



SECOS GARDEN BIRD SURVEY FOR OCTOBER 2009 TO MARCH 2010

The Survey Recorders

In this survey the number of registered participants was fifty-six. In the 2009 part of the survey records were received from forty-nine, with forty-eight received for the second session in 2010. The number of contributors remained substantially the same as in the last survey, with two new recorders joining and five previous contributors not continuing. Six survey members are not members of SECOS, as last year. Again the level of support is most encouraging and a big 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.

Table 1

<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reg. No.</u>	<u>Name</u>
8501	Hilary Clowes	0432	Avril Watkins
8502	Bryan Perkins	0333	Alan Robson
9703	John & Wendy Smith	0334	Bill Bellamy
9704	Janet Grice	9635	Doreen Jones
8505	David & Elaine Meakin	9636	Geoff Yarwood
0107	Christine Howarth	0838	Richard Howells
0208	Stan Wildig	0639	Chris Parry
0409	Marie Turner	0240	Cynthia Cadman
0610	Andy Firth	0341	Howard Nixon
8511	Alan & Joan Soper	0342	Brian Sankey
0612	Alan Straw	0343	John Fuller
9813	John Thompson	0844	Dave O'Hara
9814	Colin Lythgoe	0645	Julie Cartledge
0915	Mike Williams	0946	Jack Bower
0316	Paul & Margaret Harvey	0347	Sylvia Jarvis
8518	Ann Pym	0548	Anne & Chris Furness
0119	George & Barbara Fisher	0849	Howard and Phyllis Yates
9921	Barbara Hubbard	0552	Lillian Shufflebotham
9923	Janet & Peter Roberts	0853	David Bromont
0024	Derek Owen	0754	Brian Burke
0026	Charles Hull	0556	Bill & Jan Fox
0227	Andrew Bailey	0757	Gordon and Valerie Squire
0128	Gordon Fleet & Kath Conroy	0758	Brian & Susan Plowright
0430	John Goulding	0759	Rachel Minshull
8731	John P. Barker		

The Cumulative (All Time) Bird Species List

Since the beginning of SECOS Garden Bird Surveys in 1985, seventy-six different species of birds have now been recorded as listed in *Table 2* below in alphabetical order. No additional species were recorded this year

Table 2

<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Bird Species</u>
1	Black-headed Gull	3	Blackcap
2	Blackbird	4	Blue Tit
5	Brambling	6	Bullfinch

Table 2 (continued)

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

The Current Survey

Fifty participants producing bird records over a period of twenty-six weeks could produce a maximum of 1274 bird/week records (49x26 = 1274). Due to people being not available to record at various times, for reasons like holidays and sickness, the actual number of bird/week records produced was reduced by 74 to a very creditable 1216.

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’

Rank No.	Species	Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 1216 [1272])	Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 49 [52])	Highest Single Count	
				Count	Reg. No.
1 [1]	Blackbird	1179 [1230]	49 [52]	25	0612 & 0645
2 [3]	Blue Tit	1100 [1123]	49 [52]	30	0612
3 [4]	Robin	1095 [1118]	49 [52]	7	0612
4 [2]	Wood Pigeon	1090 [1129]	49 [51]	82	0639
5 [6]	Dunnock	1050 [992]	49 [49]	10	0645
6 [5]	House Sparrow	1042 [1039]	46 [47]	71	0240
7 [7]	Collared Dove	877 [903]	47 [49]	19	0612
8 [9]	Great Tit	872 [852]	48 [50]	20	0645
9 [8]	Starling	867 [872]	46 [48]	100,000	0026
10 [10]	Chaffinch	774 [836]	45 [48]	16	8518
11 [12]	Goldfinch	666 [674]	46 [48]	36	8511
12 [11]	Coal Tit	645 [832]	44 [51]	5	0612 & 9923
13 [15]	Wren	589 [553]	47 [47]	15	0612
14 [13]	Magpie	580 [652]	45 [45]	11	0645
15 [14]	Greenfinch	577 [623]	37 [42]	20	9923
16 [16]	Long-tailed Tit	429 [515]	44 [46]	40	0645
17 [19]	Song Thrush	342 [281]	45 [40]	3	0844
18 [17]	Nuthatch	321 [343]	24 [36]	4	0645
19 [20]	Jackdaw	292 [241]	25 [19]	40	0026
20 [18]	Crow	269 [315]	26 [31]	10	0645
21 [21]	Pied Wagtail	156 [153]	26 [31]	4	0838
22 [22]	Sparrowhawk	146 [119]	39 [34]	4	0758

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

(See *Table 1* for correlation of registration no. to members’ names.)

As with the last survey, rankings within the table were remarkably unchanged from the previous survey. Five species, blackbird, blue tit, robin, woodpigeon and dunnock had a presence in every garden of the survey, with great tit only missing from one.

