



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2003 TO MARCH 2004

The Survey Recorders

The number of participants in our latest survey increased yet again, from thirty-nine in the last survey to forty in this. Two of the previous year's recorders dropped out, but happily three new contributors joined. Five contributors are not SECOS members as was the case last year, so the SECOS membership continues to provide the predominant source of input. Again, it is most encouraging and a big thank-you is extended to all contributors new and old. I hope that the sustained high level of SECOS membership will result in an even higher level of support for the next survey. *Table 1* below lists the recorders for this survey together with their registration number.

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
0015	Megan McKelvey
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey
9817	Lorna Pickstock
8518	Ann Pym
0119	George & Barbara Fisher
9820	Bill & Betty Brookes
9921	Barbara Hubbard

<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
8731	John P. Barker
0333	Alan Robson
0334	Bill Bellamy
9635	Ron & Doreen Jones
9636	Geof Yarwood
0237	Derek Leigh
0238	Tony Coomer
0239	Paula Birchall
0240	Cynthia Cadman
0341	Howard Nixon
0342	Brian Sankey
0343	John Fuller
0347	Sylvia Jarvis

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985 seventy-five different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. One species, the lesser redpoll, has been added by this survey.

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

Table 2 (continued)

16	Feral Pigeon
17	Fieldfare
18	Goldcrest
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	Redpoll Lesser
54	Redwing
55	Reed Bunting
56	Robin
57	Rook
58	Siskin
59	Skylark
60	Snipe
61	Song Thrush
62	Sparrowhawk
63	Starling
64	Stock Dove
65	Swallow
66	Tawny Owl
67	Tree Sparrow
68	Treecreeper
69	Water Rail
70	White Wagtail
71	Willow Warbler
72	Woodcock
73	Wood Pigeon
74	Wren
75	Yellowhammer

The Current Survey

Forty participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1040 bird/week records (40x26 =1040). 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 is reduced to a highly commendable 933.

The “Listed Species”

In *Table 3* below the species entered on the “Listed Species” section of the input forms “A1” & “A2” are shown 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’

Rank No.	Species	Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 933)	Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 40)	Highest Single Count	
				Count	Reg. No.
1[2]	Blackbird	894	40	15	0208
2[1]	Blue Tit	870	40	18	8518
3[3]	Robin	855	40	5	8518
4[5]	Collared Dove	749	40	20	0110
5[6]	Great Tit	743	40	22	0110
6[4]	House Sparrow	742	38	36	9923
7[8]	Dunnock	695	37	5	9923
8[7]	Starling	687	37	76	0208
9[9]	Chaffinch	682	40	23	8518
10[11]	Wood Pigeon	662	39	12	0026 & 0237
11[10]	Greenfinch	603	39	80	0110
12[13]	Coal Tit	560	37	6	0209
13[12]	Magpie	539	37	5	9704 & 9635
14[14]	Wren	459	37	3	#1
15[15]	Goldfinch	369	30	40	8505
16[17]	Song Thrush	194	32	3	9814
17*	Jackdaw	193	17	32	0026
18[16]	Crow	174	23	4	#2
19*	Long-tailed Tit	170	31	20	0025
20[20]	Nuthatch	141	13	2	#3
21[18]	Siskin	104	20	15	0333
22[19]	Pied Wagtail	73	16	3	0334

[] Denotes the corresponding ranking in the previous survey for comparison.

* The Jackdaw and Long-tailed Tit were listed under the “Other Species Table” in the previous survey.

#1 - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0110, 0015, 8518 and 9923 (Wren)

#2 - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 8501, 0015 and 0237 (Crow)

#3 - Joint equal count between member registration nos. 0107, 8518, 0025 and 0128 (Nuthatch)

For this survey the jackdaw and long-tailed tit were ‘promoted’ to the “Listed Species” section at the expense of the mistle thrush and black-headed gull, in recognition of their more common occurrence over recent years.

Generally there was very little change in order of commonality in this survey, save for the usual minor adjustments in relative positions which is a normal occurrence. Pied wagtail records were significantly reduced from those of the previous survey. Starling flocks no longer roost in great numbers in members’ gardens as used to be the case. The highest siskin count in this survey is fifteen compared to fifty-three previously, with a twenty-five per cent reduction in recordings.

Eighteen contributors from the total of forty recorded the highest, or joint highest, count for at least one bird species. One member recorded the highest count for five species, one member recorded the highest count for four species and four members each recorded the highest count for three 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 from the seventy-five in the “all-time” list (*Table 2*). Any species recorded in the last survey, but not recorded in this survey, is included.

Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 406)</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 40)</u>
1[3]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	136	17
2[4]	Sparrowhawk	133	28
3[5]	Jay	92	15
4[6]	Pheasant	61	4
5*	Mistle Thrush	57	13
6[8]	Tree Sparrow	54	4
7[10]	Bullfinch	48	9
8[12]	Blackcap	35	11
9[17]	Grey Wagtail	33	9
10*	Black Headed Gull	29	7
11[10]	Rook	25	6
12[13]	Treecreeper	24	8
13[21]	Grey Heron	16	5
14[29]	Marsh/Willow Tit	13	2
14	Stock Dove	13	3
14[28]	Redpoll	13	4
17[7]	Redwing	11	5
17[14]	Goldcrest	11	8
19	Lesser Redpoll	10	2
19[16]	Kestrel	10	3
19[9]	Fieldfare	10	5
19[23]	Reed Bunting	10	5
23[22]	Brambling	9	4
24[17]	Mallard	7	2
24[24]	Chiffchaff	7	5
26[15]	Merlin	6	1
27	Little Owl	4	1
28[24]	Moorhen	3	1
29	Buzzard	2	2
30	Herring Gull	1	1
30	Yellow Hammer	1	1
[28]	Feral Pigeon	0	0
[17]	Kingfisher	0	0
[26]	Lesser Black-backed Gull	0	0
[28]	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	0	0
[20]	Tawny Owl	0	0
[28]	Water Rail	0	0
[26]	White Wagtail	0	0
[28]	Woodcock	0	0

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

Records of little owl by member registration no.0026, buzzard by members registration nos. 9820 & 9635, yellow hammer by member registration no. 9817, marsh/willow tits by members registration nos.0015 & 0342 and again of merlin by member registration no. 0110, are probably the most notable records in this survey.

The lesser redpoll records from members registration nos. 9814 and 9636 were the first records of this species since the surveys began in 1985 and are equally notable. Redpolls turned up in four gardens. Great spotted woodpecker records were greatly increased and sparrowhawks were evident in twenty-eight gardens, compared to only nineteen in the last survey.

Grey wagtails and grey herons were far more heavily recorded than previously, perhaps more recorders have garden ponds (and goldfish for herons). Blackcaps were also more common with a presence in eleven gardens. Fieldfare and redwing records were reduced to roughly twenty-five per cent of the last survey's numbers.

Last survey's records of feral pigeon, kingfisher, lesser black-backed gull, lesser spotted woodpecker, tawny owl, water rail, white wagtail and woodcock were not perpetuated in this survey.

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

Species other than the normal hanging feeder feeders observed in this activity include blackcap, bullfinch, goldfinch, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, jackdaw, robin, siskin and tree sparrow.

Species observed being devoured by sparrowhawks include blue tit, blackbird, collared dove, great tit, house sparrow and wood pigeon. Unsuccessful attacks are recorded for chaffinch and goldfinch.

A confrontation between two female sparrowhawks was seen in an Alsager garden.

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

<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>	
1	5	0	2	0.49	65	32	S/E to N/W	Variable	Mixed
2	1	0	6	0.76	63	42	N/W	Fresh	Mixed
3	7	0	0	0	59	32	S/W to S/E	Moderate	
4	4	0	3	0.04	52	29	E to S/E	Light	Frost
5	0	0	7	1.19	51	30	N/W to S/E	Strong	Cloudy
6	4	0	3	0.20	57	36	S/W	Strong	Mixed
7	2	0	4	0.31	55	37	S to S/W	Strong	Cloudy
8	0	0	4	0.14	53	27	N/W	Moderate	Cloudy
9	1	0	3	0.28	50	24	S/W	Blustery	Frosty
10	1	0	4	0.54	48	28	S/E to N/E	Light	Frost
11	1	0	3	1.17	51	24	S/E to N/W	Moderate	Frost/Fog
12	0	0	2	0.75	43	27	N/W	Light	Frost
13	1	0	6	0.85	50	27	N/W to S/W	Light	Frost

