



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2014 TO MARCH 2015

The Survey Recorders

In this survey records were received from forty-nine survey members in both sessions. The number of contributors is one fewer than in the last survey, with one new recorder joining, plus one returned, one temporarily incapacitated and two 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 ten 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	0227	Andrew Bailey
8502	Bryan Perkins	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
9703	John & Wendy Smith	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
1104	Ken & Beverley Jones	0430	John Goulding
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	8731	John P. Barker
1306	Roy Broughton	0432	Avril Watkins
0107	Christine Howarth	0334	Bill Bellamy
0208	Stan Wildig	9635	Doreen Jones
0409	Marie Turner	9636	Geoff Yarwood
1010	John Nixon	0838	Richard Howells
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	0639	Chris Parry
0612	Alan Straw	0240	Ron & 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	1345	Martin Langhorn
8518	Ann Pym	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	1348	Graham Bailey
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1249	Chris & Sheila Borrows
1022	Mike & Christine Brooks	1351	Ray Broughton
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
1025	John Varty	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
1426	Teri Small		

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. There were no species recorded which had not been recorded in previous years.

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

Forty-nine participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1274 bird/week records (49 x 26 = 1274). 1211 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just sixty-three 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 1211 [1244]</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 49 [50]</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [2]	Wood Pigeon	1147 [1117]	48 [50]	20 [18]	0639
2 [1]	Blackbird	1140 [1150]	49 [50]	23 [16]	1345
3 [3]	Blue Tit	1102 [1082]	49 [50]	13 [14]	1010
4 [4]	Robin	1078 [1042]	49 [49]	6 [11]	1351
5 [6]	Great Tit	950 [897]	48 [49]	12 [10]	9703,1351
6 [5]	Dunnock	912 [907]	49 [48]	6 [6]	1104
7 [9]	Magpie	801 [805]	49 [50]	9 [12]	1351
8 [8]	House Sparrow	799 [814]	42 [45]	25 [28]	8731
9 [7]	Collared Dove	718 [817]	47 [48]	13 [9]	9813
10 [11]	Goldfinch	675 [578]	45 [45]	36 [27]	0844
11 [10]	Chaffinch	672 [675]	43 [44]	32 [24]	8518
12 [12]	Starling	591 [522]	41 [42]	70 [50]	0208
13 [13]	Coal Tit	567 [515]	45 [44]	6 [5]	8511
14 [15]	Wren	487 [427]	48 [47]	4 [2]	1345
15 [14]	Jackdaw	446 [457]	28 [31]	23 [22]	1306
16 [16]	Greenfinch	439 [426]	37 [32]	15 [12]	8518
17 [18]	Crow	373 [301]	40 [40]	19 [14]	9921
18 [17]	Long-tailed Tit	356 [325]	45 [44]	15 [15]	1351
19 [19]	Nuthatch	239 [154]	19 [17]	3 [4]	1351
20 [21]	Sparrowhawk	161 [120]	32 [34]	2 [2]	#1
21 [20]	Song Thrush	119 [125]	28 [26]	3 [2]	1345
22 [22]	Pied Wagtail	85 [50]	15 [13]	3 [4]	1306

#1 Members No.1017, 0639 & 0758

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.)

In this survey there was precious little change in the ranking order, the number of gardens visited or the highest count for all species when compared to the previous survey. As with the last survey once more there was the perception that far fewer birds were evident during this survey period,

which may be attributable to the cold wet weather conditions which were experienced for considerable periods of the survey.

Blackbird, blue tit, robin, dunnock and magpie were recorded in every garden. Wood pigeon, great tit and wren were each present in all but one. The large number of records for great spotted woodpeckers, which consistently occur in at least half of the gardens, would suggest that for convenience in the next survey, it should be included in the "listed bird" part of the survey, rather than in the "other species" record. By the same token the scarcity of pied wagtail records makes it more appropriate to record as a part of "other species".

