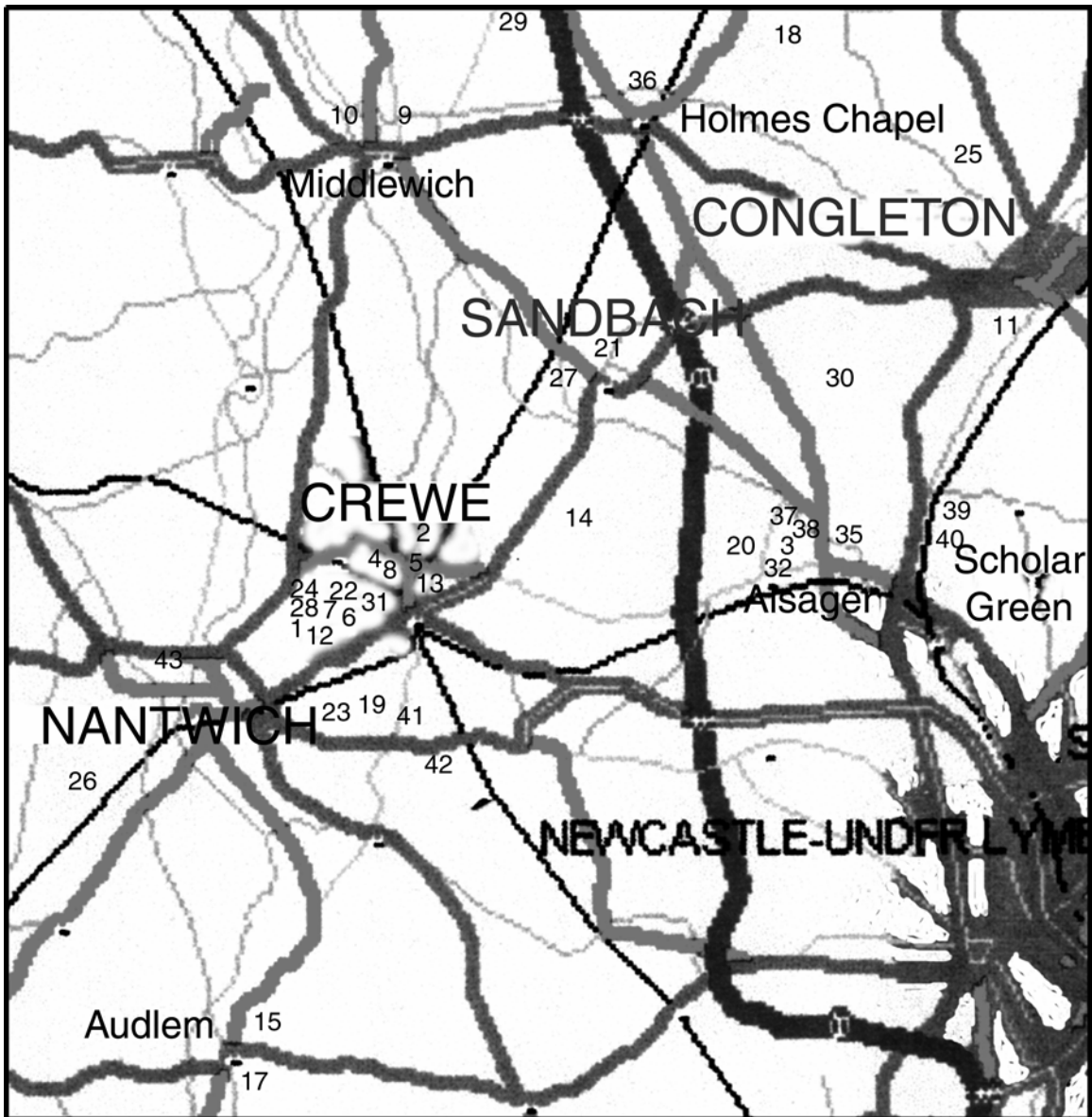
*Again, many thanks to all contributors.*

*Trevor Clowes.*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> May 2003*

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**SECOS Garden Bird Survey**  
**Year 2002/03 Survey Members Distribution Map**



Member Numbers roughly indicate locations.