



THE HOBBY

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to another New Year ! Time to start a new list, maybe implement a new birding resolution or two, but certainly to look forward to longer hours of daylight and maybe a cold spell to move some good birds our way. Included in this bulletin, Barry reviews last year's results for the summer garden feeding survey and Graham presents the latest Red List of Breeding birds in a Bedfordshire context

Andy Grimsey

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014 BIRD NEWS

Contributors: please phone Steve Blain on 07979 606300 or email recorder@bedsbirdclub.org.uk with any news or records. Records are preferred via the online system BirdTrack, using the Excel file found on the Bird Club Website, singly using the online form (<http://tinyurl.com/2v6oweh>), or on paper.

November 2014

Red-crested Pochard - Up to eight were in Quest CLP.

Ferruginous Duck - A drake was at Brogborough Lake on 11th-20th (SE) but went missing for long periods.

Greater Scaup - A female spent much of the month at Brogborough Lake

Red-breasted Merganser - A drake was on Brogborough Lake on 27th (MJP)



Northern Gannet - A juvenile flew over a Sandy garden on 21st (PN)

Merlin - One flew over Tempsford on 26th.

Mediterranean Gull - An adult was near Potton and a second-winter at Grovebury SP on 2nd. An adult was at Broom GP On 28th.

Common Tern - The latest ever record in Beds was at Stewartby Lake on 3rd (PS)

Short-eared Owl - One was at Knotting Green on 5th, with others at Henlow Grange and Folly Wood, Lidlington both on 6th. Another was seen at Knocking Hoe on 12th.

Great Grey Shrike - Up to two were seen at Sandy Smith NR during the month. Elsewhere, the Streatley bird was still in residence on 13th at least.

Common Chiffchaff - One Siberian Chiffchaff was at Marston Sewage Works from 30th (SCB)

Waxwing - One was reported in Henlow on 15th.



Black Redstart - Two were in Stotfold on 9th. Another was in Sutton on 16th-17th.

Common Stonechat - There was a scattering of records from across the county - a good showing for this species.

Tree Sparrow - Up to 30 were in wild bird cover crops just north of Upper Caldecote.

Hawfinch - One flew over The Lodge on 24th (SCB)

Lapland Bunting - Two were seen near Upper Caldecote on 3rd (SCB), with a further two at Warden Hill on 4th (JP).

December 2014

Pink-footed Goose - Two were seen - the regular injured bird at Harrold and Odell CP and another at Broom GP on 30th.

Red-crested Pochard - At least three remained from November in Quest CIP to 15th.

Long-tailed Duck - One was found on Christmas Eve at Brogborough Lake but didn't linger (JB)

Common Scoter - A drake was on Stewartby Lake 29th-31st.

Great Cormorant - The leucistic bird was present around the brick pits all month.



Great White Egret - Bedfordshire's third was present for a few hours at Harrold and Odell CP on 30th (TG)

Merlin - The only one reported was the regular male at Broom GP on 31st.

Jack Snipe - Very few reported so far this winter so one at Broom GP on 26th was notable.

Mediterranean Gull - Up to three roosted at Stewartby Lake (two adults and a first-winter)

Caspian Gull - A first-winter roosted at Stewartby Lake on 27th (MJP, KRO)

Long-eared Owl - One was reported late in the month, seen at dusk.

Penduline Tit - The third record for Beds was found at Meadow Lane GP on 28th-30th (SP). It showed extremely well for a procession of birders throughout its stay.

Common Chiffchaff - The Marston SW Siberian race bird *tristis* was present all month, along with two more found at Bedford SW towards the end of the month.

Brambling - Again a very poor winter for these so far. Please report all birds seen to BirdTrack.

Lesser Redpoll - The only substantial flock reported was at The Lodge with up to 80 present.

Hybrid Wigeon x Gadwall - One was present at Derek Whites Eggs pit on 15th.

