

**Bird Records**  
for  
**18 Greenwood Close**  
**Moffat**

**Covering**  
**the full three year period**  
**2009 – 2010 – 2011**

# Introduction

In 2009, in conjunction with the Wildlife Club Bird Survey, we kept a daily record of what birds visited our garden each day. The actual number of birds was not recorded, just whether or not a particular bird had been seen each day. We continued the record keeping through 2010 to get a comparison between the two years and then went on to record through 2011. Our feeding methods, and those of our immediate neighbours, were unchanged throughout the three year period. We did miss the odd day here and there when away from home but this has little impact on the overall record.

It was generally predicted that the severe weather would have a devastating impact on our small bird populations. Back in the 1950's and 1960's, hard winters were quite normal and the birds seemed to come through unscathed so we thought that the comparison, covering two bad winters after many years of mild ones, might prove to be quite revealing. In 2010 we did see a drop in some bird species but also an increase in others. Now, in 2011, after two hard winters followed by a miserably wet summer & autumn where food was likely to be scarce (few butterflies and few caterpillars, a mainstay of food resources), the results suggest that the bad weather actually had very little impact on the bird population. In fact, some common species, Blue, Great and Coal Tits in particular, have become increasing common, not just in how often they were seen but also in the numbers visiting. The Coal Tit, for example, has apparently had a very successful 2011 breeding season. We are also pleased to see the return of Greenfinches – they had virtually disappeared from this locale following the outbreak of finch disease in 2009.

Weather obviously plays a part in sightings with some appearing regularly either earlier or later in the 'season', presumably related to the amount of 'wild food' available at the time. Our garden also suffers another interesting peculiarity when it comes to weather – on very wet days the number of birds/species coming into the garden drops quite dramatically and on the worst days we hardly see any birds at all! This may be because they don't like the large water drops from the trees but we do not know the real reason. Looking over the records, days that show few bird sightings are virtually all days that there was heavy rain. Yet, there were exceptions with some wet days showing quite normal numbers. This may, of course, be due to hunger forcing them to brave the elements!

The following pages show graphically the number of days our more common birds were seen, month by month, for each of the three years. Comments have been added where thought to be appropriate. To follow the 3-year sequence, go along the dark blue line (2009), then the magenta one (2010) and finally the green one (2011).

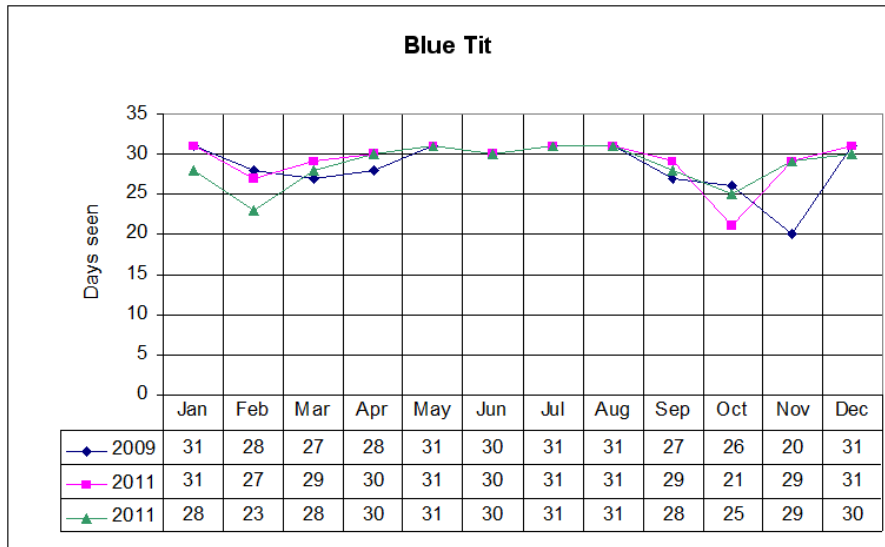
**Note:**

*Only 30 recording days in October 2010*

*The last day of February and first day of March 2011 were each observed for only half a day and there were only 29 days recording days during September 2011.*

