

SOUTH BRENT PARISH BIRD SURVEY 2014-16

www.brentbirdsurvey.co.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Photos: Steve Hopper

By BRENT BIRDERS

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SUMMARY

1. The three-year Brent Bird Survey started in January 2014 and covers the 52 OS 1-km grid squares which comprise the parish of South Brent. Small grants received by Brent Birders from South Brent Parish Council and Sustainable South Brent, have been used to help run the survey, publish reports and hold meetings.
2. The aims are to provide a record of birds and some 'non-birds' (mammals, reptiles, amphibians and butterflies) in the parish, and to enhance awareness, enjoyment and knowledge of local wildlife through participation in the survey.
3. Survey forms are filled in by observers and submitted monthly for analysis using a Microsoft Excel database developed for the survey. A website www.brentbirdsurvey.co.uk has also been developed and is used for posting survey details, summary results, news of meetings, interesting sightings and photographs.
4. Over 40 observers submitted bird records during the year, and each month records were received from at least 23. All 52 squares were visited by at least one observer each month. Compared to 2014, there were slightly fewer observers, but more square visits and more records submitted.
5. A total of 113 bird species were recorded during 2015, compared to 106 in 2014, and the survey total is now 118, with 12 new species added during 2015. Monthly totals ranged from 67 in January to 82 in May, and species recorded per square from 10 to 68, all similar to 2014.
6. The most widespread species were Carrion Crow, Buzzard, Raven, Swallow and Wren, all occurring in at least 48 squares over the year. A further 15 species were recorded in at least 40 squares. The maximum flock sizes were recorded for Starling and Woodpigeon (2,000 plus), and flocks of 100 or more were recorded in a further eight species.
7. Although only two species were added to the list of breeding species, a detailed study on six species of moorland breeding birds has provided more evidence of breeding and also estimates of the numbers of territories.
8. Rabbit was again the most widespread among 19 species of mammal, but remains unrecorded from 10, mostly moorland, squares. Among seven species of reptiles and amphibians, Frog occurred in the most squares. Adder and Mink have now been added to the list of species. Meadow Brown was the most widespread of the 28 species of butterfly, and the only non-bird to be recorded in all squares. No new butterflies were added, but most species were recorded in more squares in 2015 than in 2014, and data on monthly occurrence is now available.
9. There were some differences in the weather between 2014 and 2015, which may have had some bearing on what was recorded in the two years, but the survey is still without a spell of really cold weather.
10. A second year of observations has added much to our knowledge of the wildlife of South Brent, and the third and final year will hopefully add even more, particularly on the extent to which various species of birds are breeding in the parish.

Background

A group of local bird watchers, soon to be known as Brent Birders, started to meet in 2011. After two years of informal meetings in the village pubs, and occasional field trips, the possibility of carrying out a parish bird survey was raised and discussed. Skills and experience within the group (identification and IT skills; experience of other survey work) suggested that such a survey was feasible, and would also provide a suitable focus for the group's interests. A procedure was designed, loosely based on established bird survey methodology, and a pilot survey carried out in the autumn of 2013. This was successful, and with only minor changes to the methodology, the full three-year Brent Bird Survey (BBS) was launched in January 2014.

Brent Birders *provide a focus for recording birds and other wildlife in the South Brent area, and for promoting and encouraging an interest in local wildlife.* This is partly achieved by organising meetings and talks to help maintain and stimulate an interest in wildlife. These are open to all, and usually attract attendances in excess of 30. Speakers in 2015 included Dave Scott (A Life with Birds, Brushes, Cameras & Band Aids), Mark Lawrence (Nesting Birds), Dave Smallshire (Garden Wildlife) and Ellie Knott (Mammals of Devon).

Aims and Scope of the Survey

- **Aims:** *a) To provide a record of the birds (and some other wildlife) in the parish of South Brent. b) To enhance awareness, enjoyment and knowledge of local wildlife.*
- **Area.** See Map 1. Broadly the parish of South Brent, but more specifically the 52 OS 1-km grid squares which have at least 10% of their area within the parish boundary. For some of the analysis this area is divided into three zones: **North** (moorland), 20 squares; **Central** (including the village), 18 squares; and **South** (outside the Dartmoor National Park boundary, and south of the A38), 14 squares.
- **Period.** Three years, 2014 - 2016, for the survey, although the final report will include records and information from before this period.
- **Species.** All bird species in the wild are included, and, optionally, some 'non-birds' - butterflies, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.
- **Records.** Species seen or heard in each 1-km square in each month form the basic bird and non-bird records, with the option for birds of adding further information on maximum numbers and breeding. A record comprises a species, a month, a square and an observer.
- **Visits.** A visit comprises the records submitted by one observer for a specified square and month, and ranges from a single species recorded on one brief visit to a square to a daily accumulation of observations made during the month, typically in a garden
- **Participation.** Open to anyone.

Input and output

Survey forms have been produced, for both birds and non-birds. These are available as printed or electronic versions, and can be downloaded from the website. Most people use these forms as email attachments to send their records in each month, but other routes are acceptable, including leaving paper forms at *artworks* for collection, as an email message or by phone. Records are initially received by Mike and Peter who may query any unusual records with observers before accepting, rejecting, or recommending submission to the Devon Birds County Recorder. Records on paper forms are typed up onto electronic forms before all are sent to Dave, who designed and operates the Excel database used to process the data. In most cases, the records are then simply copied and pasted in as raw data.

A monthly output, usually produced within three weeks of the end of each month, has been made possible by the prompt submission of monthly records, and the machinations of the database. Initially the output

from Dave is in the form of monthly and cumulative spreadsheets sent to the other organisers. From these, Phil updates maps and other information on the website www.brentbirdssurvey.co.uk (built by Phil, webmaster), and Peter produces a monthly summary sheet, both for the website and for email distribution by Mike to all on the Brent Birders mailing list. From October 2015, a weekly summary is prepared by Barrie and posted on the website as 'Whitehall's Weekly Wanderings'. Non-bird records have been collated separately by Paul.

This annual report is the second of three, covering each year of the survey. Once the survey is complete, work will begin on producing a comprehensive final report. The first part, covering just birds, will appear online and as a printed report around the middle of 2017. The second part, on non-birds, is planned for publication in 2018 after more fieldwork is carried out on some groups.

Links with other organisations

- **South Brent Parish Council.** An initial grant of £100 towards the printing and publicity costs of running the survey was received from the South Brent Community Benefit Fund.
- **Sustainable South Brent.** An initial grant of £100 towards the costs of running the survey and holding meetings was received from the SSB Sustainability Fund. The SSB Bulletin has been used to promote the survey and report results.
- **Devon Birds**, www.devonbirds.org. Records have been exchanged between BBS and Devon Birds, and aspects of the survey will eventually be written up for publication in the *Devon Birds* journal. The County Recorder has already given useful advice on the identification of some species, and the decisions of the Rarities Committee will be vital in maintaining standards of record acceptance.
- **Butterfly Conservation (Devon Branch)**, www.devon-butterflies.org.uk. Records have been exchanged between BBS and the Devon Branch of Butterfly Conservation, and some members have been involved in surveys of Marsh Fritillaries in the parish on behalf of the Devon Branch.
- **Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.** Mammal records collected during the survey have been submitted to DBRC.
- **Dartmoor Study Group.** One of the regular surveys of the Dartmoor Study Group, which is involved with the study of birds on Dartmoor, is the Goosander Roost Survey, and monthly dawn counts on the Avon Dam Reservoir are providing information both for this survey and the BBS. A report on the BBS was published in the *Dartmoor Bird Report* 2014.

