



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2017 TO MARCH 2018

The Survey Recorders

In this survey records were received from forty-nine survey members in the first session and forty-eight in the second session. The number of contributors has increased by two compared to the last survey. Seventeen 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 fourteen 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	0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy
8502	Bryan Perkins	1029	Peter & Marilyn Norbury
9703	John & Wendy Smith	0430	John Goulding
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	8731	John P. Barker
1306	Roy Broughton	0432	Avril Watkins
0107	Christine Howarth	1533	David Cookson
0409	Marie Turner	0334	Bill Bellamy
1010	John Nixon	9635	Doreen Jones
8511	Alan Soper	9636	Geoff Yarwood
0612	Alan Straw	1537	Heather Smith
9813	John Thompson	0838	Richard Howells
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0639	Chris Parry
1215	Louise Adams	1740	David & Denise Hind
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0341	Howard Nixon
1017	Mick Ball	0342	Brian Sankey
8518	Ann Pym	0343	John & Wendy Fuller
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0844	Dave O'Hara
0720	Rachel Heath	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
9921	Barbara Hubbard	1348	Graham Bailey
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
1426	Teri Small	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
1727	Mike Tonks		

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. One new species has been added to the list by this survey, the Hawfinch

Table 2

No.	Bird Species	No.	Bird Species
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-nine participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1248 bird/week records (49 x 26 =1274). 1203 bird/weeks records were actually produced, just one seventy-one 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 1203 [1178]</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited Out of 49 [48]</u>	<u>Highest Single Count</u>	
				<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
1 [3]	Blue Tit	1152 [1104]	49 [48]	16 [30]	0758
2 [4]	Robin	1144 [1078]	49 [48]	7 [4]	1351
3 [1]	Wood Pigeon	1141 [1163]	49 [48]	45 [26]	0334
4 [2]	Blackbird	1121 [1111]	49 [48]	15 [14]	1351
5 [5]	Dunnock	967 [917]	48 [46]	6 [6]	1351
6 [7]	Great Tit	891 [837]	49 [48]	14 [11]	0343, 1351
7 [6]	Magpie	821 [843]	47 [48]	7 [7]	0720
8 [8]	House Sparrow	764 [735]	42 [42]	30 [40]	8731
9 [11]	Chaffinch	723 [571]	43 [42]	22 [22]	1306
10 [15]	Coal Tit	703 [495]	47 [40]	7 [6]	0639
11 [9]	Goldfinch	641 [683]	45 [42]	37 [36]	8505
12 [12]	Starling	626 [552]	42 [42]	100 [50]	1740
13 [10]	Collared Dove	563 [645]	38 [46]	6 [9]	8731
14 [18]	Long-tailed Tit	549 [373]	49 [40]	22 [24]	1352
15 [14]	Wren	532 [513]	46 [45]	6 [3]	1351
16 [13]	Jackdaw	520 [548]	30 [34]	80 [25]	1306
17 [16]	Greenfinch	470 [435]	33 [38]	9 [9]	8502, 1306, 9923
18 [17]	Crow	402 [381]	39 [34]	5 [6]	8511, 0844
19 [19]	Nuthatch	212 [218]	26 [22]	6 [3]	8505, 1351
20 [20]	GS Woodpecker	185 [171]	25 [25]	5 [3]	1351
21 [22]	Song Thrush	174 [120]	33 [24]	3 [2]	1306, 1740, 0556
22 [21]	Sparrowhawk	128 [130]	27 [29]	2 [2]	0639, 1351

Brackets thus [], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2016/17] survey for comparison. (See *Table 1* for correlation of registration number to members’ names.)

In general, there was little change in the ranking order compared to the previous survey, with the first eight positions occupied by the same species, with slight variation in the order. Wood pigeons were relegated from most common bird status, by blue tit and robin. Similarly, the number of gardens visited by each species showed little change, save for a reduction for collared doves and a welcome increase for song thrushes. The highest count too for most species was generally of the same order, with the exception of starling, wood pigeon and jackdaw flocks. Coal tit records increased significantly and chaffinches to a lesser degree.