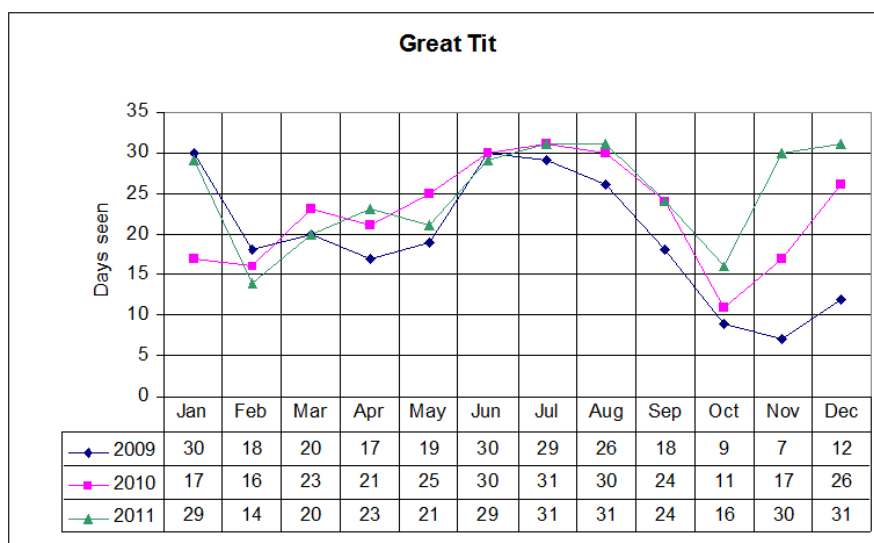
## Blue Tit

A very consistent visitor, seen most days. The actual numbers vary but the later part of 2011 has seen a significant rise.



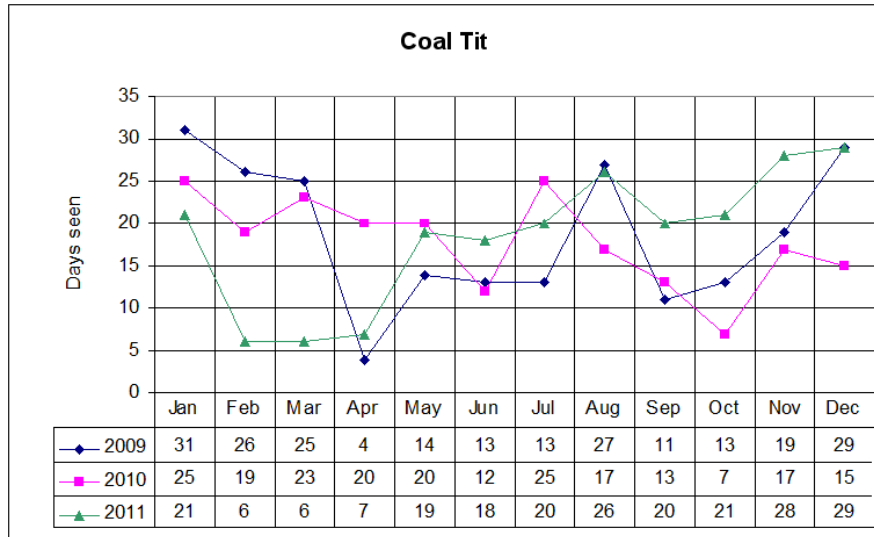
## Great Tit

Another regular. The pattern of sightings shows two distinct dips, one from February to May and another in September and October. Like the other Tits, the actual numbers seen in late 2011 is much greater than in the two previous years.



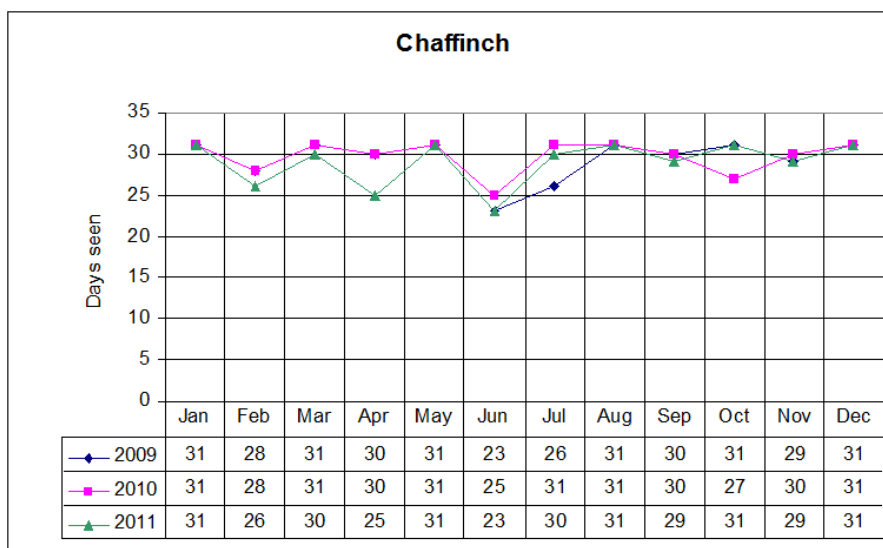
## Coal Tit

This has always been a sporadic visitor, particularly through the summer months. The year 2010 ended with a big dip in sightings giving some cause for concern. There was a flurry of sightings in January 2011 but this was followed by an ominous shortage for February to April. From May onwards, sightings recovered strongly and remained so for the remainder of the year. By December 2011 it was common to see 4 or more at a time instead of the 1 or 2 prior to then and they were visiting frequently throughout the day.