Results - Birds in 2015

For detailed results, go to the website www.brentbirdssurvey.co.uk.

Table 1: Squares, observers and visits in 2014 and 2015

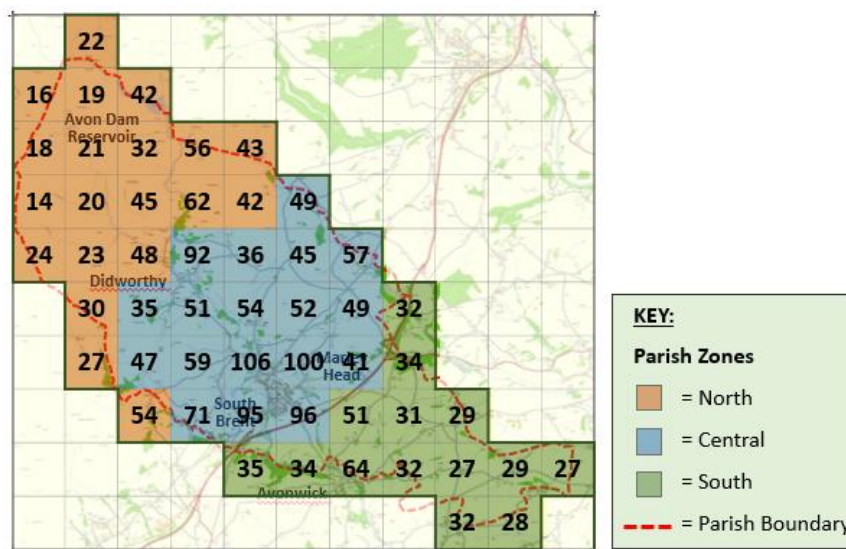
FEATURE	2015	2014
Squares visited each month	52	52*
Total number of observers during the year	45	54
Number of observers per month (mean and range)	27 (23 – 30)	33 (25 – 40)
Total number of square visits	2,278	2,076
Square visits per month (mean and range)	190 (154 – 226)	172 (128 – 200)
Annual number of visits per square (mean and range)	44 (14 – 106)	40 (11 – 127)
Total number of records	27,459	24,314

*Except in Jan-Mar when up to four squares were not visited

The Observers

- Coverage was similar to 2014, but although fewer observers contributed, there were more visits to squares, more visits per month and more records submitted (Table 1).
- The number of visits to a square throughout the year ranged from 14 to 106 (Map 1), with a mean of 44, compared to 40 in 2014. The number of visits was higher than in 2014 in 37 squares, the largest increase being from 50 to 92 in square 21 (Didworthy). In contrast there was a decrease from 127 to 96 in square 31 (Crowder Park).
- As in 2014, the number of squares visited per observer during the year ranged from one to 52, and, in 2015, about half the observers still sent in records from a single square.

Map 1: Bird Survey area, parish boundary and the total number of visits to each square during 2015.



Species recorded

- The main species recorded are shown in Table 2, grouped under Present All Year, Summer Visitors, Winter Visitors and Other (including passage migrants, occasional visitors, or status unclear). These 91 occurred in at least two months and/or at least two squares. In addition, the following 10 species, also recorded in 2014, were present mostly in just one square: **Barn Owl, Common Sandpiper, Dartford Warbler, Goshawk, Great Crested Grebe, Mute Swan, Pied Flycatcher, Red-legged Partridge, Sand Martin** and **Yellow Wagtail**.
- A further 12 species were recorded, again mostly in one square, which were new to the survey: **Brambling, Coot, Green Sandpiper, Hen Harrier, Jack Snipe, Lesser Whitethroat, Little Ringed Plover, Osprey*, Pintail, Short-eared Owl*, Wryneck* and Yellow-browed Warbler***. (Although an unidentified harrier species was on the 2014 list, and again featured in 2015, there were three definite sightings of Hen Harrier in 2015.) * = subject to acceptance by Devon Birds.
- With the addition of five species only recorded in 2014, **Curlew, Firecrest, Greenshank, Red Grouse** (droppings only) and **Willow Tit**, this brings the survey total to 118 after two years.
- Finally, there were species considered to be escapes or releases from captivity: **Canary, Lady Amherst's Pheasant** and **Wild Turkey** in 2015, plus **Mandarin Duck** and **Muscovy Duck** recorded in both years.

Table 2: Brent Bird Survey 2015.

The main species, grouped according to occurrence and ranked by total number of squares where recorded in 2015, showing number of squares, monthly occurrence and maximum counts where appropriate. Species names in bold indicate confirmed/probable breeding.

○ = recorded only in 2014. ♦ = recorded only in 2015. ● = recorded in both years

GROUP	SPECIES	No. of squares	Months												Max. count
			J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
PRESENT ALL YEAR	Buzzard	52	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	28
	Carrion Crow	52	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	60
	Raven	50	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	26
	Wren	49	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Dunnock	47	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Goldfinch	46	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	200
	Meadow Pipit	46	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	80
	Chaffinch	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	50
	Robin	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Woodpigeon	45	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6500
	Blackbird	44	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	20
	Blue Tit	44	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
	Chiffchaff	44	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	10
	Pheasant	44	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	30
	Gt Sp Woodpecker	43	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Magpie	43	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
	Skylark	42	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	30
	Blackcap	40	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Jay	39	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9
	Mistle Thrush	39	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	25
	Song Thrush	39	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Stonechat	39	♦	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
	Jackdaw	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	200
	Kestrel	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Starling	38	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2000
	Goldcrest	37	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10
	Herring Gull	37	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	300
	Pied/White Wagtail	37	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	80
	Nuthatch	36	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Bullfinch	35	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
	Grey Wagtail	35	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	14
	Long-tailed Tit	35	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	14
	Rook	35	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	55
	Sparrowhawk	35	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Coal Tit	34	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
	Green Woodpecker	34	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Great Tit	33	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8
	Grey Heron	32	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	House Sparrow	31	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	40
	Stock Dove	30	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	25
	Greenfinch	28	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	30
	Collared Dove	27	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	29
	Mallard	26	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	36
	Yellowhammer	25	♦	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	13

Table 2: Brent Bird Survey 2015. (cont.)

