



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2013 TO MARCH 2014

The Survey Recorders

In this survey records were received from fifty survey members in session one and forty-nine in session two. Once more, the number of contributors remained substantially the same as in the last survey, with three new recorders joining, plus one returned and four previous contributors discontinuing. Fourteen 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 eight 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	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
8502	Bryan Perkins	0430	John Goulding
9703	John & Wendy Smith	8731	John P. Barker
1104	Ken & Beverley Jones	0432	Avril Watkins
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	0334	Bill Bellamy
1306	Roy Broughton	9635	Doreen Jones
0107	Christine Howarth	9636	Geoff Yarwood
0208	Stan Wildig	0838	Richard Howells
0409	Marie Turner	0639	Chris Parry
1010	John Nixon	0240	Ron & Cynthia Cadman
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	0341	Howard Nixon
9813	John Thompson	0342	Brian Sankey
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0343	John & Wendy Fuller
1215	Louise Adams	0844	Dave O'Hara
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	1345	Martin Langhorn
1017	Mick Ball	0946	Jack Bower
8518	Ann Pym	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0849	Howard Yates
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1249	Chris & Sheila Borrows
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	1351	Ray Broughton
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	1352	Lorna Pickstock
0024	Derek Owen	0853	David Bromont
1025	John Varty	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
0227	Andrew Bailey	0757	Gordon & Valerie Squire
0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-nine different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. The mealy redpoll was recorded for the first time ever in this survey.

Table 2

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

The Current Survey

Fifty participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1300 bird/week records (50 x 26 =1300). 1244 bird/weeks records were produced, just fifty-six 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 is 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 1244 [1273]</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 50 [51]</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	Blackbird	1150 [1215]	50 [51]	16 [19]	0758
2 [3]	Wood Pigeon	1117 [1131]	50 [51]	18 [16]	0639
3 [2]	Blue Tit	1082 [1140]	50 [51]	14 [20]	8731
4 [4]	Robin	1042 [1104]	49 [51]	11 [5]	1215
5 [5]	Dunnock	907 [1008]	48 [50]	6 [7]	0342
6 [7]	Great Tit	897 [974]	49 [50]	10 [19]	1351
7 [8]	Collared Dove	817 [896]	48 [51]	9 [14]	0208
8 [6]	House Sparrow	814 [979]	45 [49]	28 [60]	1351
9 [10]	Magpie	805 [761]	50 [49]	12 [6]	0334
10 [9]	Chaffinch	675 [847]	44 [50]	24 [32]	8518
11 [12]	Goldfinch	578 [645]	45 [43]	27 [30]	0838
12 [13]	Starling	522 [616]	42 [45]	50 [150]	9636
13 [11]	Coal Tit	515 [759]	44 [49]	5 [17]	1104
14 [17]	Jackdaw	457 [417]	31 [33]	22 [40]	9921 0334
15 [15]	Wren	427 [495]	47 [50]	2 [2]	#1
16 [14]	Greenfinch	426 [507]	32 [43]	12 [18]	1017 9923
17 [16]	Long-tailed Tit	325 [467]	44 [47]	15 [15]	9923 1351
18 [18]	Crow	301 [349]	40 [36]	14 [6]	1250
19 [19]	Nuthatch	154 [323]	17 [33]	4 [8]	9923
20 [20]	Song Thrush	125 [186]	26 [36]	2 [2]	#2
21 [21]	Sparrowhawk	120 [141]	34 [39]	2 [1]	0639
22 [22]	Pied Wagtail	50 [100]	13 [23]	4 [3]	1306

#1 Members No.1104, 9813, 1022, 9923, 0430, 0432, 1351, 0853, 0556 & 0758.

#2 Members No.1104, 0107, 1017, 0844, 0849 & 1250.

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.)

No great change in the ranking order occurred within the table with most species maintaining their relative position in terms of commonality. Jackdaws provided the biggest change by leaping up three places, though the number of gardens visited was roughly the same, but the highest single count was halved. Accepting that this survey was for one fewer garden than previously, with the

exception of the jackdaw, records for most other species were disproportionately reduced, with the most extreme the pied wagtail for which records were reduced to fifty per cent of previous, which had itself recorded a halving from the previous year. Similarly nuthatch records were halved in terms of records and gardens visited. Song thrush records were reduced by a third, as were the number of gardens visited. Perhaps the extremes of wet weather encountered during the survey period resulted in refuge being taken in places other than gardens. The survey certainly reinforces the perception expressed by many, that far fewer birds were evident during this survey period, a trend which if perpetuated will be a major concern.