Observers:

Stuart Elsom – SE; Martin Palmer – MJP; Peter Nash – PN; Peter Smith – PS; Steve Blain – SCB; Jonathan Palmer – JP; John Bowler – JB; Tony Gill – TG; Keith Owen – KRO; Samuel Perfect SP

We thank all contributors who have submitted their records directly to the Recorder, or via Bedsbirds Email Group as well as other sources.

Compiled by Steve Blain
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BIRD RECORDS FOR 2014

We would please ask that all records of birds in 2014 are submitted to the County Recorder by the end of February. For easy management of the records, the preferred method of submission is through Birdtrack or alternatively through the form on the bird club website. Please also refer to the website for guidelines on which species require particular levels of records, either of presence or breeding, and which species require descriptions for the Rarities Committee should you have been lucky enough to encounter anything particularly notable. <http://bedsbirdclub.org.uk/records>

PROGRAMME MATTERS

Tuesday 27th January. ‘Amazing Colombia’ by Stuart Elsom. Just a reminder that this event will be only a few days away by the time you receive this edition. See previous Hobby for comments.

Tuesday 24th February starting at 7.45pm. The brief Bird Club AGM followed immediately by an illustrated talk from world renowned bird photographer David Tipling entitled ‘Field Notes’. We have finally been successful in arranging this visit by David, regarded by many as the top British bird photographer. Be assured, you will not have seen better bird images than David’s compilation of his all time favourites.

Tuesday 31st March. We are privileged to have a return visit from Dr Robert Prys-Jones who is Head of Bird Group at the Natural History Museum, Tring. His talk will focus on the extraordinary activities of two of the greatest British pioneer ornithologists of all time, namely Allan Octavian Hume and Alfred Russell Wallace. Robert has himself researched their extensive Asian bird collections at the museum with surprising results. I am confident you will find this a most interesting and fascinating talk.

Don Green

PENDULINE TITS IN BEDFORDSHIRE – PREVIOUS RECORDS AND CONTEXT



The Penduline Tit found at 100 Acre Pits near Priory CP on 28th December 2014 was the third record in the county and the same individual was potentially involved in the fourth record at Marston Vale CP on 4th January 2015.

The previous record was as recently as 10th November 2012 at Marston Vale CP when two birds were found by Neil and Paul Wright, who were leading a group around the site. These birds were seen from the hide overlooking the same reedbed in the wetlands as the 2015 sighting. Unfortunately they moved on before most of the local birders had managed to arrive onsite, presumably moving on initially to similar habitat elsewhere in the pits.

The first record had been 18th and 19th September 1991 near the hide on the southern side of Priory CP. This bird was found by David Kramer and the story of its discovery is outlined in *The Bedfordshire Naturalist* 46 (1992) alongside the stories on the four other new birds for the county found that year (American Golden Plover, Bee-eater, Radde's Warbler, Arctic Redpoll).

All four records relate to individuals in the same habitat, feeding on the seed heads of reedmace on the fringes of shallow water. This is typical of the behaviour of the majority of birds found in winter in the UK.

Penduline Tit has appeared in most but not all of our surrounding counties. Up to the end of 2014 there were five records from Cambridgeshire, including a pair that was seen at Ouse Fen on seven dates soon after the Marston Vale pair of November 2012 and another at the same location on 4th December 2014. The coincidence of these sightings would suggest a possibility of these birds being involved in the Bedfordshire records.

In Northamptonshire, the sole sighting is of a bird at Ditchford GP in October 1983. In London, seven records including multiple individuals are listed for the last ten years at Rainham Marsh RSPB and will no doubt have been seen by a number of Bedfordshire birders. The species is yet to be discovered in Buckinghamshire or Hertfordshire.