Wood pigeon, blackbird, blue tit, robin, and great tit were recorded in every garden. Dunnocks were absent from one and magpie and coal tit from two.

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 eight species, whilst another clocked up the 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-five} 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’

Rank No.	Species	Number of Bird/Week Records Out of		Number of Gardens Visited Out of		Highest Single Count		Reg. No.
		695	[587]	49	[48]	Count		
1 [1]	Bullfinch	210	[171]	21	[18]	6	[6]	0639,1351
2 [4]	Pied Wagtail	131	[99]	19	[21]	5	[3]	0612
3 [2]	Goldcrest	122	[130]	21	[22]	3	[4]	0639
4 [12]	Blackcap	100	[41]	21	[14]	3	[3]	0838, 0342
5 [8]	Feral Pigeon	83	[63]	5	[4]	6	[8]	1348
6 [9]	Stock Dove	82	[61]	7	[9]	12	[8]	1306
7 [3]	Pheasant	80	[108]	8	[9]	8	[11]	8518
8 [6]	Jay	79	[73]	6	[7]	9	[6]	1351
9 [7]	Rook	69	[70]	6	[6]	100	[42]	1306
9 [10]	Siskin	69	[54]	15	[17]	8	[6]	0853
11 [13]	Redwing	60	[37]	21	[13]	30	[30]	1306
12 [17]	Fieldfare	59	[18]	21	[9]	80	[10]	9921
13 [5]	Black-headed Gull	53	[84]	11	[14]	15	[23]	8511
14 [25]	Brambling	51	[5]	11	[5]	37	[2]	1306
15 [14]	Grey Wagtail	33	[35]	7	[7]	1	[1]	#1
16 [11]	Mistle Thrush	32	[52]	11	[11]	2	[3]	9813, 1017, 0639
17 [21]	Lesser Redpoll	30	[14]	7	[5]	11	[8]	1306
18 [21]	Treecreeper	27	[14]	11	[7]	1	[1]	#2
19 [15]	Tawny Owl	22	[31]	2	[4]	2	[2]	0639
20 [18]	Reed Bunting	20	[17]	2	[3]	5	[6]	1306
21 [18]	Grey Heron	14	[17]	5	[5]	1	[1]	#3
22 [25]	Mallard	12	[5]	6	[1]	4	[2]	0556
23 [16]	Herring Gull	11	[22]	3	[1]	2	[8]	1351
24 [20]	Lesser b-b gull	10	[15]	3	[4]	2	[3]	0639, 1351
25 [23]	Tree Sparrow	9	[11]	4	[3]	4	[2]	1351
26 [27]	Buzzard	6	[3]	5	[3]	2	[1]	1348
27 [24]	Chiffchaff	3	[9]	2	[4]	1	[2]	1306, 9813
28 [0]	Hawfinch	2	[0]	1	[0]	1	[0]	0639
29 [30]	Moorhen	1	[2]	1	[2]	1	[1]	9923
29 [30]	Willow warbler	1	[2]	1	[2]	1	[1]	0758

Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’ continued

<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>695</u>	<u>[587]</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>[48]</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>
29 [0]	Common Gull	1	[0]	1	[0]	1 [0]	1351
0 [27]	Greater b b Gull	0	[3]	0	[2]	0 [5]	
0 [27]	Kestrel	0	[3]	0	[1]	0 [1]	
0 [32]	Raven	0	{1}	0	{1}	0 [1]	
0 [32]	Waxwing	0	[1]	0	[1]	0 [60]	

#1 -- Members. 1306, 9921, 0024, 0342, 0844, 1351, 0758

#2 ---Members 8501, 1017, 1022, 9923, 0838, 0639, 1740, 0347, 1351, 0556, 0758

#3 -- Members 9921, 0639, 1740, 1351, 0758

Brackets thus [], denotes figures corresponding to the previous [2016/17] survey for comparison.

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

Thirty-one species were recorded from forty-nine gardens, compared to thirty-three species from forty-eight gardens last time. From the 1,203 total number of bird-week records submitted, 695 bird week records of other species are included, compared to 587 for the previous survey.

