



Report from the Records Sub-committee

by Martin Chaffé and Thelma Caine

Introduction

Forty-five members participated in the 2012-13 Winter Bird Count, contributing records of 73 species from 50 stations. The previous winter, 46 stations were covered, with 74 species recorded. The mean temperature in the winter of 2012-13 was 3.3°C which was 0.4°C below average. Cold weather arrived in early December, with widespread snowfall in mid to late January and further light snow on several dates in February, conditions remaining very chilly into March.

Sightings of note included a flock of **Waxwings** seen in a garden in Moor Lane, Chessington on several dates in December and January with 20+ reported here on 19th December. January records included a **Little Egret** seen along the Hogsmill River, Kingston, singles of **Stonechat** and **Skylark** reported from Bushy Park, with a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** also seen here in late February and early March. Other sightings of note in February were a **Peregrine** seen over Mount Road, Chessington and a pair of **Tawny Owls** at Sandown Park, Esher. A **Buzzard** was seen over Mount Road, Chessington on 13th March. Also during the winter a **Bittern** was reported from Barnes Wetland Centre (outside our reporting area but sites beyond this area are accepted for the Winter Bird Count).

Top ten species

The ten most common species were almost the same as last year with **Woodpigeon**, seen at 96% of stations, compared to 100% last year, followed by **Blackbird**, **Magpie** and **Carriion Crow** at 94% of stations. **Great Tit** was slightly more widespread than in 2011-12 seen at 90% stations (87% the previous year) with **Robin** at 88% of stations and **Ring-necked Parakeet** surprisingly dropping to 86% stations (down from 91% last year and 98% the previous winter). **Blue Tit** (86%), **Black-headed Gull** (82%) and **Dunnock** (76%) also made it into the top ten.

Gains and Losses

Of those species showing increases from last winter, **Goldcrests** (+16) had their best year since the winter of 2008-09, seen at 38% stations. **Chaffinches** (+11) recovered after a poor winter last year, and were reported from 70% stations, compared with 59% in 2011-12. **Treecreepers** (+8) had their best year since 2003-04, seen at 10% stations. **Green Woodpeckers** continued their upward trend, seen at 62% stations (+8 compared to the previous winter). **Blackcaps** (+8) were more widespread once again, seen at 36% stations compared to 28% in 2011-12. **Siskins** (+8) had their best winter since 2007-08 seen at 12% stations. **Pied Wagtail**, (seen at 46% stations), **Long-tailed Tit** (74% stations) and **Jay** (66% stations) all showed marked increases (+7) compared to the previous winter. **Song Thrushes** were also more widespread, seen at 64% stations compared with 57% in 2011-12. **Stock Doves** (+5 compared with 2011-12) had their best winter since the WBC began, seen at 12% stations.

Among the winter thrushes, **Fieldfares** (seen at 36% stations) were slightly up (+1) but **Redwings** (at 30% stations) were well down (-29) on the previous winter's figures. Other species showing marked decreases compared with the previous winter included **Sparrowhawk** (-17) seen at 22% stations, the lowest figures for over 20 years, **Greenfinch** (-13) seen at 50% stations compared to 63% in 2011-12, **House Sparrow** (-8) seen at only 40% stations, the lowest ever total since the WBC began, and **Grey Wagtail** seen at 6% stations (-7) the lowest total since 1982-83.

In the winter of 2012-13, there were no records at all of **Kingfisher**, **Little Owl**, **Meadow Pipit** and **Yellowhammer** and once again, no overwintering **Chiffchaffs** were seen. This species was last recorded in the winter of 2010-11.

Changes since the Winter Bird Count began

The chart overleaf shows the percentage presence of species in the winter of 2012-13 and a comparison with results from 1980-81, our baseline year (this being the first WBC for which we have comparable results). From this, resident species showing the most marked increase in figures during the period are **Ring-necked Parakeet** (+86), **Long-tailed Tit** (+55), **Great Spotted Woodpecker** and **Jackdaw** (both +50), **Green Woodpecker** (+47), **Goldfinch** (+33), **Blackcap** (+31), **Sparrowhawk** (+22) and **Collared Dove** (+20). **Egyptian Goose** (+14), **Canada Goose** and **Grey Heron** (both +11) have also shown a marked increase during this period.

Resident species showing the most marked decrease in figures between 1980-81 and 2012-13 are **House Sparrow** (-52), **Bullfinch** (-32), **Kestrel** (-28), **Mistle Thrush** (-23), **Starling** (-21), **Song Thrush** (-20), **Greenfinch** (-19) and **Tawny Owl** (-11).

Species gained compared with the winter of 1980-81 include **Bittern**, **Little Egret**, **Buzzard**, **Peregrine**, **Stonechat** and **Waxwing** which were each recorded from a single station in 2012-13. Species lost compared to the winter of 1980-81 include **Grey Partridge**, **Snipe**, **Meadow Pipit**, **Rook**, **Tree Sparrow** and **Yellowhammer**.

Red Data Species

In the WBC of 2012-13, the maximum number seen in each fortnightly period was recorded for three Red Data species, **House Sparrow**, **Starling** and **Song Thrush**. A report on these will be issued with the next Bulletin.

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