THE GARDEN BIRD FEEDING SURVEY – SUMMER 2014

Introduction

Here are the results of our 17th Summer Garden Feeding survey, which covered the period 9th March to 4th October, 2014. We received a total of 66 returns, nine less than the previous summer survey, comprising 37 from rural gardens (42 for Summer 2013) and 29 from urban gardens (33 for Summer 2013). In total, for the 66 gardens, there were over 24,000 records submitted, at an average of over 360 records per garden, so once again our thanks go to all those who took the time to do that. We would be pleased, though, if more gardens were covered for Summer 2015.

The gardens in rural areas recorded an average of 29 species feeding or foraging (two less than in the previous summer), whilst the gardens in urban areas recorded, on average, 19 species per garden (also two less than in the previous summer).

The Results

A total of 69 species was recorded in our ‘summer gardens’ in 2014, and these, as well as all other species that have been recorded since our summer surveys began in 1998, are shown in Table 1.

POS		% of gardens					POS		% of gardens				
		2014	2013	2012	average	average			2014	2013	2012	average	average
				2005 to 2011	1998 to 2004						2005 to 2011	1998 to 2004	
1=	BLACKBIRD	100	100	100	100	99	54=	CUCKOO	5	0	5	2	6
1=	WOOD PIGEON	100	100	100	100	97	54=	SPOT FLYCATCHER	5	7	8	7	15
1=	BLUE TIT	100	100	100	100	100	54=	LSR WHITETHROAT	5	1	1	4	4
1=	ROBIN	100	99	100	100	98	54=	GARDEN WARBLER	5	1	6	6	5
1=	GREAT TIT	100	99	100	98	97	58=	FIELDFARE	3	9	4	1	1
6	DUNNOCK	98	99	100	98	96	58=	KINGFISHER	3	4	3	4	5
7=	COLLARED DOVE	97	100	97	98	98	58=	BLACK H GULL	3	7	1	1	2
7=	GOLDFINCH	97	93	94	91	71	58=	SAND MARTIN	3	3	3	0.7	0.7
9=	CHAFFINCH	94	96	100	99	95	58=	HOBBY	3	5	6	4	6
9=	STARLING	94	95	95	95	99	58=	MARSH TIT	3	5	3	6	7
11	MAGPIE	92	91	90	90	82	63=	REDWING	2	12	3	5	4
12	HOUSE SPARROW	88	87	87	91	98	63=	BRAMBLING	2	11	3	8	5
13	GREENFINCH	86	91	94	95	98	63=	REED WARBLER	2	1	3	2	2
14	WREN	79	87	83	86	89	63=	COMMON RAVEN	2	3	1	0	0
15	JACKDAW	67	67	65	53	43	63=	LSR BLACK-B GULL	2	3	0	0.3	1
