

Brent Bird Survey

May 2017 summary



The second month of the extended survey resulted in continued good coverage. All 52 squares were visited by at least one observer, but only 18 observers contributed, and the totals of 2,319 records and 165 square visits were lower than those of the survey years. Overall, the weather was an improvement on May 2016, but there were still cold and often windy spells which may have had an adverse effect on some bird species and dented the enthusiasm of some observers. Rainfall was average for May, most falling in the third week, and daytime temperatures, with a peak of 22.8°C. on the 26th, mostly rose above average in the final week.

The results are summarized below and in Table 1. Following the high January 2017 total of species, 87 in May was also a record monthly total, contrasting with the 2014-16 average of 81. It included **Shelduck**, new for the parish, with a group of four flying over the Lincombe area on 5th, and also new for May were **Barn Owl** (in the village) and **Short-eared Owl** (on Dockwell Ridge on 17th). Unidentified **harrier** was also technically new for May, although in 2016 **Marsh Harrier** had been recorded. This year there were two sightings of harriers on the same day, the 8th, but neither were seen well enough for positive identification. They could have been the same bird, but the one near Bala Brook in the morning was thought to be a Marsh and the one at Dockwell in the afternoon was almost certainly a male Hen Harrier!

Species recorded in at least one previous May, but not in 2017, were **Black Redstart**, **Goosander**, **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Lammergeier**, **Little Egret**, **Marsh Harrier**, **Sand Martin** and **Tufted Duck**. Most of these are occasional visitors to the parish and unlikely to occur every year (very unlikely in the case of Lammergeier!), but the absence of Grasshopper Warbler, recorded in each of the previous three years is of more concern. One visiting observer has indicated that this is the first year in the last five when he has not seen or heard them in an area near Huntingdon Cross where they have almost certainly bred in previous years.

Fifteen species were recorded in more squares in 2017 than in the survey years, most notably **Reed Bunting**, **Spotted Flycatcher**, **Swift**, **Whitethroat**, **Willow Warbler** and **Yellowhammer**. In contrast, 19 species were recorded in fewer squares. The main decreases were for **Coal Tit**, **Cuckoo**, **Greenfinch**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Hobby**, **Jay**, **Sparrowhawk** and **Wheatear**. Also down, though not by much, were **Marsh Tit**, **Nuthatch** and **Peregrine**, species which were also flagged in January as occurring in fewer squares than previously.

The results have certainly provided yet more fascinating insights into the birds of the parish, and this will continue as we accumulate more data over the years. It would be unwise to read too much into the changes observed so far, but it will be interesting to see how the species flagged as doing well and poorly in 2017 fare in the future. Hopefully the level of recording will be maintained, *and ideally increased*, in order to provide the best information possible.

Although **Red Kite** showed no change from previous years, the continued occurrence of this exciting species is worth a mention. The now annual appearance in the parish in May was maintained, with three observers enjoying at least two birds in three different squares on the 25th. And finally, now that this will be the last report until the end of the year, it is worth mentioning that in June, **Red-backed Shrike** was added to the parish list, and **Barn Owl** to the list of confirmed breeders.

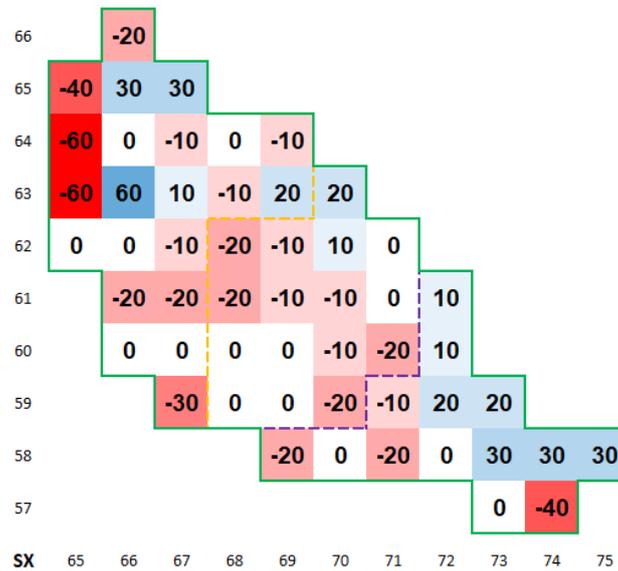
Table 1: BBS Number of squares per species per month per year - MAY