The same species occupied the top ten list with minor juxtapositions in order.

Greenfinch records were fewer and were not present in as many gardens in this survey, with the highest count reduced from 25 to 20.

The number of gardens visited by nuthatches was reduced by a third compared to the last survey. Sparrowhawks visited 39 of the 49 gardens in the survey

A starling flock of 100,000 recorded by member 0026 must have been a spectacular sight.

Eleven 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 count for seven species, one member for five species and three members for two 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-seven species were recorded, giving a total number of fifty-nine species recorded in this year’s survey {last survey fifty-three} from the seventy-six in the “all-time” list (*Table 2*). Any species recorded in the last survey, but not recorded in this survey, are included for reference.

Table 4 – ‘Ranking of Other Species’

<u>Rank No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>Number of Bird/Week Records (Out of 584 [636])</u>	<u>Number of Gardens Visited (Out of 49 [52])</u>
1 [1]	Great Spotted Woodpecker	205 [192]	23 [23]
2 [2]	Bullfinch	145 [135]	15 [15]
3 [8]	Jay	116 [57]	11 [11]
4 [18]	Redwing	108 [36]	10 [10]
5 [8]	Fieldfare	105 [57]	13 [13]
6 [5]	Mistle Thrush	103 [90]	17 [17]
7 [6]	Pheasant	101 [80]	6 [6]
8 [10]	Tree Sparrow	73 [56]	5 [5]
9 [7]	Blackcap	69 [72]	16 [16]
10 [13]	Black Headed Gull	67 [46]	8 [8]
11 [4]	Goldcrest	46 [113]	23 [23]
11 [11]	Lesser Redpoll	46 [52]	12 [12]
13 [20]	Grey Wagtail	41 [30]	13 [13]
14 [12]	Rook	34 [50]	8 [8]
15 [22]	Reed Bunting	31 [12]	4 [4]
15 [19]	Stock Dove	31 [32]	2 [2]
15 [15]	Tawny Owl	31 [39]	4 [4]
18 [25]	Buzzard	23 [6]	3 [3]
19 [21]	Grey Heron	21 [15]	6 [6]
19 [17]	Mallard	21 [37]	7 [7]
21 [15]	Brambling	14 [39]	8 [8]
22 [23]	Kestrel	12 [9]	4 [4]
23 [14]	Treecreeper	11 [40]	15 [15]
24 [3]	Siskin	8 [120]	3 [21]
25 [*]	Linnet	7 [0]	1 [0]
26 [30]	Moorhen	6 [1]	1 [1]
27 [27]	Chiffchaff	5 [3]	2 [2]
28 [26]	Red-legged Partridge	2 [4]	1 [1]
28 [28]	Yellow Hammer	2 [2]	1 [1]
30 [*]	Green Woodpecker	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [*]	Herring Gull	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [24]	Marsh/Willow Tit	1 [7]	2 [2]
30 [*]	Peregrine Falcon	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [*]	Raven	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [*]	Snipe	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [*]	Swallow	1 [0]	1 [0]
30 [*]	Woodcock	1 [0]	1 [0]
[30]	Common Gull	0 [1]	1 [1]
[28]	Feral Pigeon	0 [2]	1 [1]
[30]	Lesser Black-backed Gull	0 [1]	1 [1]
[30]	Willow Warbler	0 [1]	1 [1]

[] Denotes corresponding figures to the previous {2008/09) survey for comparison

[*] Denotes did not appear in the previous survey.

The “Other Species.”

Linnet, green woodpecker, herring gull, peregrine, raven, snipe, swallow and woodcock were all recorded in this survey, but were missing from the last. Common gull, feral pigeon, lesser black-backed gull and willow warbler were all recorded last time but not this.

The harsh winter weather brought a large increase in redwing and fieldfare records and unusually redwing records numbered greater than for fieldfares..

Jay records were twice that of the previous survey, though their visits were spread throughout the duration of the survey.

Goldcrest records halved in this survey, but they were still present in the same number of gardens Buzzard records as garden birds increased by a multiple of four, though were only present in the same number of gardens. Similarly reed buntings increased by a factor of three times.

Brambling and treecreeper records crashed to a third of the previous survey.

Siskin records suffered one of the largest crashes so far recorded. The last survey included a hundred and twenty records from twenty-one gardens, but this survey contains only eight records from three gardens, a ninety-three percent reduction.

Grey wagtails garden visits continued the trend of increase established in the last survey.

Great spotted woodpecker records easily retained last year’s position of being the most common bird of the “Other Species” table.

The garden reporting the highest number of different species in this survey was that of member no. 0026 with thirty-nine, closely followed by member no. 0556 with thirty-seven, the same gardens as in the previous survey.

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

Snowy conditions provided bonus birds, with many reports of fieldfares and redwing visiting gardens, for some an unprecedented event.