GROUP	SPECIES	No. of squares	Months												Max. count
			J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
PRESENT ALL YEAR (cont.)	Reed Bunting	20	◆	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8
	Snipe	19	●	●	●	●	●	◆	◆	◆	◆	●	●	●	6
	Tree Creeper	19	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Marsh Tit	18	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
	Tawny Owl	17	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Dipper	16	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
	Siskin	14	●	●	●	●	●	●	◆	●	●	●	●	◆	
	Cormorant	11	●	●	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	●	◆	◆	2
	Moorhen	10	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	8
	Mute Swan	4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	2
	Little Grebe	1		◆	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	◆	5
SUMMER VISITORS	Swallow	49			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			106
	House Martin	41				●	●	●	●	●	●	●			300
	Linnet	31			◆	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			30
	Willow Warbler	30				●	●	●	●	●	●				
	Canada Goose	26	◆	●	●	●	●	●	●	○		●	●	●	17
	Swift	25				○	●	●	●	●					14
	Whitethroat	24				●	●	●	●	●	●	◆			
	Wheatear	22			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			15
	Cuckoo	19				●	●	●	○						
	Whinchat	16				◆	●	●	●	●	●				
	Spotted Flycatcher	13					◆	●	○	●	●				
	Hobby	12				○	●	●	●	●	●	●	◆		
	Redstart	12				◆	●	●	●	●	◆				
	Tree Pipit	11				●	●	●	●						
	Garden Warbler	9				●	●	●		◆					
	Grasshopper Warbler	5					●		◆	○					
	Lesser Redpoll	4				◆	○	◆	◆						
WINTER VISITORS	Fieldfare	37	●	●	●	◆						●	●	●	150
	Redwing	36	●	●	●	○						●	●	●	300
	Woodcock	14	●	●	○							◆	●	●	10
	Goosander	7	●	●	●	●	●				◆	●	●	●	
	Golden Plover	6	●	●	◆							○	●	●	150
	Teal	5	◆	◆	●	◆	○				●	●	◆	●	
	Wigeon	2	●	◆										●	94
OTHERS	Great Black-backed Gull	23	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◆		◆	○	◆	5
	Peregrine	15	●	●	●	●	●	●	◆	◆		●	●	●	
	Ring Ouzel	10	◆			◆					◆	●	●	○	
	Little Egret	9		◆	◆		◆					◆	●	○	
	Kingfisher	8	●	○			●	●	◆	◆	◆	●	●	●	
	Lesser Black-backed Gull	8	○	○	◆	●	◆	◆	◆	○		○		●	7
	Merlin	7		◆	●	○						●		●	
	Black Redstart	5				◆	◆						●		
	Sedge Warbler	5								◆	○				
	Little Owl	3	○	◆	○	◆	●			◆		◆	◆		
	Red Kite	3					●	◆				○			6
	Black-headed Gull	2	●	◆	○	○			◆		○				2
TOTAL SPECIES			67	71	73	79	82	78	74	77	73	80	70	68	

Distribution

- The number of squares in which each species recorded in 2015 is used to rank the species within each of the four groups in Table 2.
- Two species were found in all 52 squares, **Buzzard** and **Carrion Crow**, with **Raven** in 50. Over the two years, it is only these species that have been recorded in all squares. All are opportunistic predators or scavengers which can forage over a wide area, and are not restricted to specific habitats. The most widespread summer visitor was **Swallow**, in 49 squares, again able to feed or migrate over almost any habitat, and the most widespread winter visitors were **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** in 37 and 36 squares respectively.
- The number of squares occupied by the most common species (in 40 or more squares) is similar in the two years (Table 3). In those species that have changed by five or more squares there were more increases than decreases. Those increasing were: **Fieldfare** and **Pheasant** (+11); **Great Black-backed Gull** (+9); **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **House Martin** and **Woodcock** (+7); **Cormorant**, **Little Egret**, **Redstart** and **Siskin** (+6); **Grey Heron**, **Reed Bunting** and **Stonechat** (+5). Those decreasing were: **Starling** (-8); **Great Tit** (-7); **Redwing** (-6); **Greenfinch** and **Kestrel** (-5).
- The number of species recorded per square ranged from 10 to 68 for the whole year (Map 2). The differences largely reflect the lower number of species on open moorland, compared to the lower altitude squares, with their greater range of habitats and better coverage by observers. In a few moorland squares in winter, there appeared to be no birds present at all.

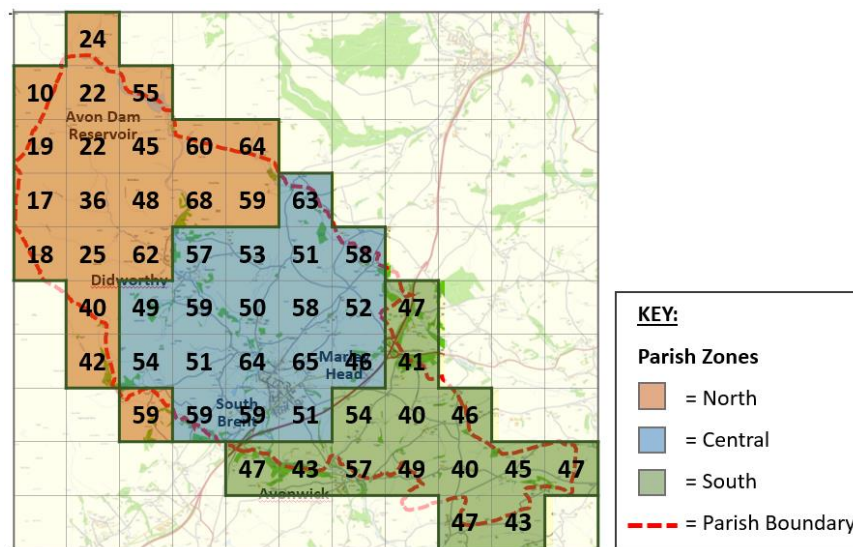
Table 3: The most widespread species – recorded in at least 40 squares during the year

Number of squares	Species in 2015	Species in 2014
52	Buzzard, Carrion Crow	Carrion Crow
50	Raven	
49	Swallow, Wren	Buzzard, Swallow
48	-	Wren
47	Dunnock	-
46	Goldfinch, Meadow Pipit	Blackbird, Chaffinch, Meadow Pipit, Raven, Starling
45	Chaffinch, Robin, Woodpigeon	
44	Blackbird, Blue Tit, Chiffchaff, Pheasant	Robin
43	Great Spotted Woodpecker, Magpie	Herring Gull, Magpie, Woodpigeon
42	Skylark	Blue Tit, Chiffchaff, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Skylark
41	House Martin	Mistle Thrush
40	Blackcap	Great Tit, Song Thrush