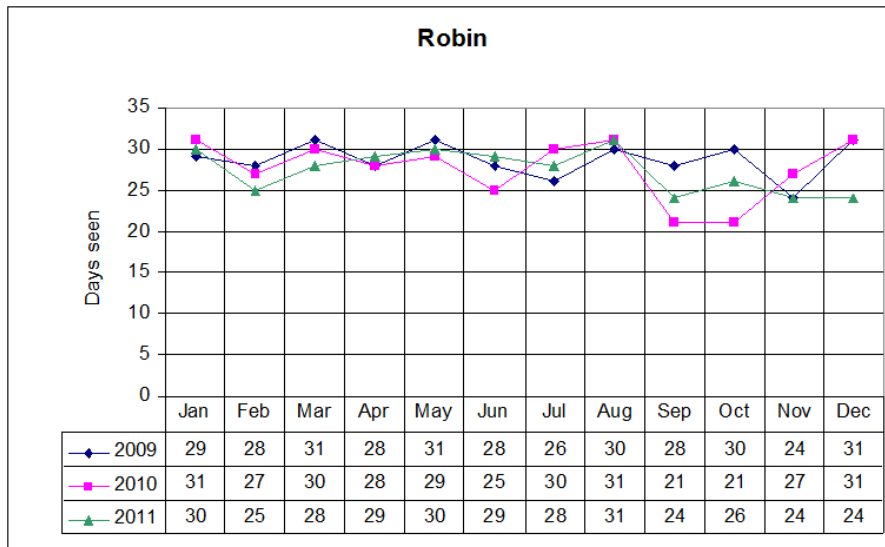
## Chaffinch

A very consistent visitor throughout the year.



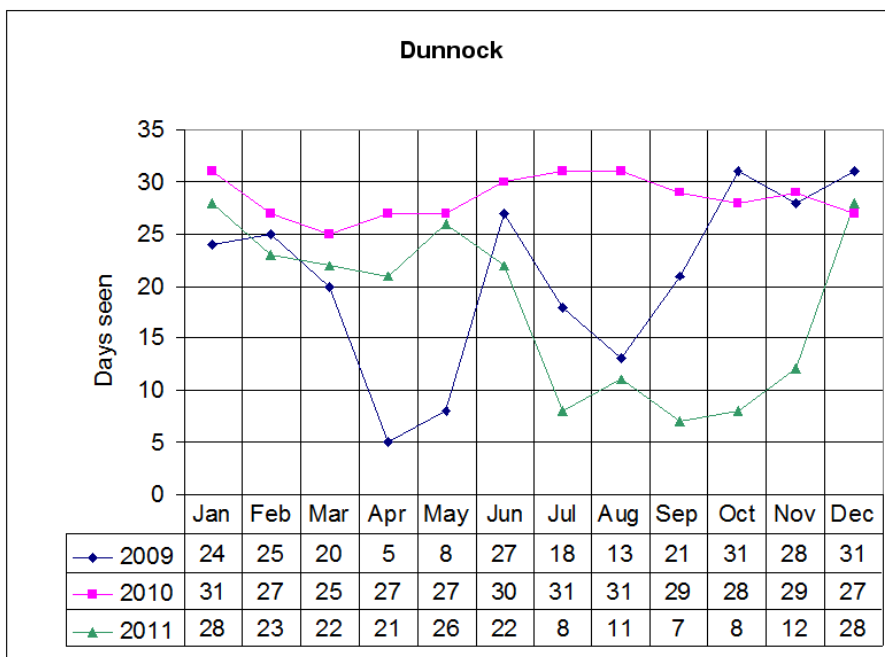
## Robin

Another consistent visitor though not every day. There is a dip in sightings during November 2009, a more significant one during September and October of 2010 followed by a strong recovery in December. Sightings dipped in September 2011 and remained low for the rest of the year.