One fieldfare took up garden residence for a whole month and was described as a thug. It persistently attacked all other birds, even up to pigeon size, which tried to feed, and was only subdued by a magpie.

Even better was a visit from a woodcock, taking food droppings from beneath a bird feeder. Much comment on sparrowhawk visits and behaviour featured. One was even recorded using a feeder on two occasions. There were extensive reports of sparrowhawk killing success after displaying extensive patience in waiting for prey opportunities for up to seventy-five minutes perched in garden trees. Success came in the form of house sparrow, finch, collared dove and other unidentified small birds, often following relentless garden chases.

Pigeon and collared dove were subject to sparrowhawk attacks but escaped, in one case an attempt on seven collared doves failed.

One of our members also almost became a sparrowhawk casualty when one left his tree and passed within inches of his head!

On the other hand a blackbird chased off a pigeon and a sparrowhawk.

There were several reports of over-flying ravens.

Remarkably one member studied a peregrine with prey present for forty-five minutes at breakfast time in his Sandbach garden. The same bird was seen to return at lunch time and remove the carcass, probably a pigeon or collared dove.

Chaffinches once more were reported to have a fungal infection on their legs.

Variouly food presentations brought success as follows.

Seed feeders were reported to attract robin, bullfinch, redpoll, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and reed bunting,

Fatballs were attractive to blackcap, great spotted woodpeckers and blackbirds.

Niger seed feeders attracted redpoll and goldfinch.

Nut feeders were used by great spotted woodpeckers,

Suet cake attracted blackcap and great spotted woodpecker.

Redwings devoured rowan berries, similarly bullfinches took honeysuckle berries.

Replacing niger seed by sunflower hearts produced instant benefits in attracting goldfinches for one member.

Finally a tawny owl caused consternation to all the rest of the bird population, when roosting by a chimney cowl.

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.