Photos: Steve Hopper

Map 2: Total number of bird species recorded in each square during 2015



Monthly occurrence

- The pattern of monthly occurrence is used to determine the four groups of species in Table 2.
- The majority of species (55) have been recorded in every month. Those added in 2015, as a result of recording in more months, comprise: **Cormorant**, **Reed Bunting**, **Siskin**, **Snipe** and **Yellowhammer**. **Little Grebe** is included because of a record in January 2016. Many of the 55 species are resident within the parish, but not all are. For example, although **Chiffchaff** has been recorded in each month, its presence as a common summer visitor and passage migrant from March to October, contrasts with the very small number of birds, probably from further north or east, which occur in winter.
- Seventeen species are considered to be summer visitors, which mostly winter in Africa, but the list also includes **Canada Goose**, **Lesser Redpoll** and **Linnet** which mainly visit the area to breed, and are mostly absent November to February. Canada Goose have now been recorded in every month apart from September, but the few records between August and December have mostly been of birds flying over, so the species is best regarded as a visitor.
- The seven species of winter visitor are absent from at least June to August, when most are on more northern breeding areas.
- Although at least one **Ring Ouzel** was recorded during the 2014/15 winter in Brent, this and several other species mainly occur in transit between their breeding and wintering areas: **Black Redstart**, **Pied Flycatcher**, **Sedge Warbler** and **Yellow Wagtail** are the obvious examples of species only occurring as passage migrants. One of the main findings in autumn 2015 concerned the importance of the area for migrants such as these, as well as for birds from further north, such as **Whinchat**, which do breed locally.
- The status of several other species is uncertain, either because of the scarcity of records or their irregular occurrence. Further records in 2016 may result in some clarification.
- The number of species recorded per month ranged from 67 (January) to 82 (May), with a monthly mean of 75.

Breeding

- Species for which there is evidence of probable or confirmed breeding are indicated in bold in Table 2. The total of about 60 species is similar to 2014. Two important additions to the list are **Grasshopper Warbler** and **Snipe**, which were not even recorded during the breeding season in 2014, but a 2014 record of the former species has since come to light, and in 2015 probable breeding in both species was noted at several sites.
- Although not part of the original aims of the survey, an unexpected outcome of the arrival of Barrie in the village, has been the detailed information collected on numbers and distribution of several moorland breeding birds, involving careful observation of breeding behaviour and the mapping of territories. As a result, unlike other species, we now have a good idea of the numbers breeding in the parish as most of these are entirely, or largely, restricted to the moorland areas surveyed. The numbers of pairs found in 2015 were: **Stonechat** (60), **Yellowhammer** (35), **Wheatear** (24), **Whinchat** (20), **Reed Bunting** (19) and **Tree Pipit** (14). See Maps 3 for breeding detail of the Stonechat. Table 4 shows summary data for all six species.

Maps 3a & 3b: Distribution of breeding territories for Stonechat in 2015

The map below (3a) shows the number of Stonechat breeding territories per km square. The map (3b) to the right shows the detailed locations of these territories.

The majority of the territories plotted represent paired birds, however a few are probably unpaired males and the territory was not sustained throughout the breeding season. Not all such territories have been plotted. A few territories of paired birds have been plotted on the map in blue but did not appear to be occupied throughout the breeding season.

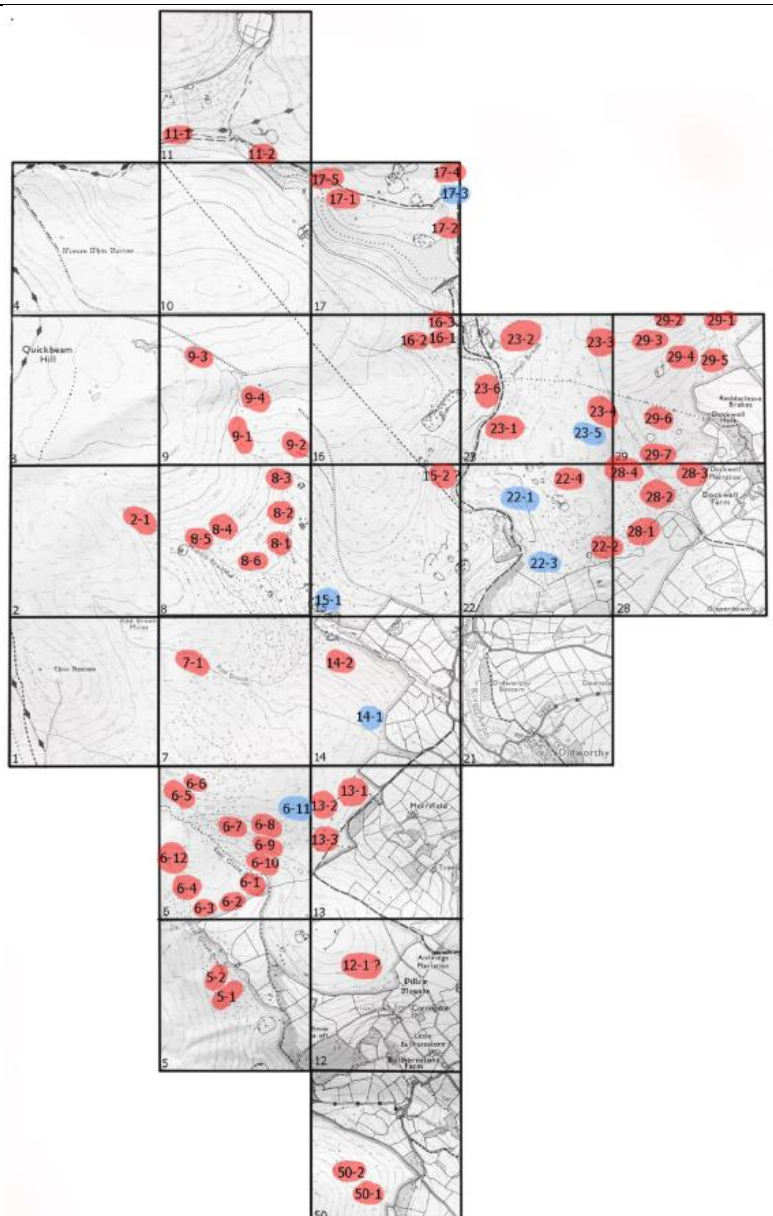


Table 4: The number of territories for six moorland species in 22 Brent parish squares in 2015.
The maximum number for each species is in **red**.

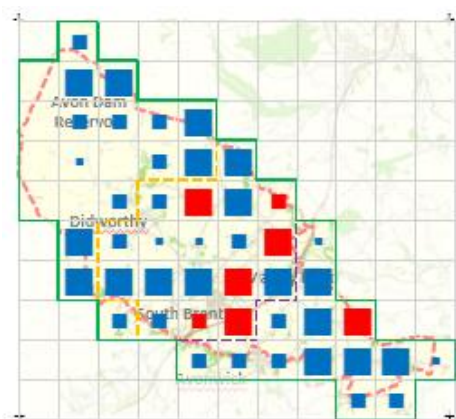
SQUARE NAME	Square Number	SPECIES					
		Stonechat	Whinchat	Wheatear	Reed Bunting	Tree Pipit	Yellow-hammer
Three Barrows	1				1		
Petre's Pit Bottom	2	1		1			
Knatta Barrow	3				1		
Western White Barrow	4						
West Glaze Brook	5	2				2	4
Brent Fore Hill	6	11		3			
Red Brook	7	1		1	1		
Middle Brook	8	6	2	1	1	1	3
Broad Rushes	9	4	4		4		
Eastern White Barrow	10		2		1		
Huntingdon Cross	11	2	1	6	3		
Corringdon Ball	12	1					
Merrifield	13	3		2			2
Zeal	14	1		1	1	1	
Brent Moor	15	1	1			1	4
Rider's Rings	16	3	3	6			1
Avon Dam	17	4	2	3	2		
Dockwell Ridge	22	2				4	3
Small Brook	23	5	3		2	1	3
Dockwell	28	4			1	1	5
Dockwell Hole	29	7	2			1	6
Owley	50	2			1	2	4
TOTAL TERRITORIES		60	20	24	19	14	35