Blackbird, wood pigeon, blue tit and magpie were recorded in every garden. Robin and great tit were each only missing from one.

Twenty-six contributors from the total of fifty recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. One member recorded the highest or joint highest count for five 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 twenty-nine species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-one species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-five} from the seventy-nine 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 465</u> [620]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 50</u> [51]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	G S Woodpecker	132 [184]	19 [21]	2 [3]	#1
2 [2]	Bullfinch	109 [135]	13 [21]	7 [4]	1017
3 [15]	Redwing	66 [37]	23 [12]	50 [25]	0409
4 [7]	Blackcap	52 [81]	17 [14]	2 [2]	9704
5 [6]	Pheasant	48 [85]	10 [9]	4 [5]	1306
6 [5]	Goldcrest	46 [90]	12 [22]	2 [3]	#2
6 [12]	Stock Dove	46 [49]	6 [5]	4 [3]	0844
8 [8]	Rook	45 [73]	6 [7]	20 [40]	1306
9 [4]	Siskin	41 [93]	16 [20]	10 [15]	8518
10 [3]	Jay	40 [94]	2 [14]	2 [3]	-
11 [11]	Mistle Thrush	31 [50]	11 [13]	2 [2]	0227 0758
12 [9]	Black Headed Gull	29 [55]	8 [11]	18 [30]	1104
13 [10]	Fieldfare	28 [51]	11 [26]	12 [50]	1306 1351
14 [14]	Reed Bunting	27 [39]	5 [10]	4 [7]	1306
15 [20]	Feral Pigeon	26 [30]	2 [3]	4 [5]	9813
16 [18]	Lesser Redpoll	25 [32]	8 [10]	6 [4]	8518
16 [18]	Tawny Owl	25 [32]	2 [6]	2 [2]	0639
18 [27]	Grey Wagtail	23 [5]	5 [1]	1 [2]	-
19 [17]	Tree Sparrow	14 [35]	4 [5]	2 [8]	#3
20 [21]	Buzzard	13 [19]	4 [4]	1 [1]	-
21 [13]	Brambling	12 [40]	5 [13]	9 [6]	8518
22 [16]	Treecreeper	10 [36]	5 [8]	1 [2]	-
23 [23]	Mallard	8 [17]	3 [6]	3 [4]	0556
24 [30]	Chiffchaff	7 [1]	6 [1]	1 [1]	-

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

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 465 [620]</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 50 [51]</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
24 [23]	Grey Heron	7 [17]	3 [3]	1 [2]	-
26 [25]	Kestrel	4 [7]	2 [2]	1 [1]	-
27 [21]	Herring Gull	2 [29]	1 [1]	2 [4]	0208
28	Linnet	1 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	1306
28	Mealy Redpoll	1 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	1017
[30]	Garden Warbler	0 [1]	0 [1]	0 [1]	-
[30]	Lesser b-b gull	0 [1]	0 [1]	0 [1]	-
[29]	Moorhen	0 [3]	0 [2]	0 [1]	-
[26]	Raven	0 [6]	0 [2]	0 [1]	-
[30]	Red-leg Partridge	0 [1]	0 [1]	0 [2]	-
[28]	Waxwing	0 [4]	0 [3]	0 [7]	-

#1 – Members 1306, 0432, 1351, 1352 & 0758.

#2 – Members 1104, 8518, 9923, 0844 & 0556.

#3 – Members 8518, 1250 & 0556.