The highlight of the survey was the hawfinch recorded in one member's garden in Alsager, a species not recorded in any previous survey.

In addition to the hawfinch, common gull was present in this survey, but not in the last. Greater black-backed gull, kestrel, raven and waxwing, were recorded in the last survey, but were absent from this.

Bullfinch continues to be the most common visitor in this table as it has been in recent previous surveys.

Blackcap, brambling, fieldfare, lesser redpoll and treecreeper provided far more records in this survey and appeared in more gardens. Though far from common in gardens, buzzard records increased and even appeared as a pair on one occasion.

Feral pigeons continued to become more common.

Mistle thrushes and black-headed gulls declined as visitors.

Twenty-one members recorded the highest count for at least one species but one member had the highest count for eight species, closely followed by another for six (only species count greater than one qualify for inclusion in this exercise).

The garden of member 1351 was visited by the highest number of "different other species" with seventeen, closely followed by member 1306 with sixteen and member 0639 with 15.

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

Feeding habits mentioned

Generally hanging feeders were reported to attract house sparrows, great spotted woodpeckers, bullfinch, chaffinch, jackdaw, blackbird, siskin, robin, greenfinch long-tailed tit and starling.

The following species were reported feeding on food sources below.

Sunflower hearts -robin, goldfinch, greenfinch, dunnock, brambling.

Black sunflower seeds – nuthatch, coal tit and great tit.

Suet blocks – starling, jackdaw, great tit, blue tit.

Fatballs – blackcap, blackbirds, jackdaws and starling.

Rotting apples, attracted no fewer than eighty fieldfares in one garden with more in surrounding trees.

Peanut feeder attracted jays.

Coconut – great spotted woodpecker and blackcap.

Rowan berries – mistle thrush, redwing and starling.

Feeding habits mentioned continued

Holly berries – blackbirds.

Crab apples – fieldfares, but being too sour, thought to exclude blackbirds.

Finally, scrambled egg, mixed fruit and crumbled bread provided sustenance in snowy conditions!

Predatory behaviour

A jackdaw killed an ailing chaffinch and carried it away.

A sparrowhawk killed a blackbird and elsewhere a pair were noted hunting as a pair

On two occasions sparrowhawk was seen to take flight pursued by a small flock of starlings. Another was seen off by a crow.

A hawfinch joined other finches objecting to a roosting owl.

A feisty robin attacked a dunnock.

A dead blackbird was plucked by another blackbird, possibly for nesting material.

A cat took a blackbird.

A long-term resident moorhen disappeared from a garden following the arrival of a neighbour's new cat.

Disruptions to recording.

Several members have found that their records have diminished due to new house building on adjacent fields. Similar consequences were attributed to tree felling.

Home relocation and home repairs were reported as detrimental, at least temporarily, to bird recording.

First garden visit reports.

For various members the following were recorded as garden first time visitors – great-spotted woodpecker, goldcrest, greenfinch, treecreeper, female blackcap, brambling, redpoll and rook.

Noted unusual bird behaviour.

A dunnock foraged by turning leaves in the manner of a blackbird.

Collared doves not seen in Holmes Chapel for two years.

Overflying reports were received for buzzard, red kite and raven (though not counted in the survey figures).

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	0.85	60	40	NW-SW	Moderate	Cloudy
2	0	0F	3	0.23	68	40	NW-SW	Moderate	Cloudy
3	0	0F	3	0.96	51	38	SW-SE	1 Gale	Cloudy
4	0	0F	3	0.14	62	35	SW-NW	Light	Cloudy
5	0	2F	4	0.55	55	27	NW	Light	Mixed
6	0	3F	5	0.78	51	27	NW	Light	Mixed
7	2	4F	6	0.27	51	24	NW	Light	Cloudy
8	0	4F	6	1.09	54	27	SW-NW-W	Strong	Mixed