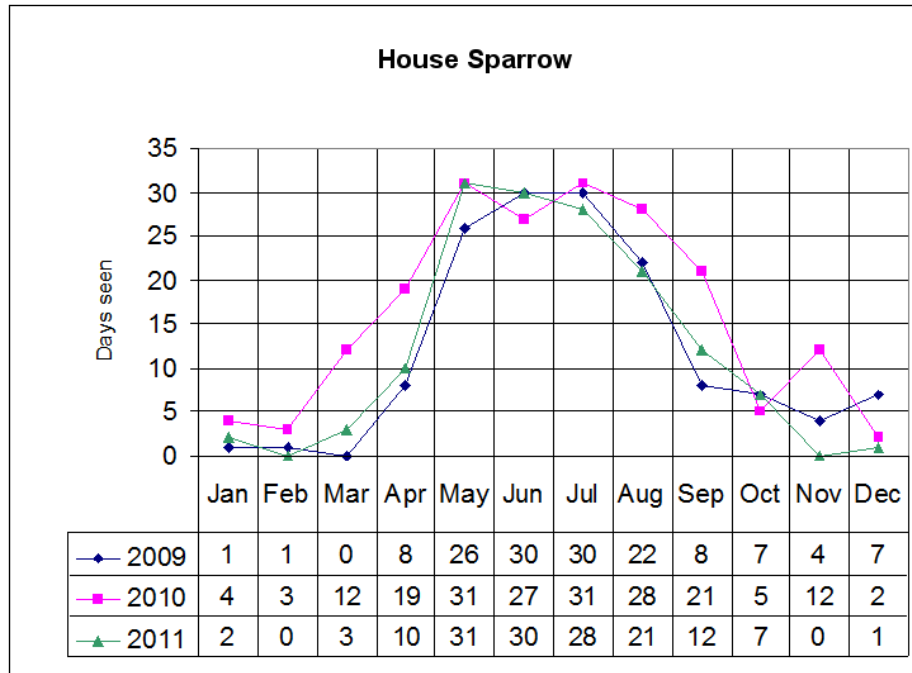
## Dunnock

Mainly a very erratic pattern to sightings although 2010 was quite steady. These are elusive birds at times and it is thought that they are probably present most of the time, just not seen!



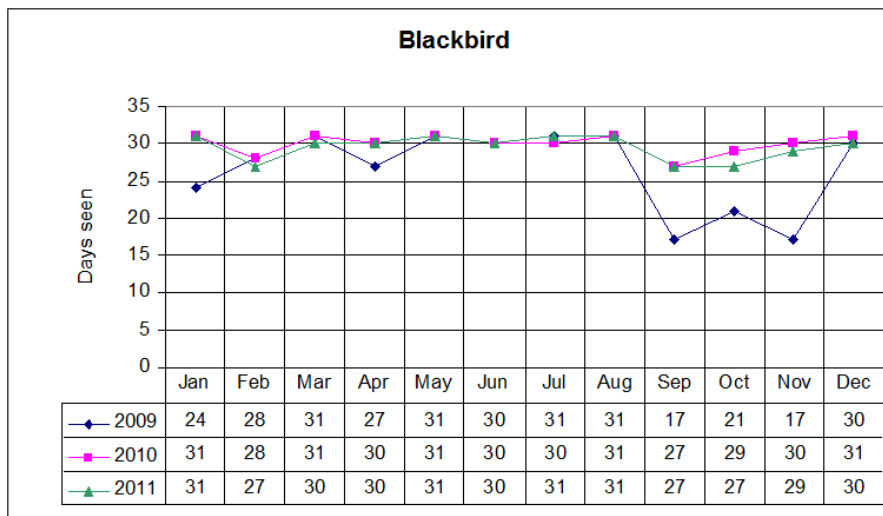
## House Sparrow

This is an interesting one and is fairly consistent. These birds really only visit our garden during the summer months when the parent birds appear to bring in their young. However, they are present all year round within 100 yards of here. By October, visits are fairly rare until the following April when the nesting season starts again.



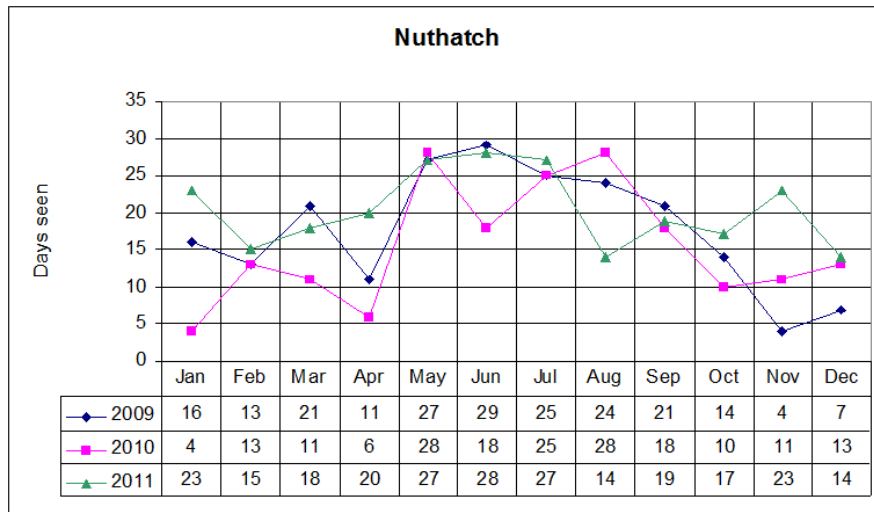
## Blackbird

Despite a dip during the late autumn of 2009, the numbers have otherwise remained consistent. The actual number of birds would seem to have increased slightly.