Sixteen contributors from the total of forty-nine recorded the highest or joint highest count for at least one bird species. One member recorded the highest or joint highest count for four 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 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 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 663</u> [465]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 49</u> [50]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [1]	G S Woodpecker	210 [132]	24 [19]	3 [2]	1351
2 [2]	Bullfinch	163 [109]	15 [13]	7 [7]	1017
3 [10]	Jay	106 [40]	15 [2]	7 [2]	1351
4 [6]	Stock Dove	96 [46]	9 [6]	6 [4]	1306
5 [5]	Pheasant	90 [48]	8 [10]	6 [4]	1306
6 [4]	Blackcap	81 [52]	15 [17]	3 [2]	1426, 1345
7 [6]	Goldcrest	79 [46]	15 [12]	2 [3]	#1
8 [12]	Black Headed Gull	75 [29]	12 [8]	30 [18]	8501
9 [8]	Rook	65 [45]	10 [6]	12 [20]	1306
10 [14]	Reed Bunting	57 [27]	9 [5]	4 [4]	8518, 1022
11 [11]	Mistle Thrush	48 [31]	10 [11]	3 [2]	0612, 0639
11 [15]	Feral Pigeon	48 [26]	2 [2]	4 [4]	1348
13 [24]	Grey Heron	40 [7]	8 [3]	1 [1]	#2
14 [18]	Grey Wagtail	35 [23]	9 [5]	2 [1]	1306
15 [3]	Redwing	32 [66]	9 [23]	20 [50]	1306
16 [20]	Buzzard	24 [13]	8 [4]	3 [1]	1345
17 [13]	Fieldfare	21 [28]	9 [11]	3 [12]	1351
17 [16]	Lesser Redpoll	21 [25]	5 [8]	4 [6]	8518
17 [22]	Treecreeper	21 [10]	7 [5]	1 [1]	#3
20 [16]	Tawny Owl	17 [25]	3 [2]	2 [2]	0639
21 [23]	Mallard	15 [8]	3 [3]	4 [3]	0556, 0334
22 [27]	Herring Gull	12 [2]	1 [1]	2 [2]	0208
23 [19]	Tree Sparrow	11 [14]	4 [4]	4 [2]	0612
24	Lesser b-b gull	5 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	0208

Table 4 -- 'Ranking of Other Species' continued

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records Out of 663</u> [465]	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 49</u> [50]	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
25 [26]	Kestrel	4 [4]	3 [2]	1 [1]	#4
25	Moorhen	4 [0]	2 [0]	1 [0]	0432, 0556
27 [9]	Siskin	3 [41]	3 [16]	2 [10]	0758
27	Yellow Hammer	3 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	8518
29 [24]	Chiffchaff	2 [7]	2 [6]	1 [1]	1306, 1017
30 [21]	Brambling	1 [12]	1 [5]	1 [9]	8518, 1345
30	Red-leg Partridge	1 [0]	1 [0]	1 [0]	8502
0 [28]	Linnet	0 [1]	0 [1]	0 [1]	-
0 [28]	Mealy Redpoll	0 [1]	0 [1]	0 [1]	-

#1 – Members 9813, 0838, 0639, 0556.

#2 – Members 1306, 1010, 9921, 9636, 0639, 1345, 1351, 0758.

#3 – Members 1306, 1010, 9923, 0838, 0342, 1351, 0556.

#4 -- Members 0612, 9921, 0556.

Brackets thus [], denotes corresponding figures to the previous [2013/14] survey for comparison.

Thirty-one species were recorded from forty-nine gardens, compared to twenty-nine species from fifty gardens last time. From the 1,211 total number of bird week records submitted, 663 bird week records of other species were included, compared to only 465 for the previous survey. Lesser black-backed gull, moorhen, yellow hammer and red-legged partridge were present in this survey but not in the last. Linnet and mealy redpoll recorded in the last survey were absent from this.