Maximum counts

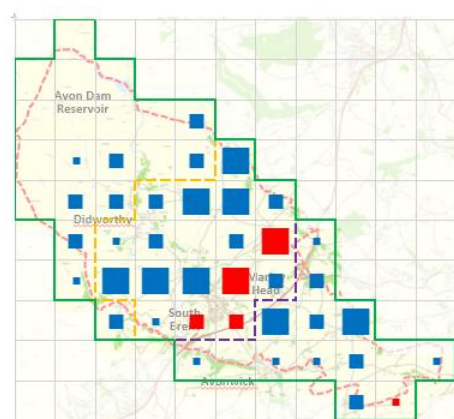
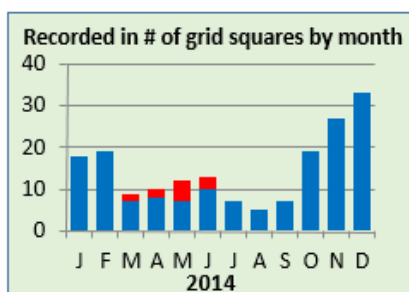
- Recording the numbers of birds is an optional feature of the survey, but several observers provide this information. For some species it is of limited value without knowing the area surveyed or the time spent counting. However, for species which form groups or flocks, it can give a useful index of abundance and how this varies between species, months, squares and years. Maximum flock size is given for the relevant species in Table 2. The other species either do not form flocks and/or the maximum number given was five or less.
- In both years, the maximum flock size was for **Woodpigeon**, with 6,500 recorded on 22 November 2015. This number was the total of several flocks moving west between 07:45 and 09:00. The largest flock using the parish was, again in both years, **Starling** with an estimated 2,000 feeding around cattle sheds near the A38 in the 2014/15 winter. Other species occurring in flocks of more than 100 were **Fieldfare**, **Golden Plover**, **Goldfinch**, **Herring Gull**, **House Martin**, **Jackdaw**, **Redwing** and **Swallow**.

Maps 4a to 4d show distribution and monthly presence of several typical species. The full data can be seen on the Brent Bird Survey website at www.brentbirdsurvey.co.uk.

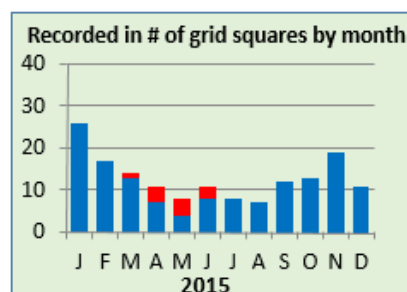
Maps 4a: Distribution of Starling in 2014 and 2015. Widespread. Resident, but numbers augmented in autumn and winter by migrants from continent. More widespread and abundant in 2014 compared to 2015, especially in December. (Note that the size of squares, whether red or blue, represents maximum flock size.)



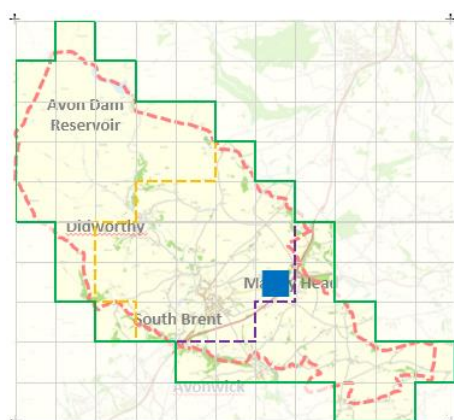
2014 Distribution Map



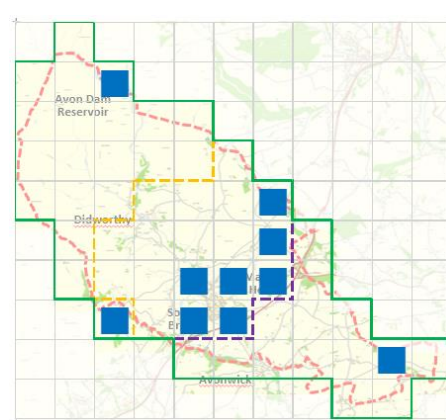
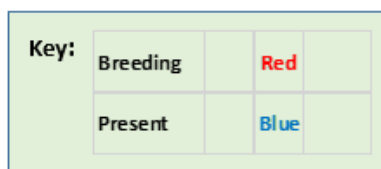
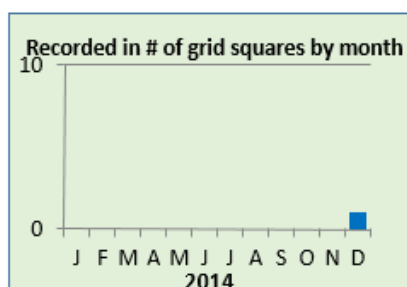
2015 Distribution Map



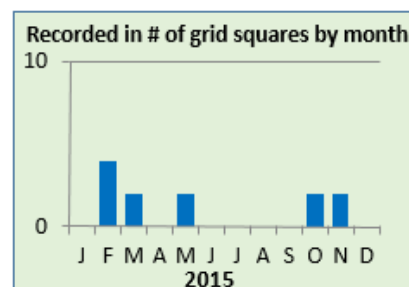
Maps 4b: Distribution of Little Egret in 2014 and 2015. Occasional visitor, with big increase in records in 2015, mostly in the Central Zone, though could be due to one or two wandering birds.