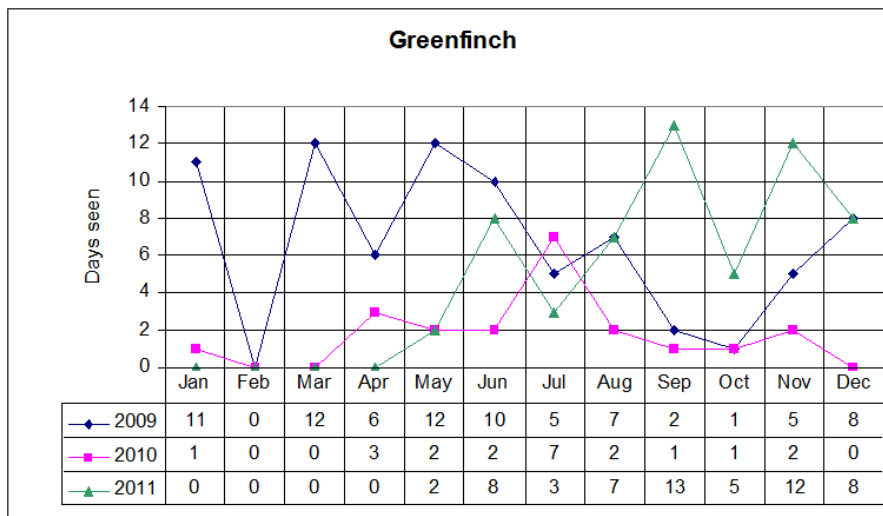
## Nuthatch

Apart from the summer months, visits by Nuthatch have been variable. The dip in the summer of 2010 is probably due to the loss of an adult during the nesting season. Another dip in August 2011 may be due to a less than perfect brood – the remains of one young and an unhatched egg were found on clearing the nestbox used later in the year,



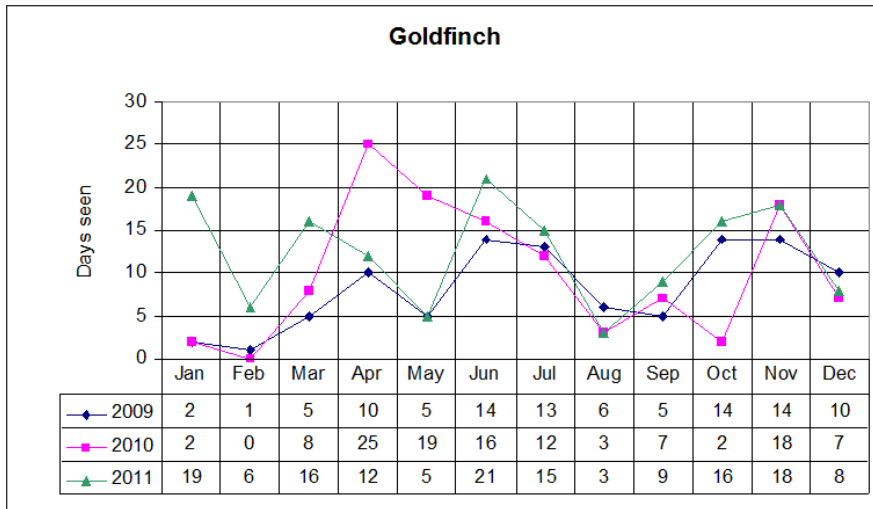
## Greenfinch

These were fairly regular visitors in the earlier part of 2009, dipping in the autumn and recovering again towards winter. The erratic nature of sightings during the first half of that year may be misleading as the birds seemed to have a strong preference for the garden next door (at No.16) where they were seen far more often than in ours! Unfortunately, many birds were hit by 'finch disease' and the numbers plummeted though 2010. This continued through the earlier part of 2011 but made a strong recovery thereafter. Nice to see them coming back.