16=	LONG TAILED TIT	65	81	79	71	60	63=	LITTLE OWL	2	1	3	3	4
16=	CARRION CROW	65	64	62	61	49	63=	TUFTED DUCK	2	0	0	0.3	0
18=	SPARROWHAWK	62	68	67	69	56		LINNET	0	5	3	5	15
18=	COAL TIT	62	60	64	68	59		COMMON REDPOLL	0	4	0	0.1	0
20	GT SP WOODPECKER	58	65	56	57	51		TREE SPARROW	0	3	3	2	0.4
21	SONG THRUSH	55	67	72	76	83		YELLOW WAGTAIL	0	1	1	2	2
22=	BLACKCAP	41	67	44	34	31		BARN OWL	0	1	5	1	0.3
22=	SWIFT	41	47	40	18	14		TURTLE DOVE	0	1	3	2	4
22=	GREEN W'DPECKER	41	41	42	38	33		COMMON REDSTART	0	1	1	0.7	1
25	CHIFFCHAFF	38	33	40	29	30		BLACK REDSTART	0	1	0	0.4	0.1
26	HOUSE MARTIN	33	24	26	24	15		LSR SP W'DPECKER	0	1	0	1	2
27	SWALLOW	30	35	35	23	24		CANADA GOOSE	0	1	0	0.1	0.9
28=	BULLFINCH	29	35	33	24	23		COMMON CROSSBILL	0	0	3	0	0.3
28=	ROOK	29	31	32	25	19		SEDGE WARBLER	0	0	3	0.9	1
28=	JAY	29	33	27	23	14		LITTLE GREBE	0	0	1	0.3	0
31	GOLDCREST	27	31	29	24	27		GREY PARTRIDGE	0	0	1	0.7	0.6
32	TAWNY OWL	26	15	14	10	10		MANDARIN	0	0	1	0.1	0.1
33	STOCK DOVE	24	20	22	13	6		CORMORANT	0	0	1	0	0
34=	PHEASANT	23	32	28	35	27		CETITTS WARBLER	0	0	1	0	0
34=	FERAL PIGEON	23	17	18	18	16		PIED FLYCATCHER	0	0	0	0.4	0.1
36	PIED WAGTAIL	21	28	23	26	36		WAXWING	0	0	0	0.4	0
37	MALLARD	20	19	24	18	14		CORN BUNTING	0	0	0	0.3	0.3
38	NUTHATCH	18	19	22	13	10		WRYNECK	0	0	0	0.1	0
39=	YELLOWHAMMER	15	8	12	8	7		HERRING GULL	0	0	0	0.3	0
39=	COMMON BUZZARD	15	20	4	2	0.6		PEREGRINE	0	0	0	0.1	0
39=	WILLOW WARBLER	15	21	22	21	27		SKY LARK	0	0	0	0.6	2
42=	MISTLE THRUSH	14	12	18	18	24		N'THERN WHEATEAR	0	0	0	0.1	0.3
42=	RED KITE	14	12	8	2	0		MUTE SWAN	0	0	0	0.3	0.9
42=	GREY HERON	14	9	12	13	9		COMMON TERN	0	0	0	0.3	0.9
45=	COMMON W'THROAT	11	11	14	10	9		LITTLE EGRET	0	0	0	0.1	0
45=	RED L PARTRIDGE	11	7	9	9	7		R-N PARAKEET	0	0	0	0	0.3
47=	MOORHEN	9	12	8	11	9		MEADOW PIPIT	0	0	0	0	1
47=	KESTREL	9	13	9	13	15		COMMON GULL	0	0	0	0	0.1
47=	SISKIN	9	45	9	16	18		COOT	0	0	0	0	0.1
47=	LESSER REDPOLL	9	29	5	3	2		COMMON SNIPE	0	0	0	0	0.1
51=	RED BUNTING	8	23	13	6	1		GREYLAG GOOSE	0	0	0	0	0.7
51=	TREECREEPER	8	7	6	9	8		WILLOW TIT	0	0	0	0	0.1
53	GREY WAGTAIL	6	7	6	7	7							