Brackets thus [], denotes corresponding figures to the previous [2012/13] survey for comparison

Twenty-nine species were recorded from fifty gardens, compared to thirty-three species from fifty-one gardens last time. From the 1,244 total number of bird week records submitted, only 465 bird week records of other species were included, compared to 620 for the previous survey from 1,273. Commonly records were reduced by a half for many species and herring gulls in the extreme were reduced to seven per cent of previous. The only species in positive territory compared to the last survey are redwing, doubling their presence, grey wagtail increased by a factor of four and chiffchaff by a factor of seven. There were two species recorded in this survey not recorded in the last, the linnet and the mealy redpoll. The latter a Scandinavian visitor, not previously recorded in any previous survey, is larger and darker than the lesser redpoll of the British Isles. The garden warbler, lesser black-backed gull, moorhen, raven, red-leg partridge and waxwing were present last time but were absent from this survey.

Seventeen members recorded the highest count for at least one species but one member had the highest count for six species.

The garden of members 1345 and 0556 were visited by the highest number of "other species" each with fourteen, closely followed by one garden with twelve and four with eleven.

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

A consistent comment was that there appeared to be a distinct shortage of birds to record, which is supported above by the reduced bird count for most species in this survey compared to the last. Harsh winter conditions in the previous survey resulted in several species being recorded in some gardens for the first time. Not so this time, it would appear that this year's incessant rainfall was disliked as much by the birds as by us! A bonus would appear to be that unusually there were no records of cats taking birds; they don't like rain either.

For some, a lack of birds was attributed to nearby building developments causing incessant noise and disruption from goods vehicles feeding the site. Something which currently threatens many residents of East Cheshire. Similarly mentioned was the felling of mature trees for development works, bringing destruction to the hitherto bird friendly environment.

Despite these rather depressing negatives there were some reports of notable bird behaviour. Sparrowhawks were seen to take other species, notably dunnock and goldfinch.

A dunnock was noted to be busily engaged in attacking its own reflection in a shiny plant pot and also in a window.

There were many records of tawny owls calling and one was mobbed whilst roosting on a chimney by jackdaws. In turn a buzzard was mobbed by crows and a sparrowhawk was noted chasing crows and a jay from the site used in the previous year for nesting.

No doubt reacting to hard times a robin was seen exercising aggressive behaviour in defending a feeding station as though its own and chasing off competing tits, the same was noted elsewhere against goldfinches.

A female pheasant made a garden visit for the first time in twenty-three years of occupancy for one member. Similarly for a different garden recording siskin not seen in the previous twenty years.

On frosty mornings, coal tits were noted to be the first to visit feeders, but were then absent for the rest of the day.

A lack of garden bird records in one garden saw an improvement following the harvesting of an adjacent corn field.

Garden food sources attracted various species as below.

Redwings and other thrushes fed on hawthorn and rowan berries.

Nuthatch on fatballs.

Starlings fed on alder berries, rowan, fat balls, mealworms and suet pellets.

Blackcap on yellow mahonia berries.

Sparrows took primrose flowers and brassica seedlings.

Redwings, blackbird and fieldfares took holly berries.

Great spotted woodpecker fed on peanuts.

Siskin, goldfinch, greenfinch, chaffinch, sparrows, tits and redpoll find sunflower hearts the food of choice.

Goldfinch still take nyger seed for some!

Bullfinch were seen taking black sunflower seeds.

Blackbird took pyracantha seeds and cotoneaster.

Grapes, apple and donut pieces proved irresistible to long-tailed tits

Random comments

Nine magpies assembled in the top of a cedar tree in an Alsager garden.

The same tree played host to a buzzard until it was despatched by the attention of crows.

Blue tits entered a nest box in late December, probably to roost.

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	3	0F	4	0.11	68	36	SW/NW/NE	Moderate	Mixed
2	0	0F	7	0.91	61	37	NE/SE/S	Strong	Cloudy