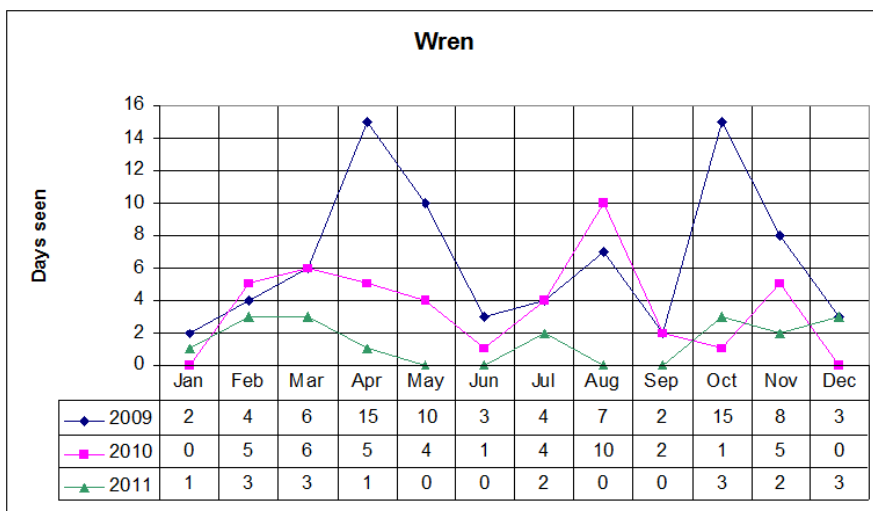
## Goldfinch

Never seen in great numbers but reasonably regular visitors. An unusual rise in sightings during late spring of 2010 but otherwise quite consistent.



## Wren

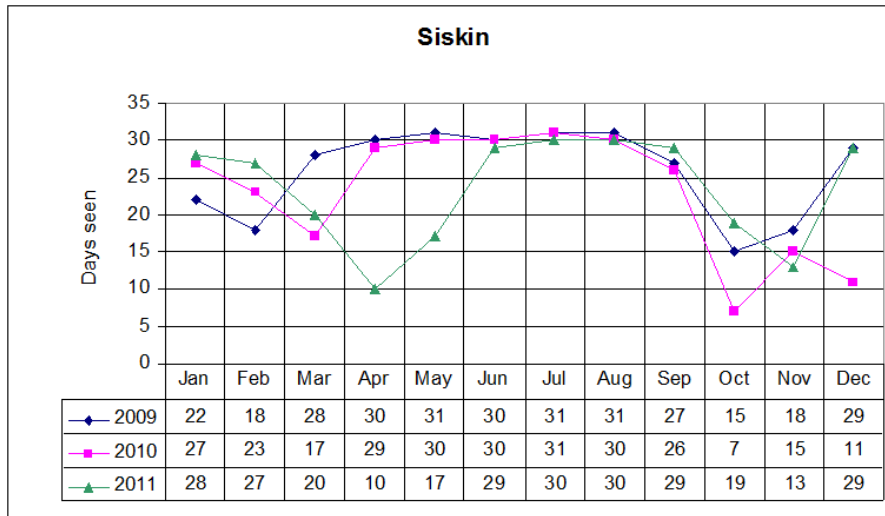
A steady decline in sightings each year. During 2011 they were heard more often than seen so there must still be some in the vicinity. The decline in sightings is worrying.





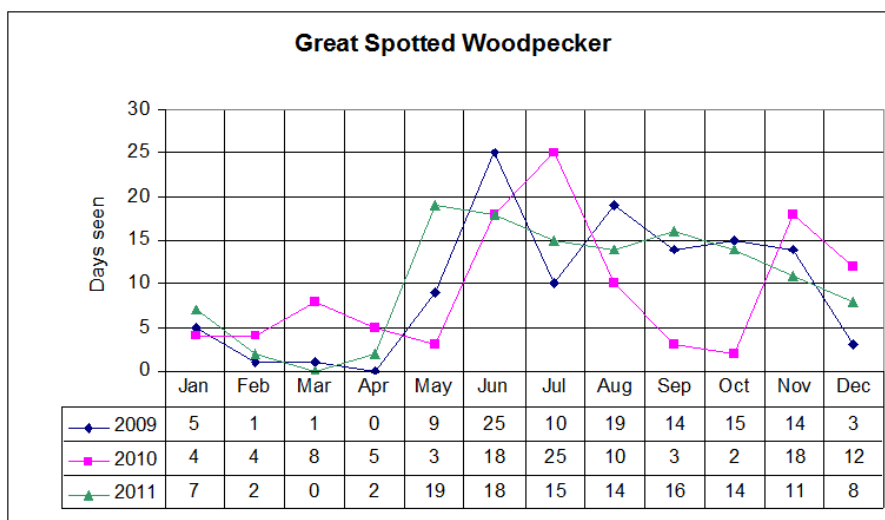
## Siskin

Very regular visitors. Interesting that the good spell of weather in April and May of 2011 actually gave less sightings.