Table 1 – Species recorded in gardens during the Summer Garden Bird Feeding Survey 1998-2014

During last summer five species appeared in all of the gardens that were surveyed – Blackbird, Blue Tit, Wood Pigeon, Robin and Great Tit. In addition, the Dunnock and Chaffinch were reported from all rural gardens. A major feature of Summer 2013 was the very cold start, and with that, a large

number of winter finches (primarily Lesser Redpolls and Siskins) and Reed Buntings lingered in our gardens, but that was not repeated in 2014, and for those species the situation returned to normal.

Table 2 shows the frequency of the 'Top 20' species in our summer gardens. This is measured by calculating how many weeks in total each species was recorded (all gardens), and comparing it with the maximum possible number of weeks, in the case of 2014 this being 1,980 weeks (66 gardens x 30 weeks). Several species occurred at the highest levels of frequency since our summer survey started, including Jackdaw at 33% (compared to just 6% in 1998), Goldfinch at 61% (just 16% in 1998) and Magpie at 53% (just 30% in 1998). There were four species in the 'Top 20' that appeared at the lowest levels since our summer survey started, with Collared Dove at 65% (compared to a high of 79% in 2004), House Sparrow at 59% (compared to 82% in 1998), Greenfinch at 51% (compared to 73% in 2005) and Song Thrush at 16% (compared to 35% in 2003). Of those, the population of both House Sparrow and Song Thrush had already suffered some declines since our survey started in 1998, but for Greenfinch and Collared Dove the declines are more recent, starting around 2009. We can also see in Table 2 the percentage points change between the average 1998 to 2004, and 2014. The biggest 'winners' are Goldfinch (up 38 points), Wood Pigeon (up 23 points), Jackdaw (up 19 points) and Magpie (up 16 points). No prizes for guessing what the biggest 'losers' were over the same period, with Starling down 21 points, House Sparrow down 20 points, Greenfinch down 17 points and Song Thrush down 12 points.

FREQUENCY OF THE TOP 20 SPECIES							
POS		2014	2013	2012	average 2005 to 2011	average 1998 to 2004	percentage point change 1998-2004 to 2014
1	WOOD PIGEON	90	90	91	86	67	+23
2	BLACKBIRD	88	89	92	88	87	+1
3	BLUE TIT	84	82	86	84	82	+2
4	ROBIN	79	77	81	80	72	+7
5	DUNNOCK	73	73	78	73	66	+7
6	GREAT TIT	71	68	72	69	64	+7
7	COLLARED DOVE	65	71	73	75	75	-10
8	CHAFFINCH	63	65	69	67	62	+1
9	GOLDFINCH	61	59	60	52	23	+38
10	HOUSE SPARROW	59	60	65	69	79	-20
11	STARLING	56	55	60	64	77	-21
12	MAGPIE	53	46	45	42	37	+16
13	GREENFINCH	51	55	57	66	68	-17
14	JACKDAW	33	29	27	22	14	+19
15	WREN	28	28	32	31	35	-7
16	CARRION CROW	21	19	20	19	15	+6
17	COAL TIT	20	18	20	21	18	+2
18	GT SP WOODPECKER	19	23	25	21	17	+2
19	LONG-TAILED TIT	17	19	21	15	11	+6
20	SONG THRUSH	16	19	20	23	28	-12

Table 2 – Frequency of Top 20 species

The Species

The following comments cover the more significant events in Summer 2014, and major changes since the summer surveys started in 1998.

Raptors

The Sparrowhawk is the most regular raptor in our survey, recorded in 62% of gardens in Summer 2014. As expected, they are more likely to be seen in rural gardens. Both Common Buzzard and Red Kite are being seen hunting over, or even perched in, our gardens and that of course reflects the

general pattern seen in the county at large. The Kestrel and the Hobby also make their appearances in our list, though both were restricted to rural gardens in Summer 2014.

Pigeons, Cuckoo and woodpeckers

As in the previous summer, the Wood Pigeon was recorded in all gardens that were covered, and it was the most frequent visitor too. Even in the first year of our summer surveys it was seen in 94% of gardens, but the most significant change has been in the frequency of the visits, up from an average of 67% in the first seven summers to 90% for the last two summers, an increase of 23 percentage points. The Collared Dove was recorded in 97% of gardens surveyed last summer, being absent from just one rural and one urban garden. As already mentioned though, the frequency of appearances is showing a negative trend, down ten percentage points from the average during 1998-2004 compared to 2014. The Stock Dove, on the other hand, is becoming more frequent in our gardens, particularly in rural gardens, but in urban areas too. One in Andrew Budd's Amptill garden was a 'garden first'.

The Feral Pigeon shows more regularly, as we would expect, in urban gardens, being recorded in 30% last summer. On a negative note, the Turtle Dove was absent from all gardens surveyed, for the first time since our survey started in 1998. Since then they have never been a regular garden visitor, but in two previous summers they had appeared in 8% of the gardens.

The Cuckoo too, has never been a widespread garden visitor (although in 10% of gardens in 2001), but after a total absence in the surveyed gardens in 2013, it showed in three rural gardens last summer.