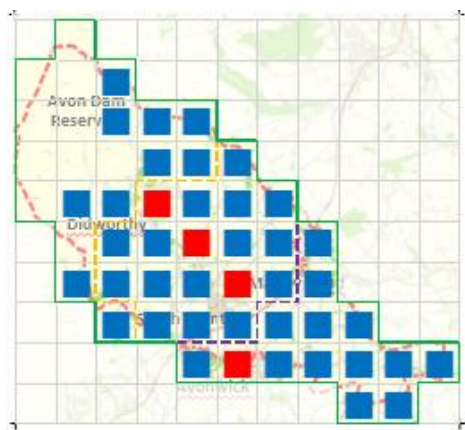
2014 Distribution Map



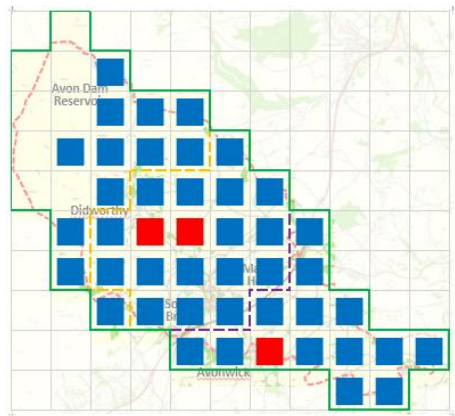
2015 Distribution Map



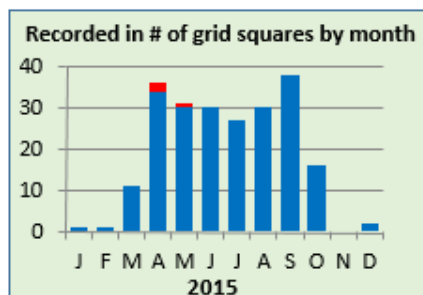
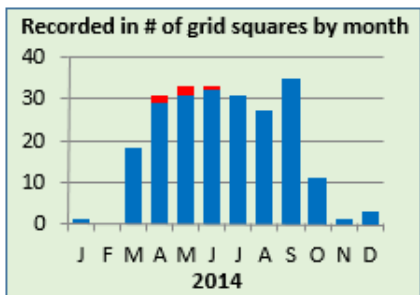
Maps 4c: Distribution of Chiffchaff in 2014 and 2015. Recorded in all months, but mainly a summer visitor and passage migrant - note spring and autumn peaks. Widespread, but absent from open moor.



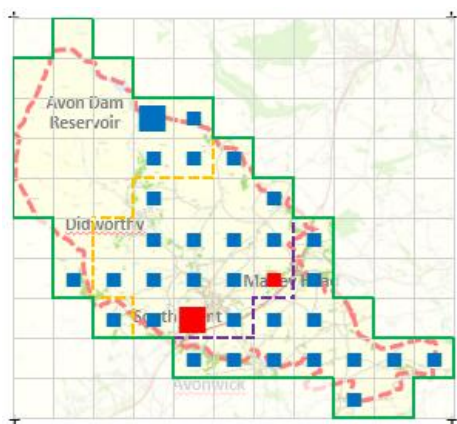
2014 Distribution Map



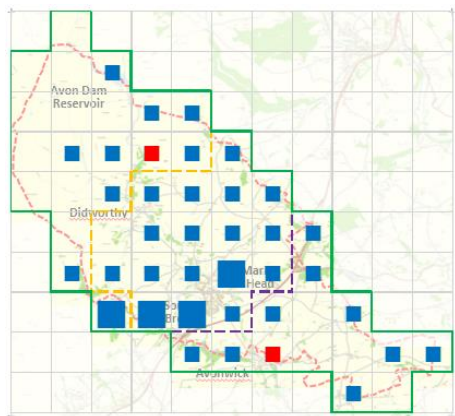
2015 Distribution Map



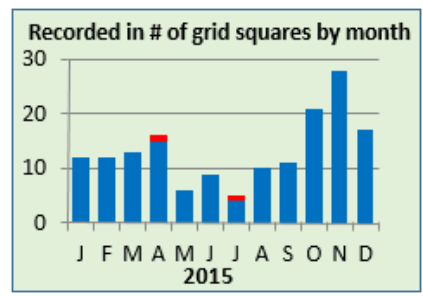
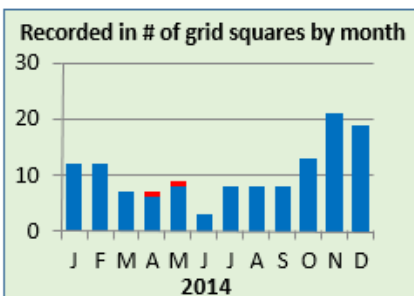
Maps 4d: Distribution of Goldcrest in 2014 and 2015. Widespread resident, mostly in the Central Zone, and mostly in autumn and winter with arrival of migrants from continent.