Jay records were two and a half times greater than previous, turning up in fifteen gardens compared to two last time, propelling them to third in the table from tenth. Perhaps the acorn crop failed in other parts of Europe causing an influx into Britain? Last survey's third spot was occupied by redwings due to a similar influx, but this time they returned to a more usual fifteenth place with only nine gardens producing records compared to twenty-three previously. Reed buntings progressed to tenth in the table, doubling their records and number of gardens visited.

Buzzard records and gardens visited doubled, with a highest single count of three, cementing their confidence in making garden visits.

Records for great spotted woodpecker, bullfinch, stock dove, pheasant, blackcap, goldcrest, black-headed gull and grey heron all increased substantially, some by a factor of two.

Siskins were a rarity this year; following a presence in sixteen gardens in the last survey, only three gardens were privileged this time, with a corresponding reduction in record numbers and the highest single count. Brambling records followed a similar declining course.

Finally three records of a yellow hammer in one garden is a highlight, having been completely absent from the surveys for many years.

Sixteen members recorded the highest count for at least one species but one member had the highest count for five species (highest specie count not considered unless greater than one).

The gardens of members 1306 and 0556 were visited by the highest number of "other species" each with seventeen, closely followed by members 1345 with fourteen and 1351 with thirteen.

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

As normal there were many comments regarding sparrowhawks being present, but in many cases they were seen to be not successful in catching prey, though some success was recorded with blackbird, blue tit and goldfinch as victims. Many were seen to take up

a patient station near to feeders and one sought to find concealment in a holly bush. A nest building pair were harassed by crows, magpies and jays.

A record of a red-legged partridge was surprising in that the garden is close to a busy suburban road.

Elsewhere a grey heron alighted on a bird table which provided a good vantage point for a neighbour's fish pond. Another was seen to take a frog from a garden pond. Even more remarkably a buzzard perched on a hanging feeder, in addition to numerous reports of visits to garden trees.

A garden pond attracted both grey and pied wagtail at the same time.

In October one garden suddenly enjoyed a bounteous visitation of chiffchaff, wren, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, goldcrest, robin and dunnock all at the same time.

Several recorders expressed their surprise that house sparrows and starlings were to be seen in their garden, which is indicative of the great change in the fortune of these species, which we have tracked since 1985. Similar comments were made for hedgehog sightings.

There were many reports of goldcrest on conifers and yew trees.

One recorder felt honoured to host hundreds of starlings for an over-night tree roost.

Grey squirrels have become an increasing nuisance in skilfully taking bird food, forcing many of us to invest in squirrel-proof feeders.

Dunnock and house sparrows were seen to be nest building at the end of March. Paired great tits and collared doves were reduced to single members by predators.

A resourceful jackdaw attempted to remove wire netting from a chimney pot so that a nest could be built. A builder was summoned to make the netting secure.

In our garden jackdaws take turns to demolish fat balls in a feeder, whilst the other members of the flock, sometimes joined by a crow, feast below on the droppings as the balls crumble. You can't beat teamwork!

Garden food sources attracted various species as below.

Nuthatch, magpie and jay took peanuts. Nuthatch was caching for winter supplies.

Blackbirds and mistle thrushes took holly berries.

A grey wagtail used house ivy to take flies, whilst wrens used ivy as a roost.

Bullfinch and redwing took rowan berries, whilst an influx of blackbirds in October also devoured rowan berries.

A blackcap ground-fed on apples and fieldfares on crab apple.

Blackcap, starling, jackdaw and magpie fed on fat balls.

Bullfinch, blackcap, robin and dunnock were noted on seed feeders.

Blackcap took honeysuckle berries.

Blackcap and goldcrest fed on mahonia flowers.

Goldfinch, greenfinch, chaffinch, house sparrows and robin took sunflower hearts.