The story for our two common woodpeckers is more positive, although the Great Spotted Woodpecker dipped from the high of the previous summer, being found in 58% of gardens. It much prefers rural areas, appearing in 76% of those gardens, compared to 34% of gardens in urban areas. Last summer the Green Woodpecker was recorded in 41% of the gardens, which is about average for the last ten years. It shows an even stronger preference for gardens in rural areas, in 54% of those. One in Peter Almond's Bromham garden was a 'garden first' for him. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, now very scarce anywhere in the county, was not reported from any of the gardens surveyed in Summer 2014.

Crows

Between them, members of the crow family are widespread and very regular visitors to our gardens, with three crow species included in the 'Top 20' most frequent visitors, and with all three increasing. One of the biggest gains across all species has been for the Jackdaw, in 67% of gardens in the last two summers, compared to a low of 29% in 1998. It shows a strong preference for rural gardens, in 81% of those during last summer, compared to 48% of urban gardens. The frequency of appearances is also growing strongly, at 33% last summer the highest since our summer surveys started. The Magpie remains the most obvious member of the crow family in our gardens, with a frequency level of 53% last summer the highest yet. It appeared in 92% of the gardens, and was just as likely to be found in urban and rural gardens.

Goldcrest and tits

The Goldcrest appeared in 27% of gardens last summer, which is about the long-term average. After a disappointing showing in Summer 2013, the picture for Coal Tit improved slightly, found in 62% of gardens. It is another species that shows a strong preference in the summer for rural gardens. After very strong results for the last four summers the Long-tailed Tit dropped back, and in only 65% of gardens, was the lowest since 2004, when in 55%. It remains though, in our 'Top 20' most frequent summer garden visitors. The Blue Tit has been recorded in all summer gardens (except one garden in 2003, which was probably an anomaly), since our survey started. The level of frequency has been consistently high too. Pretty much the same can be said for the Great Tit, and apart from the first

summer of our survey, has never been lower than in 96% of gardens, and at a fairly stable level of frequency, if somewhat lower than the Blue Tit. The Marsh Tit just about hangs on to its place in our summer survey, being recorded in just one rural and one urban garden last summer.

Warblers

The Blackcap is the most familiar warbler in our summer gardens, appearing in 41% of those covered last summer. As expected, most of those were in rural areas, but generally the results have been very erratic, year on year, with a high of 67% of gardens (in Summer 2013) and a low of 25% (in Summer 1998). Overall though, there has been a gradual increase. The Common Chiffchaff is the next highest-placed warbler on the list, last summer appearing in 38% of the gardens. Of the 25 gardens that held Chiffchaff, in only six of those did it linger long enough to suggest that breeding took place. By contrast, the Willow Warbler was only in 15% of the gardens, and in none of them for more than five of the weeks, so all appearances no doubt related to passage birds. Other members of the warbler family to show in our Summer 2014 gardens were Common Whitethroat (in 11%), Lesser Whitethroat (in 5%), Garden Warbler (also in 5%) and Reed Warbler (in 2%).

Wren and Starling

The Wren appeared in 79% of gardens last summer, the lowest since our summer surveys began, the two previous lower summers being 82% in both 1998 and 2011.

The Starling is suffering a more long-term decline, although the number of gardens, and the frequency, seems to have levelled off. A glance though, at Table 2, shows that since the start of our summer surveys the frequency of appearances has dropped by 21 percentage points. Overall, they are found in a higher proportion of urban gardens, where the frequency of appearances is higher too.