2014 Distribution Map



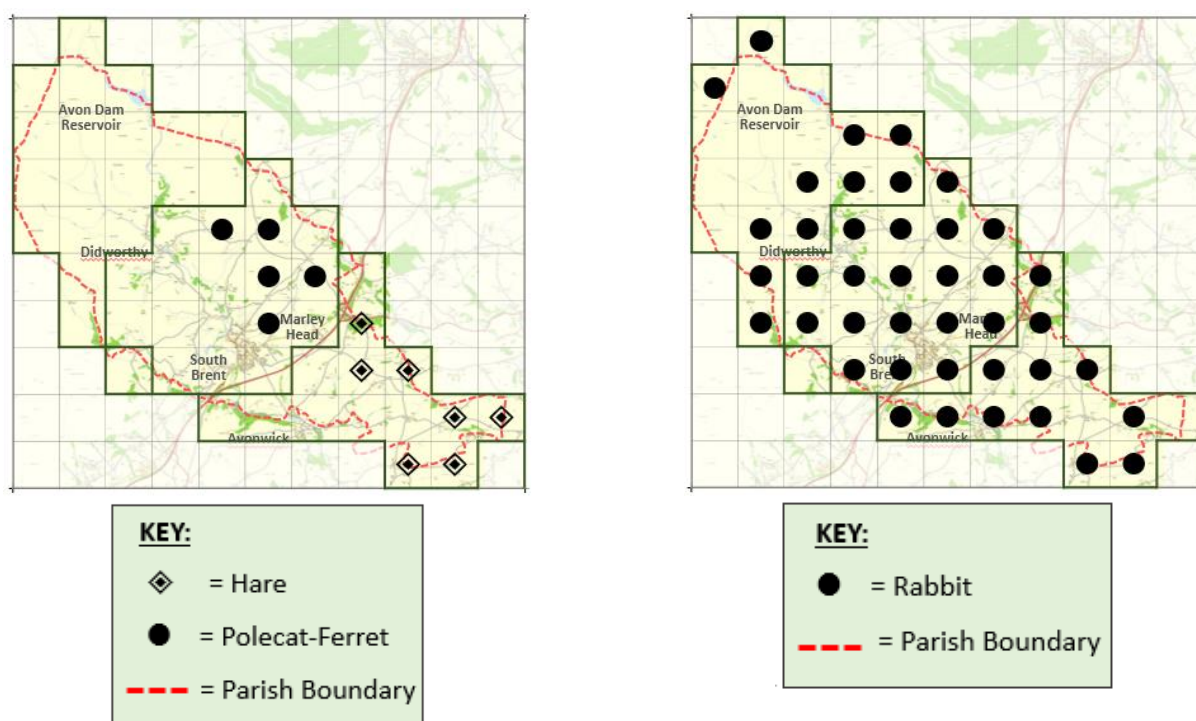
2015 Distribution Map



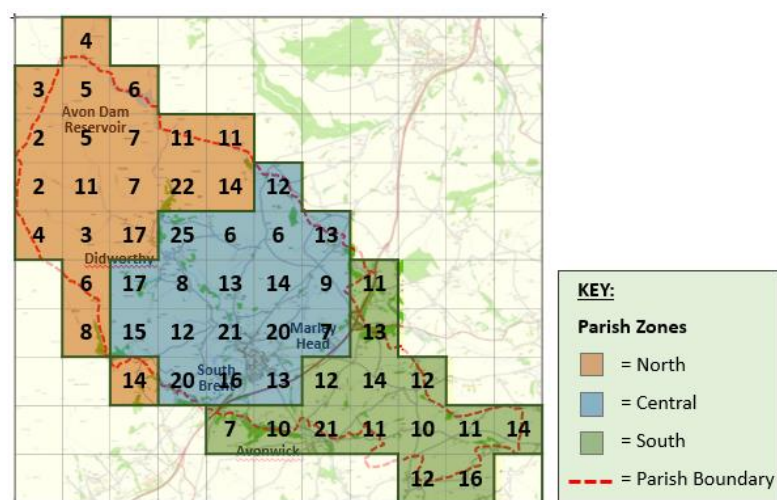
Results - Non-birds in 2015

- During 2015, 28 observers submitted non-bird records, compared to 15 in 2014, and as a result there were records for 19 species of mammal, seven reptiles and amphibians and 28 butterflies.
- The two most widespread *mammals*, **Mole** and **Rabbit** have now been recorded from 38 and 42 squares respectively since the survey started, the gaps mostly being on open moorland (Maps 5). Several species were found in more squares in 2015 compared to 2014, most notably **Brown Hare** (2 to 7) and **Polecat Ferret** (1 to 5). Maps 5 show that species such as these seem to have quite a restricted distribution in the parish. There were no records of **Fallow Deer** and **Red Deer** in 2015, but **Mink** (identified from droppings on a rock on the Western Wella Brook in April) was a new species, hopefully not a common one. Once again, the only reports of **Otter** came from The Pack Horse.
- The common *amphibians* and *reptiles* continue to be recorded from a reasonable number of squares, especially **Frog** in 27, but are still undoubtedly being overlooked. Snakes remain an even greater problem. In last year's report only a single **Grass Snake** was reported. Since then, there has been another record, in 2015, and we now have two reports of **Adder**, one in each year and both surprisingly from the village area rather than the moor.
- Twenty-eight species of *butterfly* were recorded in the parish in 2015, at least two being recorded in every square (Map 6). No new species were added, and **Clouded Yellow**, recorded in nine squares in 2014, failed to show in 2015. **Meadow Brown** occurred in all 52 squares, the only non-bird to do so. Most species were recorded in more squares in 2015 (Table 5), notably **Green Hairstreak**, **Holly Blue**, **Large White**, **Painted Lady**, **Purple Hairstreak**, **Silver-washed Fritillary** and **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary**, in some cases due to targeted searching. However, **Green-veined White** and **Small Copper** occurred in fewer squares than the previous year. We now have more information on the pattern of seasonal occurrence of butterflies as a result of monthly recording in 2015 (Table 5), and this will continue in 2016. Maps 7 show the distribution of four species of butterfly, two fritillaries and two browns.

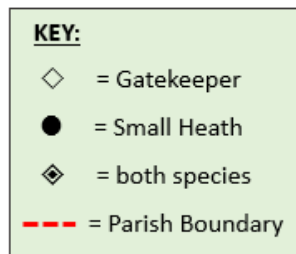
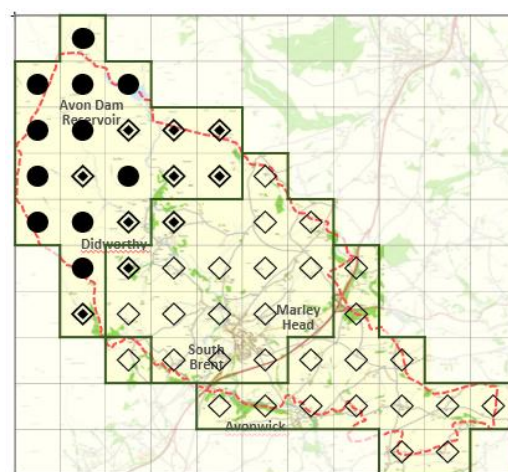
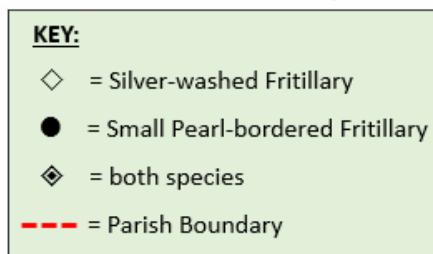
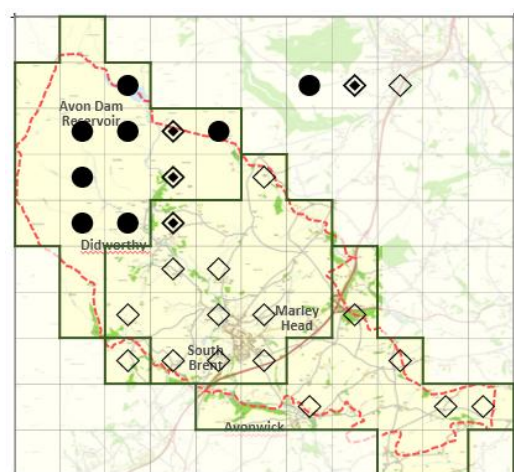
Maps 5: Distribution of Hare, Polecat-Ferret and Rabbit in 2015



Map 6: Number of butterfly species per square recorded in 2015



Maps 7: Distribution of Silver-washed Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Gatekeeper and Small Heath in 2015. In each pair, one of the species is mostly found in the North Zone, the other mostly in the Central and South Zones.



Photos: Phil Dean

Table 5: Butterflies. The number of squares in which each species was recorded in each year, and in each month in 2015.

Species	YEARS		MONTHS											
	2015	2014	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Brimstone	13	9			2	7	1	1	1	2	3			
Clouded Yellow	0	9												
Comma	19	17				3			15	7	2	6	1	
Common Blue	14	13					6	4	1	8	2			
Gatekeeper	39	36							28	35	5			
Green Hairstreak	13	2					4	11	1					
Green-veined White	35	44				2	6	8	13	26	3			
Holly Blue	15	8				10	7	2	1	7	4	1		
Large Skipper	27	24						17	16	4				
Large White	26	10						1	15	17	4	4		
Marbled White	4	3						1	4					
Marsh Fritillary	3	2						3						
Meadow Brown	52	49						31	51	41	12			
Orange Tip	21	22				12	14	3						
Painted Lady	24	6					2	9	8	9	5	2		
Peacock	34	36		1	1	17	3	1	10	15	6	6		1
Purple Hairstreak	4	1							4	2				
Red Admiral	36	37		2		3	3	10	20	26	21	10	4	3
Ringlet	32	32							31	9				
Silver-washed Fritillary	18	8							14	9	1			
Small Copper	5	14					1		2	5	2			
Small Heath	21	20					4	19	13	9	2			
Small P-b Fritillary	10	5					1	10						
Small Skipper	6	4							6	2				
Small Tortoiseshell	34	38		2	2	8	2	9	21	13	11	4		
Small White	28	28			1	3	5	5	10	21	8	2		
Speckled Wood	41	38				13	10	28	13	22	37	19		
Wall Brown	9	12				1	3	5		5	2			
TOTAL SPECIES	28	29	0	3	4	11	16	20	23	22	18	9	2	2