Table 5 – Weather Summary continued

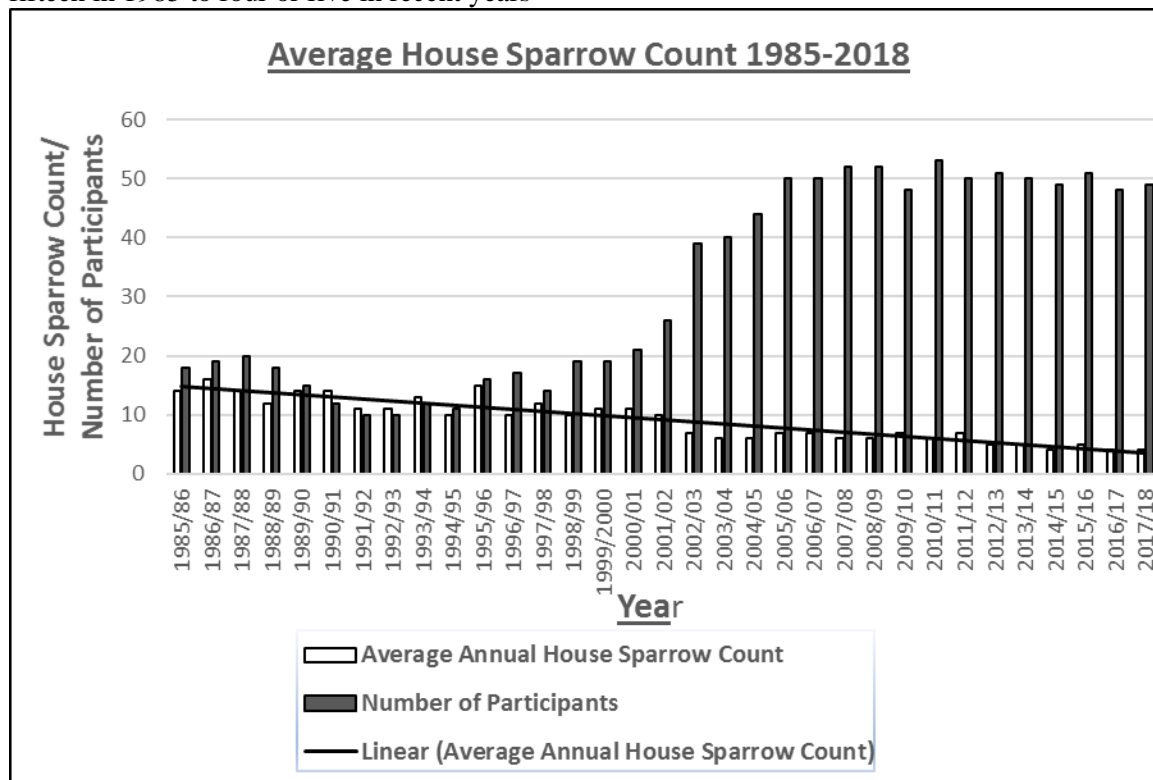
Week No.	Number of Days			Inches of Rain	Temp. °F		Wind		One Word Notes
	Sunny Periods	Frost Snow Sleet	Wet cloudy		Max	Min	Direction	Strength	
9	6	6F	3	0.64	42	21	NW	Light	Sunny
10	2	3F1S	5	0.52	49	24	NW-SW	Light	Cloudy
11	0	7F1S	6	1.30	38	18	NW	Light	Mixed
12	0	3F	4	0.21	49	28	NW-SW	Light	Cloudy
13	0	5F	4	0.98	48	24	SW-NW	Light	Cloudy
14	1	6F	7	0.90	47	24	NW	Moderate	Cloudy
15	2	5F	1	0.05	44	23	E-SE-SW	Light	Cloudy
16	1	7F	7	0.71	43	25	NW	Light	Cloudy
17	0	2F	6	0.69	50	29	NW-SW	Light	Cloudy
18	0	5F1S	5	0.67	52	26	SW	Light	Cloudy
19	0	7F	3	0.37	45	19	N-NW	Strong	Mixed
20	2	6F1S	6	0.49	48	23	NW	Light	Mixed
21	0	5F	3	0.20	47	22	NW-SE	Variable	Mixed
22	1	7F/S	0	0.00	36	14	E	Moderate	Cloudy
23	0	7F	7	1.03	53	27	SE-SW	Light	Cloudy
24	0	3F1S	6	0.65	51	23	S-SE	Variable	Mixed
26	0	4F	5	0.59	56	29	NW	Light	Cloudy

House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2018

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-three year period and are presented below.