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	0	0F	6	1.50	61	35	SW	Fresh	Cloudy
2	0	0F	7	1.03	52	34	SE/NE/SW	Variable	Cloudy

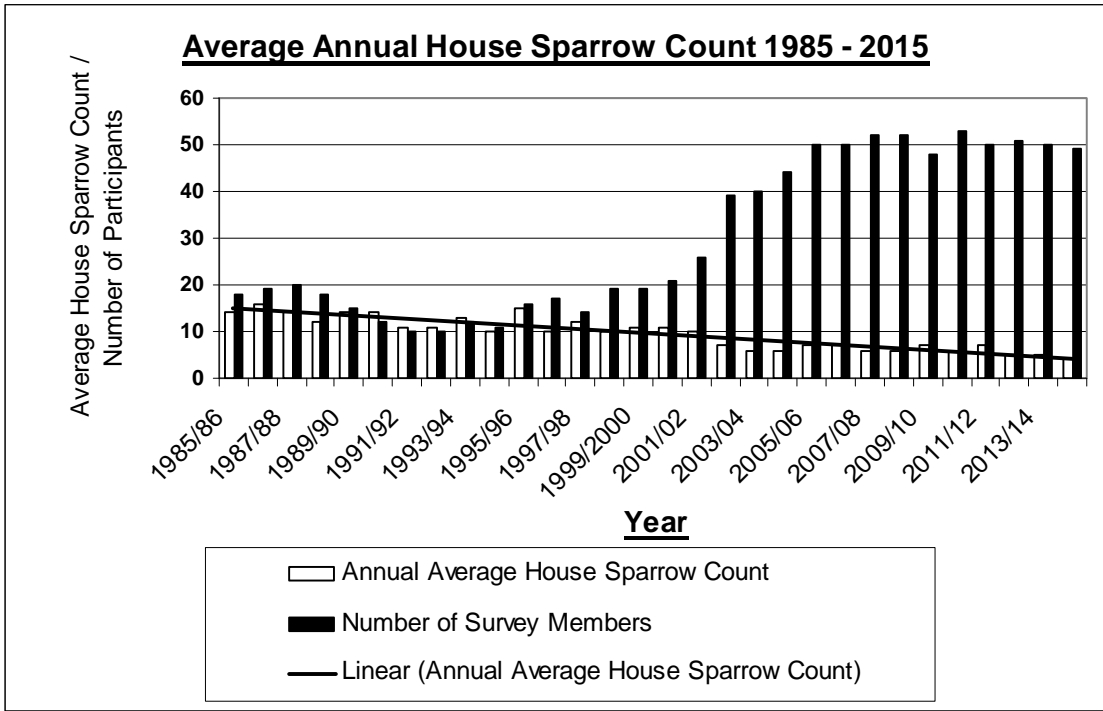
Table 5 - Weather Summary (continued).

<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	0	0F	7	0.67	61	37	SW/NW	Strong	Cloudy
4	0	0F	4	1.34	63	35	SW	Light	Cloudy
5	0	0F	4	0.91	54	30	SW/N	Light	Mixed
6	0	0F	6	0.59	52	35	SW	Variable	Cloudy
7	0	0F	3	0.80	51	32	SE	Light	Cloudy
8	2	0F	5	0.47	48	27	NW-SE	Light	Cloudy
9	6	1F	1	0.04	49	22	NW	Light	Mixed
10	0	1F	7	1.02	47	24	NW	Light	Mixed
11	0	0F	6	1.06	51	33	SW-NW	Moderate	Cloudy
12	2	3F	6	1.12	50	22	NW	Light	Mixed
13	0	5F	4	0.43	44	22	NW-SW	Light	Mixed
14	0	3F	6	0.40	53	24	NW	Light	Cloudy
15	0	6F	6	0.38	47	22	NW	Strong	Cloudy
16	0	7F	4	0.34	40	20	NW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	4F	4	0.79	46	27	NW	Strong	Cloudy
18	6	7F	1	0.01	39	21	N-NE	Light	Sunny
19	0	3F	1	0.11	45	30	N	Light	Cloudy
20	4	6F	3	0.37	50	25	NW	Light	Mixed
21	0	4F	5	0.51	53	24	NW-SW	Fresh	Mixed
22	0	4F	2	0.18	56	27	NW	Moderate	Moderate
23	0	5F	5	0.90	54	27	NE	Light	Cloudy
24	5	5F	2	0.03	51	27	NE,SE,NW	Light	Sunny
25	0	5F	4	0.54	55	26	NW,SW	Strong	Mixed
26	0	0F	6	1.48	55	34	NW-S	Strong	Cloudy