Photos: Phil Dean

Comparison between 2015 and 2014

Selected results from the two years are shown in Table 6. Clearly there are similarities in terms of numbers of species and the most common species. A more detailed comparison for individual bird species is of course available on the website www.brentbirdsurvey.co.uk

Table 6: Summary of results in 2015 and 2014

		2015	2014
BIRDS	Total number of species recorded during the year (excluding known/presumed escapes and releases)	113	106
	Number of species only recorded in one year	12	5
	Number of species per month (mean and range)	75 (67 – 82)	71 (64 – 81)
	Number of species per square during the year (mean and range)	47 (10 – 68)	44 (9 – 69)
	Species recorded in most squares	Buzzard and Carrion Crow – in all 52 squares	Carrion Crow – in all 52 squares
	Species with highest count (migrants)	Woodpigeon (6,500)	Woodpigeon (2,000)
	Species with highest count (feeding)	Starling (2,000)	Starling (2,000)
NON-BIRDS	Number of mammal species	19	20
	Most widespread mammal	Rabbit	Rabbit
	Number of amphibian and reptile species	7	7
	Most widespread amphibian/reptile	Frog	Frog
	Number of butterfly species	28	29
	Most widespread butterfly species	Meadow Brown	Meadow Brown

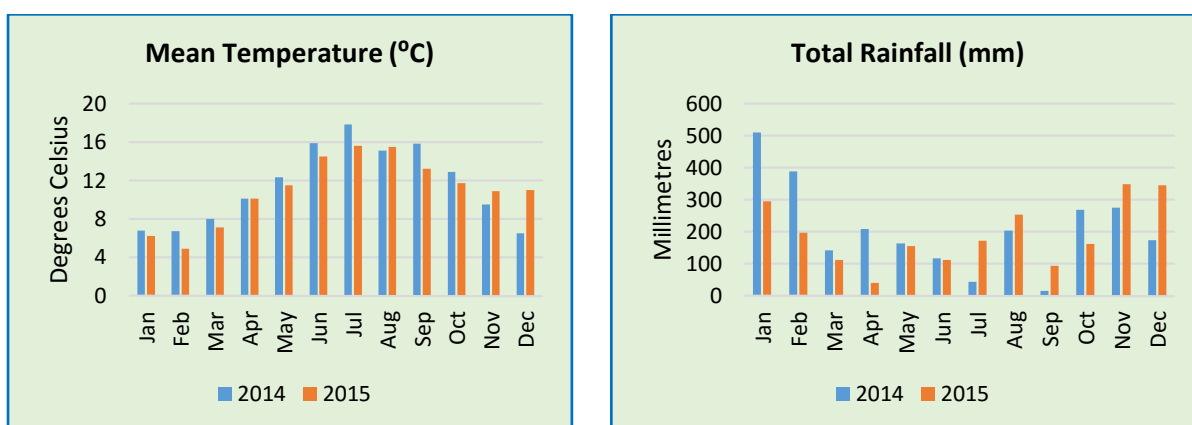
With results from two years of survey now available, we are in a better position to identify which features are likely to be consistent from year to year, at least over a short time period, and which show more variation. When the 2016 results are added, this should become clearer still. As the same broad methodology has not changed from year to year, the results are broadly comparable. There have been some changes in the body of observers, and slightly fewer sent in records in 2015, but those responsible for most of the square visits have remained the same in both years, and the number of square visits and number of records submitted have both increased. In addition, we all gained experience in 2014 which has probably made coverage in 2015 more effective. Although an improvement in coverage means that some differences between the years may be due more to observers than birds, the important point is that more information on the birds of Brent has now been obtained. Probably the biggest change concerned moorland breeding birds, where Barrie's studies have greatly added to the knowledge acquired in 2014. For example, **Snipe** were probably present throughout 2014 and breeding, as they were in 2015, but were not recorded June to September because we weren't looking – or listening. Other changes, however, are more likely to be due to the birds than the observers, so the increase in **Fieldfare** and decrease in **Starling** show that these are species whose numbers and distribution can vary from year to year, and this helps to justify having a three-year rather than a one-year study.

Other species are more problematic. Were there more **Black Redstart** and **Sedge Warbler** records in 2015 because we searched more, or was it a good year for these species? In general, more species were recorded in 2015, and there were 12 additions to the list, but most were species whose occurrence in the area and chance of being spotted, are largely a matter of chance. Nevertheless, for both birds and non-birds, increased vigilance, knowledge and time spent in the field have probably paid off, with **Brown Hare**, **Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary** and **Stonechat** among several species to have benefited in terms of an increase in records.

Overall, there were more similarities than differences between 2015 and 2014. The domination by black blobs in Table 2 provides a measure of this, as does Table 3 for the common bird species. The larger number of red diamonds (2015 discoveries) than open circles (2014 only) reflects the progress made in 2015, but the fact that there are open circles shows that even with an increase in square visits and experience, birds (hopefully!) won't get recorded if they're not there.

Weather is a major factor affecting the numbers and behaviour of birds – and observers! Although some of the species occurring in Brent are affected by weather events well away from the local area, and no really cold weather has occurred so far, the data presented in Charts 1a and 1b show that the two years of the study so far were far from identical in terms of local weather. Most monthly temperatures were lower in 2015 than 2014, but not in November and especially December (only half a degree lower than May!). January and February 2014 were even wetter than November and December 2015, but July, August, September, November and December were all wetter in 2015 than 2014. It is impossible to say what, if any, effect these differences may have had on the results of the survey, but it would be unwise not to take them into account when trying to interpret the data.

Charts 1a and 1b: Mean monthly temperature and rainfall for South Brent in 2014 and 2015



Conclusions and future plans

Although the two aims of the survey had been achieved by the end of 2014, continuation of the survey into 2015 has enabled us to gain a more robust understanding of the birds and other wildlife of the parish, and hopefully we have also continued to increase awareness of wildlife, both through the survey and also the meetings arranged by Brent Birders.

Having two years of data enables comparisons to be made between years, and begins to give a better understanding of which wildlife events are more likely to be consistent from year to year and which are more likely to change. The results of a third year will either enhance this understanding, or cause confusion. Recording in 2016 will follow the pattern now established for the previous two years, so that at least the results will be comparable. There are no plans to change anything, though it is hoped that more access to private land, more consistent recording of butterflies and more evidence of breeding will be achieved.

We are happy to involve more observers in 2016. Anyone interested should contact us via the website or through Mike Goss mrgandjng@tiscali.co.uk and 01364 72539.

Acknowledgements

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Further information on wildlife relevant to this survey can be found on the following websites:

British Trust for Ornithology www.bto.org

Butterfly Conservation www.butterfly-conservation.org

Devon Birds www.devonbirds.org

Devon Wildlife Trust www.devonwildlifetrust.org

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds www.rspb.org.uk



Photo: Steve Hopper



Photo: Steve Hopper