Thrushes and Spotted Flycatcher

With reports from just 55% of the gardens last summer, the results for the Song Thrush showed a dramatic plunge, to a new low point, the previous low being 67% in the previous summer. Of the gardens surveyed it was entirely absent from seven rural gardens and 23 gardens in urban areas. It showed in only 14 rural gardens for ten or more of the weeks in the survey period, but in only one of the urban gardens at that level. It just about hangs on to its place in the 'Top 20' most frequent garden visitors. Dave Parsons, in his Haynes garden, was very pleased to record Song Thrush during 16 of the weeks, many more than usual for him, but that was due to them being 'captured' on a 'Trail Cam' that he set up.

The Mistle Thrush picked up slightly, after a low point in the previous summer, but was in just 14% of the gardens last summer, still half the average level for the period 1998 to 2004.

One of the most familiar garden birds is, of course, the Blackbird. There is not much new to say, apart from confirming that it has been seen in every surveyed garden since 2002, and it maintains a very high frequency rate too, beaten off the top spot only by the Wood Pigeon. Similarly, the Robin is a high-profile garden bird, in never less than 99% of gardens since 2004, and at a very stable frequency rate.

The Spotted Flycatcher was recorded in just three of the gardens last summer, and in never more than in three of the weeks.

Dunnock, House Sparrow, wagtails, finches and buntings

The Dunnock was reported from 98% of gardens (and in all of those in rural locations), a level it has held, more or less, since 2002.

Although the number of summer gardens holding House Sparrow has been fairly consistent since 2009, the frequency of appearances last summer reached a new low of 59%, and that was across

gardens in both rural and urban areas. Consider that in the period 1998 to 2004 (when the species was already in serious decline) the average frequency was 79%. The situation remains rather patchy across the county with, for example, Trevor and Elizabeth Askew from their Luton garden, reporting that House Sparrow numbers 'increased dramatically' during last summer, Andrew Budd from Ampthill saying that it 'was a very good breeding year' and Pip Housden, from his Kempston garden reporting that House Sparrows increased 'from the usual six to twenty plus'. It is all relative, but Judy Knight claimed that 'a massive [count of] six House Sparrows' in her Linslade garden was 'a lifetime achievement'. Even in my own garden in Woburn, where they used to be a real rarity, I managed to record them during six of the weeks, including a singing male.

Following the results from the BTO Breeding Bird Survey the alarm bells are starting to ring regarding the state of our wagtail populations. The Pied Wagtail is the only member of that family that has ever been regular as a garden visitor, but it is becoming less so. During the first eight years of our summer surveys it appeared in an average of 35% of the gardens. Last summer the appearances dropped to just 21%, and in the last six summers has averaged only 22% of the gardens. It seems to be virtually absent from urban gardens, appearing in just one such garden in the last summer survey, and in that in just one week.

To be more positive, we can reflect on the very healthy situation for the Goldfinch. Last summer they were recorded in 97% of our summer gardens, a new high. The frequency increased to a new record level too, of 61%, and that can be compared to a frequency of just 16% in 1998. In many (probably most) gardens they are the most numerous finch.

Two other members of the finch family are not doing so well. The Chaffinch appeared in 94% of the surveyed gardens, the lowest since 92% in 2001 (the comment about the previous lowest was incorrect in the Summer 2013 write-up). Compare that to an average of 99% during 2006 to 2012. The Greenfinch is suffering even more, only showing in 86% of the gardens last summer, a new low point (it was recorded in all gardens as recently as 2007). The frequency of appearances took a tumble too, and at 51% was another new low (compared to a high of 73% in 2005). Both of these species have been suffering from the disease *Trichomonas gallinae* for some years, the Greenfinch more so than the Chaffinch. I still get diseased birds in my garden, despite that I regularly clean and disinfect the feeders.

The Linnet failed to appear in any of the gardens last summer, the first blank return since our summer surveys started in 1998. In the first three summers of our survey it showed in an average of 19% of gardens, so that all represents a significant decline.

The most regular bunting in our Summer 2014 gardens was the Yellowhammer, appearing in 15% of those covered, the highest level since our summer surveys began. Betty Cooke installed a new pond in her Clifton garden, and was very pleased that the first avian species to use it was a Yellowhammer.

