

The Birds of Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath 2015



Male Wheatear on the log pile

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Despite coverage on the Common being rather poor again this year, a total of 96 species were recorded, four more than in 2014. Of these, 45 bred or probably bred, with no doubt the highlight of the year being the successful breeding of a pair of Skylarks on the Plain, the first to do so since 2007. Much credit for this achievement must go to Wildlife & Conservation Officer, Peter Haldane, and his staff, who have persevered over the years to create a suitable and safe habitat for this Red-listed bird. Credit is also due to Chief Executive, Simon Lee, for his valuable cooperation, and indeed to the vast majority of the visiting public, many of whom have displayed a keen interest in the well-being of these iconic birds. Signage on the Plain this year was extended to the two uncut sections during the autumn and winter months, thus affording our migrants and winter-visiting birds a sanctuary in which to feed and shelter safely. Another outstanding high note this year was the Snow Bunting found on the Large Mound in January, a first for the Common since records began in 1974; and yet another first for the Common came in the form of three Whooper Swans at Rushmere in December. There was also a surprising influx of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers during the spring, a bird that in the previous few years had become an extremely scarce visitor. In addition to the Skylark, there were a further two successful ground-nesting species this year, these being the Willow Warbler and Reed Bunting. Other observations of note during the year included Little Egret, Red Kite, Jack Snipe, Short-eared Owl, Yellow Wagtail, Firecrest, Marsh Tit, Brambling and Common Crossbill.

On the down side, one or two regular migrants, and indeed former breeding species, remained absent this year, or at least due to their scarcity were overlooked. These included the Bullfinch, Spotted Flycatcher and Tree Pipit. It also proved to be quite a poor year at our ponds, in some cases due to the ongoing problem of low water levels which once again accounted for pairs of Little Grebes and Tufted Duck at Bluegate GP abandoning the site. While at Queensmere, despite the provision of new platforms, alas no Mute Swans could be tempted. Another disappointment was the absence of any Gadwall at our ponds, this being a duck that has hitherto been a regular on the Common's list. However, conversely, the likes of Coot, Moorhen and Mallard appear to have done quite well. Meanwhile at Beverley Brook, though often encountered, there was no positive evidence of the Grey Wagtail or Mandarin Duck breeding.

On the whole, our woodland species appear to be doing well, including perhaps one of our rarest visitors, the Hobby, with a pair breeding successfully again this year. This elegant falcon has now bred continuously with us since the year 2000, with just the one failure in 2008; this as a result of their nest becoming dislodged during high winds. The Common Buzzard continues to be seen regularly, both above and in our woodlands, though more particularly in the Beverley Mead's area; one suspects that this large raptor may be on the verge of breeding on the Common but, despite much searching, no nesting site has yet been found. Among other woodland species seemingly thriving are the Robin, Wren, Blue and Great Tit, Blackcap, Nuthatch and the Great Spotted Woodpecker.

There has been some debate recently regarding the benefits or otherwise of the clearances in some areas of the Common's western woodlands. As far as our birdlife is concerned, there would certainly appear to be room for a little diversity in these areas, but one would hope that any work undertaken is coupled with a degree of moderation, inasmuch as those areas cleared be given time



to revitalize before the policy becomes more extensive , if indeed the plan is to extend the policy. Looking at the areas cleared in 2014, they do seem to have regenerated quite quickly, with bramble and hazel now replacing the once dominant holly scrub. This will definitely benefit certain species, such as the Wren, Robin, Dunnock and Blackcap. On the other hand, it will not particularly suit the likes of the Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl and Jay, all of which show a preference for overgrown and semi-inaccessible woodland in which to nest and find solitude. That said, thankfully, many such areas still exist on the Common.

As ever many thanks are extended to all contributors to this report, a full list of which may be found below. Special thanks are extended to Angela Evans for checking and advising on its content, and for printing and compiling additional copies as needed, also to Peter Haldane and his colleagues at the Ranger's Office for collecting and forwarding records from the public, as well as passing on their own observations.