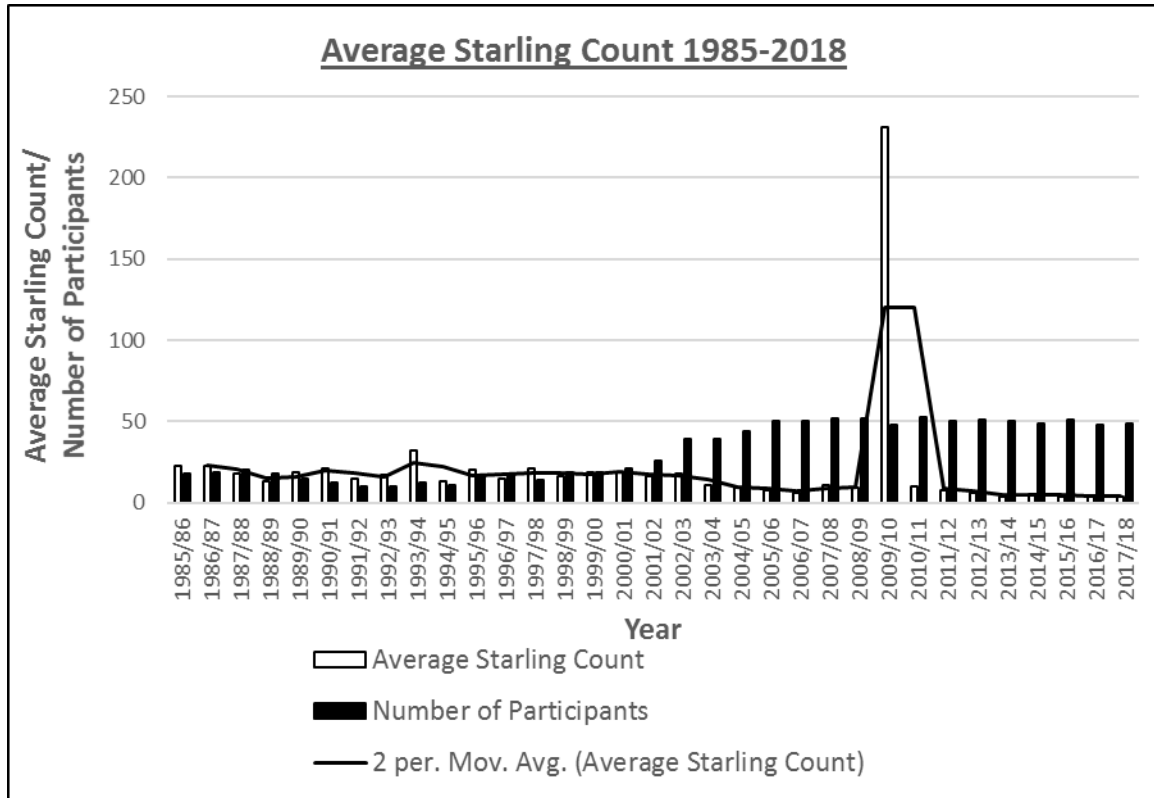
House sparrows

The declining trend for the house sparrow population continues to follow a negative path with seven gardens failing to record a single house sparrow during the entire period of the survey. The trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow average count has declined from around fifteen in 1985 to four or five in recent years



Starlings

The average annual starling count for this survey continued at a lowly count of four as in the previous survey, whilst in 1985 the average stood at twenty-three. Seven gardens did not record a single starling during the survey. 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. The overall trend continues to be one of decline.



This survey continues to show that there has been a sustained decline in the population of both species, which shows no signs of reversal. 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 2018/19 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 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 currently also by car 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 excellent 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 2017/18 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.

16th May 2018