Table 5 – Weather Summary continued

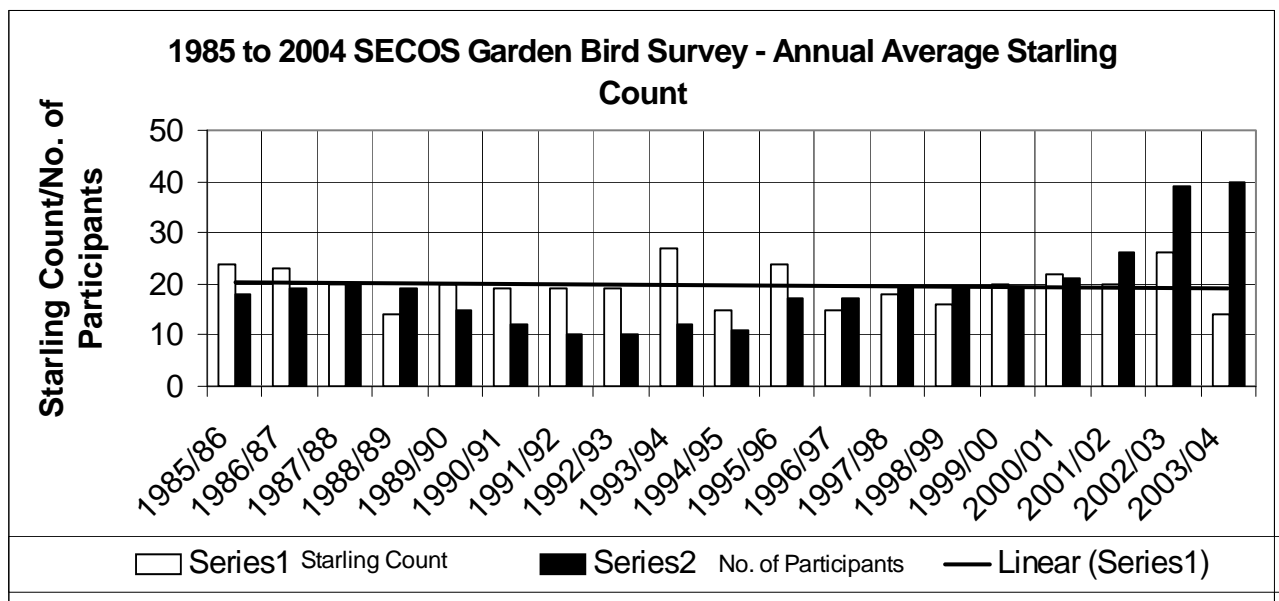
Week No.	Number of Days			Inches of Rain	Temp. °F		Wind		One Word Notes
	Sunny	Snowy Sleety	Wet cloudy		Max	Min	Direction	Strength	
14	2	0	5	0.66	42	21	S/E to N/W	Light	Frosty
15	1	0	6	0.68	49	33	S/W	Strong	Cloudy
16	1	0	6	0.55	44	24	N/W	Fresh	Cloudy
17	1	1	6	1.15	43	29	N/W	Blustery	Cloudy
18	1	2	6	0.73	51	24	?	Strong	Frosty
19	1	0	6	1.14	56	34	S/W	Moderate	Cloudy
20	1	0	4	0.08	49	23	N/W to S/W	Strong	Gales
21	4	0	3	0.27	54	27	N/E	Moderate	Frosty
22	5	1	2	0.09	43	21	?	Light	Frosty
23	6	0	1	0.01	57	21	N/E	Light	Frosty
24	5	0	2	0.12	55	28	N/E to S/E	Variable	Bitter
25	2	0	5	0.44	62	37	S/W	Strong	Gales
26	0	2	7	0.46	52	32	N/W to N/E	Strong	Thunder

House Sparrow Research from SECOS Garden Bird Survey Archives

House sparrow counts for this survey have been included in the spreadsheet analysis produced as part of the last survey report. The trend revealed is a further slight reduction in numbers. The data for the above has been inputted into an Excel spreadsheet containing twenty 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.

Starling Research from SECOS Garden Bird Survey Archives

Following on from the exercise on sparrows included in the last survey report which took figures from garden bird surveys from 1985 to the present, a similar exercise is now included in respect of starling counts. The starling is also believed to be in decline, certainly there are no records of the large garden roosts of the past.



The chart above shows the annual starling count averaged across the garden bird survey group for each year and the number of recorders participating.

Over the period of our surveys since 1985, a discernible slight decline is evident in the trend line (labelled linear series 1).

It is accepted that by being selective with which records are used a different result could be obtained. One could make a case for omitting the figures where large garden roosts are present because they tend to inflate the true garden count situation and also the records where it is evident that not much recording took place, because this reduces the average. However absolutely no manipulation has been applied in the assumption that all these factors probably cancel each other out.

The usual caveats apply, in that the group constituents change from year to year and the number of people producing records is comparatively small (but is getting larger). A time span of twenty years is probably not conclusive.

Again the Excel spreadsheet can be made available on request to anyone who wishes to carry out further analysis on the data.

The Next Survey

Forms for the 2004/05 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, who should already be in receipt) in my anticipation and hope of your 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 committee reviewed the format of the input forms and have requested that the dates used for the recording week numbers should be changed to 'week commencing' rather than 'week ending' as hitherto for greater clarity. This has been carried out.

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.

Once more I make the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2003/04 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 recorders.

Trevor Clowes.

30th April 2004