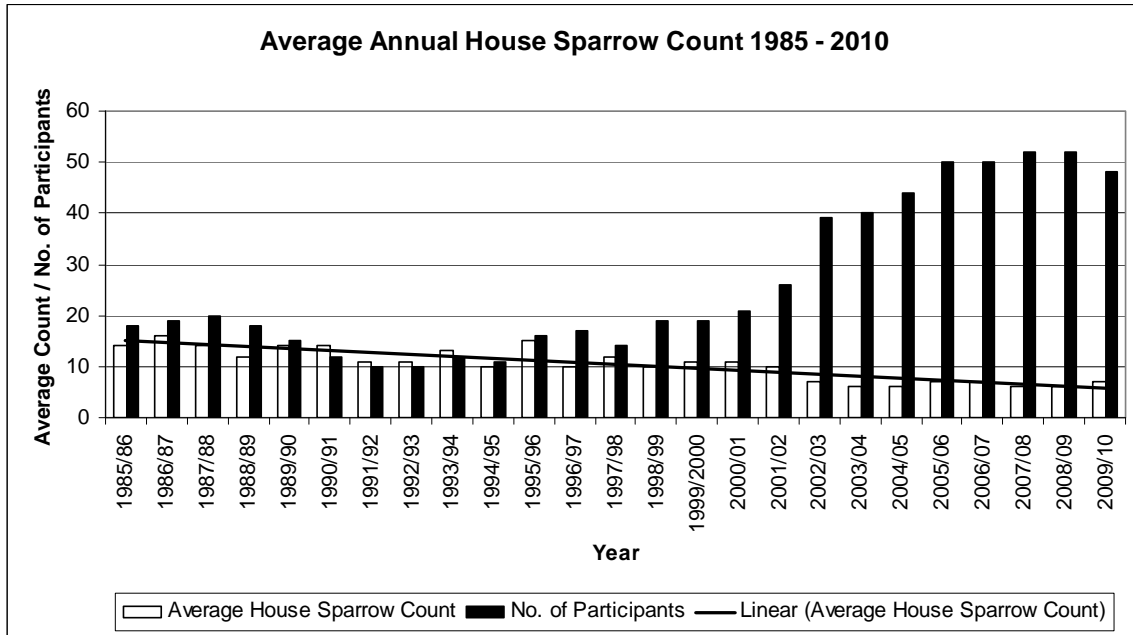
Table 5 – Weather Summary

<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	7	0	5	0.83	68	35	SW	Light	Mixed
2	3	0	2	0.04	60	34	NW	Light	Mixed
3	2	0	3	0.29	59	34	SE	Moderate	Cloudy
4	4	0	3	1.55	64	43	NW-S	Light	Cloudy
5	3	0	6	1.73	58	30	NW	Gale-Mod.	Cloudy
6	0	0	6	0.78	52	30	NE/SW/NW	Variable	Cloudy
7	3	0	3	0.89	55	37	SW	Moderate	Mixed
8	5	0	7	1.34	48	33	SW	Moderate	Mixed
9	1	1F	7	0.75	50	22	NWNE/SW	Moderate	Cloudy
10	1	3F	6	0.70	49	24	SW/S/NW	Light	Mixed
11	5	5F1S	4	0.38	39	16	E-NE	Light	Frosty
12	2	6F1S	5	0.23	41	19	NW-SW	Light	Frosty
13	2	7F1S	5	0.87	18	19	NW/SE	Light	Frosty
14	0	7F1S	0	0.00	30	8	NE	Light	Frosty
15	0	7F	6	0.63	39	26	SE	Light	Frosty
16	1	4F	5	0.35	45	30	NW-SE	Light/Mod	Warmer
17	1	6F	4	0.55	43	23	SW-NW	Light	Cloudy
18	2	1F6S	5	0.67	44	22	NW-SE	Light	Cloudy
19	3	7F	1	0.01	40	23	NE	Light	Frosty
20	2	7F	7	0.60	44	22	Variable	Light	Cloudy
21	3	5F1S	7	0.78	45	21	Variable	Light	Cloudy
22	6	7F	0	0.27	48	20	NW	Light	Sunny
23	6	6F	1	0.05	48	17	SE/SW	Light	Sunny
24	3	2F	2	0.30	60	29	NW/SW	Fresh	Cloudy
25	5	2F	5	0.61	58	31	SW	Fresh	Cloudy
26	1	1F1S	6	0.95	58	29	NW	Variable	Sunny

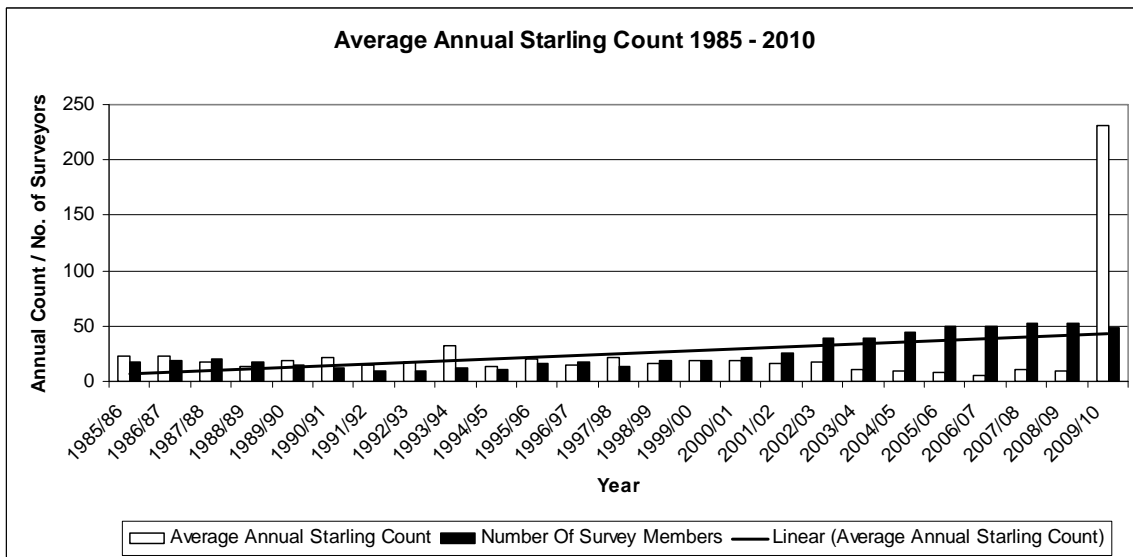
House Sparrow and Starling Research from the Garden Bird Survey Archives 1985 to 2010

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 house sparrow count has increased from six to seven in this survey. However the twenty-five year trend line on the chart shows that the house sparrow population continues to decline.



The average starling count for this survey showed an enormous increase, principally because one member had a roost estimated to number a hundred thousand birds. Consequently the average count for this survey stands at two hundred and thirty-one compared to eleven or twelve in previous years. The trend line now shows a pronounced recovery, but should be considered to be a gross distortion and not a source of comfort. However, for consistency the results have been treated in an identical way to those for previous surveys.



Despite the above anomaly 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 survey so far and 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 2010/11 Winter Garden Bird Survey will be provided to all present members of the survey team. Those who take email distribution will be in receipt by that medium and the remainder will receive forms with the pre-season newsletter.

I include my usual plea to be informed 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 able to commence analysing the data and preparation of the report.

As usual forms for any new recruits to the next survey will be available at the first club meeting in September. Please encourage others to join up, whether SECOS members or not, 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 far preferable, being quicker, more legible, greener, cheaper-saves photocopying costs to the club). My e-mail address is _____ for contact and returning your completed forms.

Finally I include the usual offer to anyone who wishes to perform a more detailed analysis of the 2009/10 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 or CD-ROM.

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.

3rd June 2010