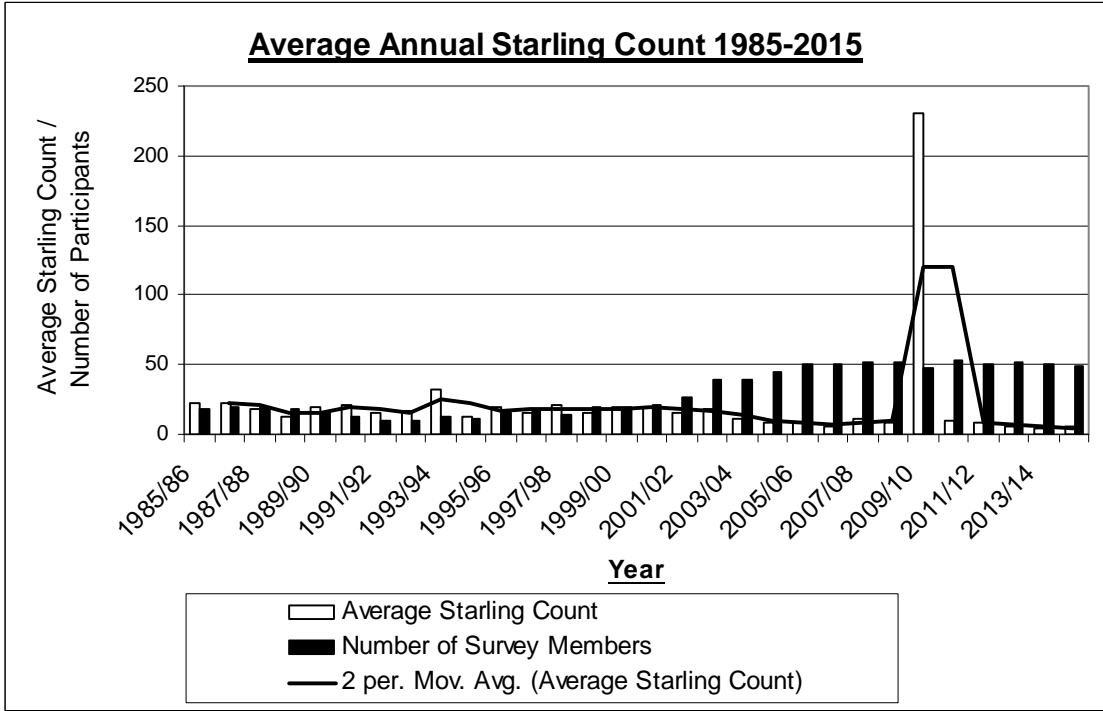
House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2015

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 year period and are presented below.

The average annual garden house sparrow count has continued to decline since the year 2002 and has now been reduced to four in this survey as compared to five in the previous survey. The thirty year trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow population has declined from an average of around fifteen.



The average annual starling count for this survey improved slightly to five having dropped to four in the previous survey. The trend line has been changed to a moving average one rather than linear to accommodate the one off distortion caused by a large roost in 2009/10. The overall trend is still one of 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 2015/16 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.

Do please inform me if you wish to discontinue supporting the survey. I then know when I am in receipt of the full complement of completed forms and then won'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 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 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. Full details of the club's activities are maintained in an up-to-date state on the 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 2014/15 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.

7th May 2015