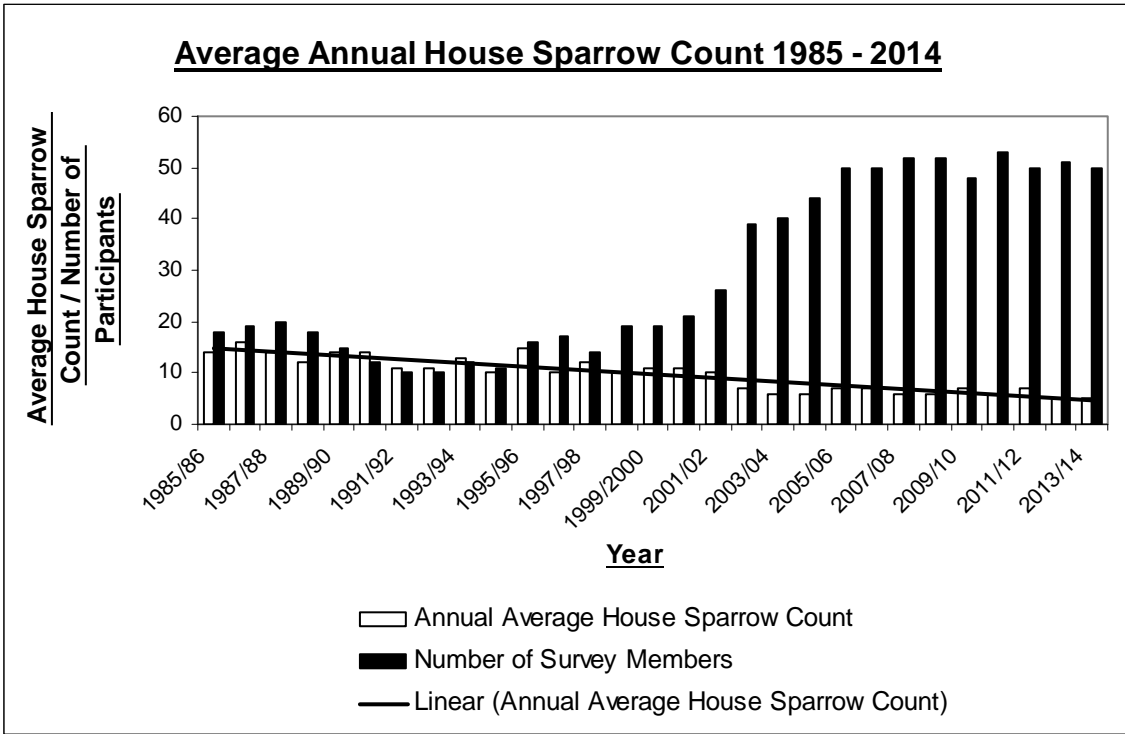
Table 5 - Weather Summary (continued).

<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 Periods</u>	<u>Frost Snow Sleet</u>	<u>Wet cloudy</u>		<u>Max</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Direction</u>	<u>Strength</u>	
3	1	0F	2	1.58	61	40	SW	Moderate	Mixed
4	0	0F	7	1.34	56	33	SW	Light	Cloudy
5	1	3F	6	0.69	49	27	NW/SW	Light	Cloudy
6	2	1F	4	0.48	52	26	NW	Light	Mixed
7	0	4F	5	0.72	47	23	NW-NE	Light	Cloudy
8	2	3F	2	0.06	46	25	NE-NW	Light	Mixed
9	1	2F	4	0.42	47	30	NW	Light	Mixed
10	1	0F	3	0.21	50	31	NW/SW	Light	Mixed
11	0	5F	6	1.29	50	28	SW	Strong	Cloudy
12	4	6F	3	0.68	47	26	SW	Strong	Mixed
13	0	2F	6	0.87	47	28	SW	Strong	Cloudy
14	0	4F	6	0.84	48	27	SW	Strong	Cloudy
15	2	3F	5	0.71	46	28	SW	Light	Cloudy
16	0	6F	6	1.15	47	25	SE-NW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	5F	7	0.98	44	29	S/SW/SE	Light	Cloudy
18	1	2F	6	1.16	44	31	S/SW/NE	Strong	Cloudy
19	0	6F	6	1.29	44	27	SW	Strong	Cloudy
20	3	3F	4	0.24	53	31	SW	Moderate	Mixed
21	4	3F	3	0.36	52	26	SW	Fresh	Mixed
22	2	3F	3	0.69	56	28	SW-W	Light	Mixed
23	2	4F	0	0	61	26	SE/NW	Light	Mixed
24	3	3F	4	0.47	58	30	SW	Fresh	Mixed
25	2	4F	5	1.08	59	26	NW-SE	Light	Mixed
26	0	0F	5	0.77	64	40	SE-SW	Light	Cloudy