Year	2014	2015	2016	Mean	2017	Year	2014	2015	2016	Mean	2017
Canada Goose	12	7	14	11	8	House Sparrow	26	25	29	27	24
Mallard	17	18	16	17	17	Grey Wagtail	11	13	15	13	8
Goosander	1	-	1	1	-	Pied/White Wagtail	14	15	26	18	23
Pheasant	22	27	31	27	26	Meadow Pipit	24	20	26	23	23
Grey Heron	8	5	9	7	8	Chaffinch	42	42	44	43	42
Little Grebe	1	1	2	1	2	Greenfinch	14	12	22	16	9
Sparrowhawk	13	8	12	11	3	Goldfinch	24	22	29	25	31
Buzzard	33	36	40	36	31	Siskin	4	7	10	7	6
Kestrel	4	9	10	8	9	Linnet	13	15	21	16	21
Peregrine	2	3	2	2	1	Bullfinch	28	15	16	20	20
Moorhen	4	3	7	5	4	Yellowhammer	13	15	16	15	18
Snipe	1	5	5	4	2	Reed Bunting	9	8	7	8	10
Herring Gull FLYING	28	29	30	29	28	<i>Additional species in alphabetical order</i>					
Herring Gull LANDED	ND	18	21	20	13	Barn Owl	-	-	-	-	1
Stock Dove	16	12	19	16	15	Black Redstart	-	1	-	1	-
Woodpigeon	35	38	39	37	37	Cormorant	-	2	-	2	2
Collared Dove	18	12	22	17	17	Grasshopper Warbler	1	4	1	2	-
Cuckoo	14	17	17	16	12	Great Black-backed Gull	3	11	1	5	5
Tawny Owl	5	4	9	6	6	Great Crested Grebe	1	-	-	1	1
Swift	13	12	16	14	18	Harrier (unidentified).	-	-	-	-	2
Green Woodpecker	13	12	13	13	13	Hobby	2	3	6	4	1
G S Woodpecker	20	17	18	18	15	Kingfisher	1	2	1	1	1
Magpie	34	34	40	36	37	Lady Amherst's Pheasant	-	1	-	1	1
Jay	22	18	19	20	11	Lammergeier	-	-	3	3	-
Jackdaw	29	33	34	32	32	Lesser Black-backed Gull	-	3	3	3	3
Rook	22	15	19	19	15	Lesser Redpoll	1	-	-	1	2
Carrion Crow	48	46	52	49	46	Little Egret	-	2	-	2	-
Raven	18	16	21	18	22	Little Owl	1	1	-	1	1
Goldcrest	9	6	22	12	9	Marsh Harrier	-	-	1	1	-
Blue Tit	32	32	36	33	30	Mute Swan	1	1	1	1	1
Great Tit	30	30	32	31	34	Pied Flycatcher	1	-	-	1	-
Coal Tit	15	13	13	14	9	Red Kite	2	2	1	2	3
Marsh Tit	4	5	4	4	3	Red Legged Partridge	1	1	-	1	1
Skylark	32	30	36	33	37	Redstart	1	5	-	3	5
Swallow	38	42	46	42	43	Sand Martin	1	2	-	2	-
House Martin	16	19	19	18	19	Shelduck	-	-	-	-	1
Long-tailed Tit	10	9	10	10	10	Short-eared Owl	-	-	-	-	1
Chiffchaff	33	31	33	32	34	Spotted Flycatcher	-	1	1	1	3
Willow Warbler	20	20	22	21	27	Teal	1	-	-	1	1
Blackcap	36	31	35	34	32	Tree Pipit	7	6	9	7	6
Garden Warbler	7	7	9	8	10	Tufted Duck	-	-	2	2	-
Whitethroat	13	10	13	12	18	TOTALS	81	83	78	81	87
Nuthatch	14	12	14	13	10						
Treecreeper	7	5	7	6	2						
Wren	41	44	48	44	46						
Starling	12	8	12	11	11						
Dipper	6	6	9	7	5						
Blackbird	39	41	42	41	43						
Song Thrush	33	25	29	29	32						

2014-2016 mean (minimum value = 1)
 absences and notable* decreases relative to 2014-16
 additions and notable* increases relative to 2014-16



Map 1: Increase (blue) and decrease (red) in species per square in May 2017 compared with the average for May 2014-2016 (squares 1 to 49) or 2015-2016 (squares 50 to 52). Numbers are percentage values rounded down to the nearest 10%.



The species count per square was generally slightly lower in May 2017 than the average for the survey. However, there is a small increase in some squares along the north-east edge of the parish.

Contributors to the May 2017 survey were: *Margaret & Philip Andrade, Eileen Blockly, Phil & Sue Dean, Andrew & Kit Ferguson, Tim Ferry, Simon Geary, Mike & Jan Goss, Laurette Guest, Peter & Sylvia Hamilton, Helen Harvey, Alan Hayes, Paul & Barbara Heatley, Mike Ingram, Doug King Smith, John Luscombe, Dave MacDiarmid, Richard Oram (weather), Dave & Kate Pakes, Adrian & Gaynor Platt, Peter Reay & Lesley Austin.*