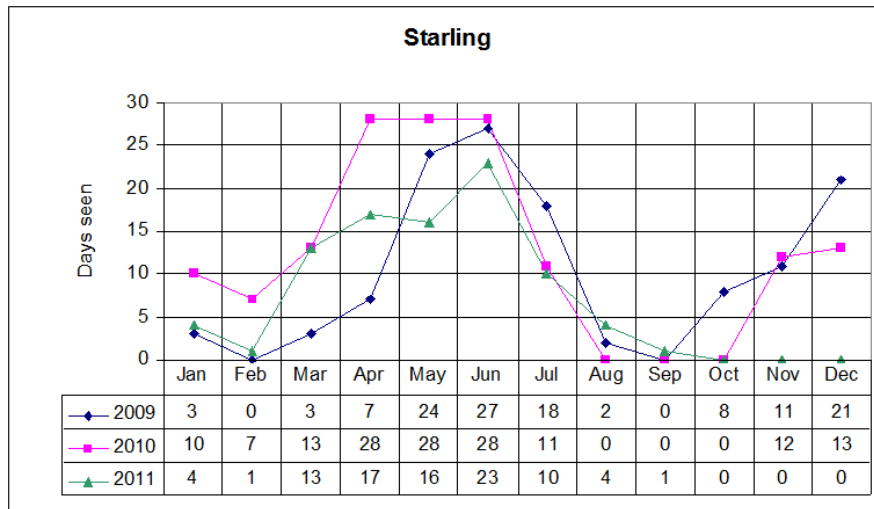
## Great Spotted Woodpecker

A fairly consistent pattern of visits throughout although with a marked dip in the autumn of 2010. Interestingly, in 2011 almost all visits were from a male, accompanied during the summer by two youngsters.



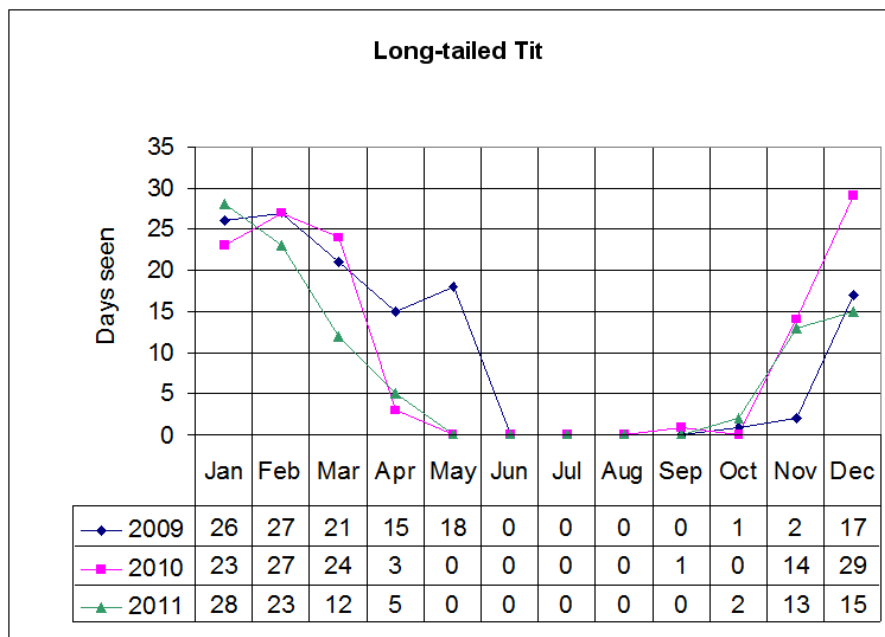
## Starling

A fairly consistent pattern for 2009 & 2010, numbers increasing in summer with many young birds present, then falling off in the autumn. Another increase comes as winter approaches, probably due to migrants arriving. The mild start to the winter of 2011 has apparently delayed migration so no sightings!