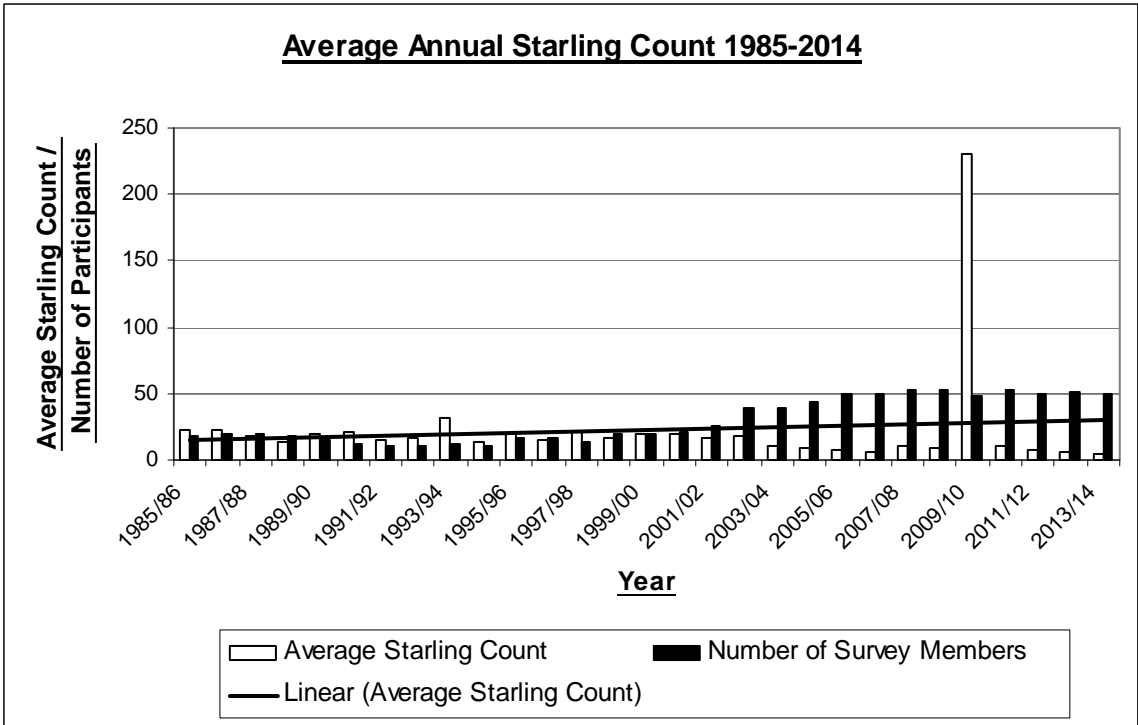
House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2014

The two bar charts used in previous reports have once more been updated to include the latest data from this survey and are presented below.

The average annual garden house sparrow count has continued to decline since the year 2002 and remains at a lowly five in this survey as in the previous survey. The twenty-nine year trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow population has declined from an average of around fifteen suggesting that the population has been reduced by sixty-six per cent over that period. Habitat loss appears to be a big factor, with Cheshire particularly blighted at present with even more irresponsible development proposals on the remaining green belt land. Our neighbour's house became vacant for an extended period and the untended garden became overgrown with long grasses and briars. Our garden sparrow count soared into double figures. The garden has now been brought back under control and now only two or three remain, but at least they are using our sparrow terrace to breed!



The average annual starling count for this survey dropped to six in the last survey and continues at that level in this. The trend line in our survey will forever be distorted by the large one-off roost of 2009-10. The reality is that numbers are still in decline.



Once more, this survey continues to support the general concerns that a decline in both populations is under way. 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 2014/15 Winter Garden Bird Survey will 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.

Once more please inform me if anyone wishes to discontinue supporting the survey, so that I know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms and then don't pester you needlessly. I am not able to commence analysing the data and preparing the report until I know no more forms will be received. Equally please encourage 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 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 by mini-bus to more distant reserves. Members also have access by arrangement to the club's bird hide on Rode Pool.

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, together with my postal address, which are also included on the survey guideline document.

Finally I include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2013/14 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.

15th May 2014

Version 2.