Summary

Our summer garden survey has now been running for 17 years (and the winter survey even longer). Once again we have to thank the enthusiasm of our members for supporting our garden feeding projects, with many of you taking part since their inception. As usual, with the results from Summer 2014, we can see both expected and surprising trends, not all positive of course, but it does give us a good picture of what birds are occurring (or are not) in one of our most valuable habitats – our gardens.

Barry Nightingale

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT !

Our parent organisation, the Beds Natural History Society was formed in September 1946 through the efforts of Henry A S Key, who arranged an inaugural meeting in Bedford to which he invited all known naturalists in the county. He wrote to all of them with personal letters. When Henry passed away in the nineties I received his files containing much of his early correspondence including the replies to the invitations mentioned. They made interesting reading and it occurred to me that a couple of extracts might be of interest to our members.

From Peter Taylor, 12 Manton Drive, Luton, 17th Sept. 1946:

Dear Mr Key, ... There are, I know, many keen and active workers in the County. Mr Piercy of Clifton is very keen on birds and I discussed early in the year, the formation of a Bird Club which could possibly be the nucleus of a more general Nat. Hist. Soc.....

So who's idea was it? And from I Jean Allison, 11 High Street, Sandy, 26th Sept. 1946:

Dear Mr Key,.....I am sorry but I have not yet managed to find an ornithologist in this area. Several of my friends and I will continue to think and make inquiries amongst likely people.....

No comment necessary.

There's more where they came from.

Don Green

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome the following new members to the Beds Bird Club:

John Hayward, Ampthill
Ray and Marilyn Munday, Maulden
Jim Porter, Meppershall

We hope you will enjoy many years of membership with us.

Mary Sheridan

BEDFORDSHIRE RED LIST OF BREEDING BIRDS

Compiled by the Records and Research Committee, Bedfordshire Bird Club
G R Goodall, R K Hicks and S C Blain

Introduction

Bird conservation organisations have carried out a third review (Eaton et. al. 2009) of bird species of conservation concern, updating the last review in 2002.

A total of 246 species were assessed against a set of objective criteria to place each species on one of three lists – green, amber and red – indicating an increasing level of conservation concern.

Many farmland and woodland species have failed to recover from declines that led to them being red listed. Some species have declined still further and continue to do so.

As a result of the national review, the Records and Research Committee (Bedfordshire Bird Club), has undertaken a review of the county Red Data Book: Birds (2006) and this has resulted in a new county red list.

Bedfordshire criteria

The Bedfordshire criteria fall into two groups.

1. Species that are categorised as 'Red' in the national list and which occur regularly in Bedfordshire.
2. Species that are listed as being of principal importance in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and which occur regularly in Bedfordshire.

Table - The Bedfordshire Red List of breeding birds.

		National Lists (2009)	NERC Act (2006)
Grey Partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>	Red	Yes
Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	Red	Yes
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Red	Yes
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Amber	Yes
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus argentus</i>	Red	Yes
Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Red	Yes
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Red	Yes
European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Red	Yes
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos minor</i>	Red	Yes
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	Red	Yes
Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Amber	Yes
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Red	Yes
Wood Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Red	Yes
Grasshopper Warbler	<i>Locustella naevia</i>	Red	Yes
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Red	Yes
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Red	Yes
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Red	Yes
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Amber	Yes
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Red	Yes
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Red	Yes
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Red	Yes
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Red	Yes
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Red	Yes
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis cabaret</i>	Red	Yes
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	Amber	Yes
Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Red	Yes
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Red	Yes
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Amber	Yes
Corn Bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Red	Yes

Graham Goodall

IMAGES

Martin Palmer: Red-breasted Merganser
Sean D'Arcy: Penduline Tit
Steve Blain: Black Redstart; Penduline Tit; Great White Egret



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*The Bedfordshire Bird Club is the ornithological section of the Bedfordshire Natural History Society
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