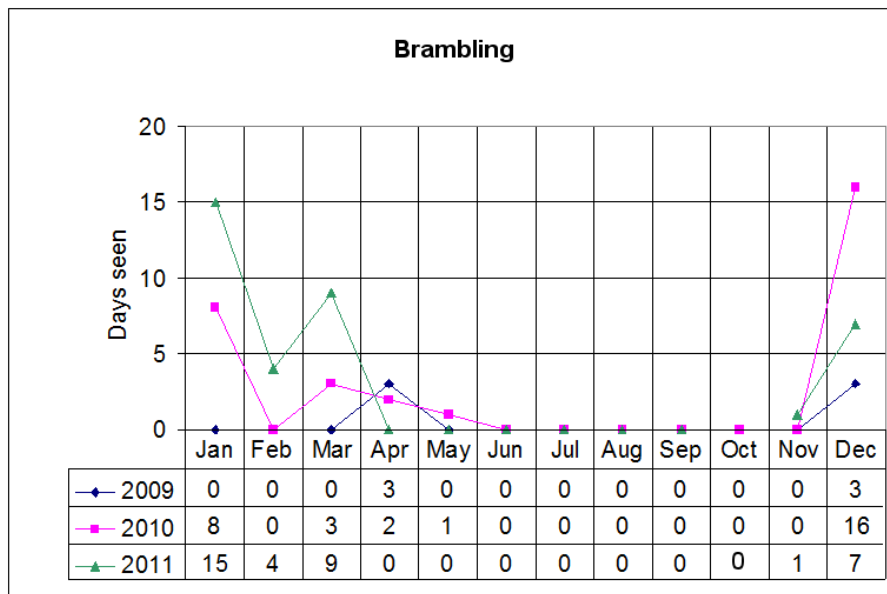
## Long-tailed Tit

One of the birds predicted to suffer the effects of hard winters – yet the pattern is fairly consistent for all three years. No discernable change in the actual number of birds seen so they seem to have coped very well.



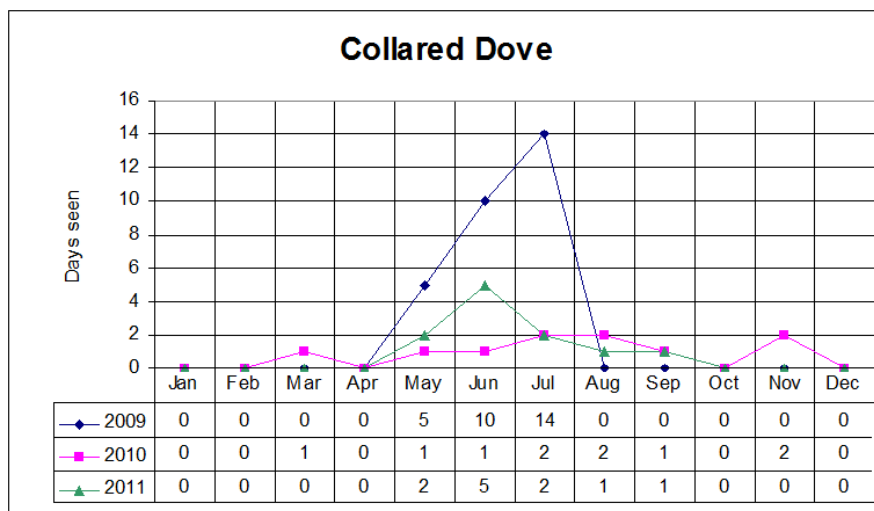
## Brambling

Not a frequent visitor but a clear pattern following the winter migrant trend. The end of 2010 through to the spring of 2011 had a large number of sightings at a time when literally hundreds were in the vicinity.



## Collared Dove

This is a rare visitor to the garden – yet is a frequent one to the garden next door at No.20. Could be a difference in feeding methods and because the garden there is much more 'open' than ours.



## **Other garden visitors**

### **Sparrowhawk**

Actual sightings are not all that common. However, visits are usually just a quick 'fly by' and, unless someone happens to be looking at the time, so are likely to remain unnoticed. It is probable that these quick visits are actually quite frequent.

### **Merlin**

Merlin sightings have generally been extremely rare - it is not a bird that you would expect to see in an urban garden. However, for a few days in March 2011 we had quite a number of sightings of a male. When first seen it seemed a bit too large for a male Merlin but not quite large enough for a male Sparrowhawk. The issue was settled when it briefly stopped in the garden in full view and could be positively identified as a Merlin. Over that few days we had both the male Merlin and male Sparrowhawk passing through quite regularly before the Merlin left the territory to the Sparrowhawk. We have not seen a Merlin since then.

### **Lesser Redpoll**

A fair few sightings in April/May of 2009, another flurry during January-May 2010 and another few sightings in January 2011.

### **Mistle Thrush**

Sightings generally limited to the winter months when they were feeding on Yew berries adjacent to the garden. In 2011 the berries ripened early and were consumed by Blackbirds before Mistle Thrushes got there.

### **Redwing**

A similar story to the Mistle Thrush. When present, there were often good numbers of them.

### **Pheasant**

A new one for the garden. No pheasants had been seen in the garden at all until November 2011 when two appeared one day. Since then 2/3 (all hens) have appeared quite often.