Contributors to this year's report: Chris Bye, Peter Carlill, Gay Carr, Mark Cook, Bella Covill, Dave Dawson, John Dean, Angela Evans, Mary Evans, Roy and Heather Fenton, Tim Gilbert, Mike Goodman, Paula Graystone, Graham Guthrie, Peter Haldane, Andrew Harding, Les Hill, Frank Hung, David Hunter, Simon Lee, London Bird Club, Vanessa Pearson, Paul Pickering, Adrian Podmore, Richard Price, Simon Riley, Andrew Simon, Simon Rocksborough-Smith, John Rowcliffe, Bill and Jack Rowland, Tim Straw, Chris Taplin, Melanie Varley, Kate Veale, John Weir (JWr), Jan Wilczur (JWc) and David Wills.

Finally, this year's report is dedicated to Gay Carr, who sadly passed away in March, 2015. For many years, Gay gathered valuable information relating to the Common's birds and butterflies, including regularly recording WeBS (Wetland Bird Survey) counts at our ponds, and indeed led many an interesting walk embracing these subjects, several of which I was privileged to attend.

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Little Grebes apparently nest building in open water at Bluegate GP

DETAILS OF BIRDS RECORDED ON WIMBLEDON COMMON & PUTNEY HEATH 2015



Red
Kite

Observers' initials are shown against records where appropriate – mo (for many observers). All references to first-time breeders or to new additions to the Common's list of species relate only to recent history: 1974 to 2015.

Species

Mute Swan

Status: prior to 2007, an irregular visitor to the Common's ponds, but has since bred at Queensmere in five of the past nine years.

Unfortunately, there was to be no breeding this year at Queensmere. In fact these birds were surprisingly conspicuous by their absence during most of the year. All records are given: single birds were at Kingsmere for a few days at the beginning of January and again for a week or so in March. Elsewhere two were at Rushmere on 23 March, with two there again on a few dates in September, and one was at Queensmere during much of December. (DW, FH, MG, KV).

Whooper Swan

Status: rare visitor.

Three, two adults and a juvenile were found at Rushmere on 11 Dec. These unexpected visitors were first noted in the afternoon and were still present at dusk, but unfortunately had moved on by the following morning (RP).

Greylag Goose

Status: bred at Kingsmere in each year from 2000 to 2005, but has since become an infrequent visitor.

Apart from two birds at Kingsmere on 17 March, the remaining records received during the year involved groups flying over, with a maximum of ten flying north on 7 Dec. (BM, DW, JW, TG, DW).

Canada Goose

2 pairs bred

Status: breeding resident.

Bred at Bluegate GP where a pair successfully produced a brood of six goslings, while at Kingsmere, a pair there was not so productive, raising just a single gosling. (mo).

Egyptian Goose

Status: a regular non-breeding feral visitor.

Intermittent visitors to our larger ponds, usually in pairs, but five were noted at Kingsmere on several dates in June (DW, MG, SRS).

Mandarin Duck

Status: feral breeding resident, usually one or two pairs.

There was no positive evidence of breeding having taken place on the Common this year, although a few juveniles were noted at Queensmere later in the year, but these may have come in from elsewhere. The best count of the year came from Queensmere with 13 there on 13 Jan. (JWr).

Mallard

Status: breeding resident with numbers increasing during the autumn and winter.

Records of birds with young were comparatively few this year, but were received from the following ponds: Bluegate GP on 30 May and 15 June; and at Rushmere on 1 June (mo).

Northern Shoveler

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

Present intermittently at Kingsmere from the beginning of the year until 27 March, with a maximum of 12 on 4 Jan., and from 16 Oct. to the year's end, but in smaller numbers. Elsewhere a drake was at Bluegate GP on 13 April and a duck at Queensmere on 12 and 28 Dec. (mo).

Species

Common Pochard

Status: normally a winter visitor and passage migrant with a preference for Queensmere, but a pair bred at Bluegate GP in 2013, thus becoming the first to do so since records began in 1974.

Present intermittently at Queensmere from the beginning of the year until 4 March, and from 9 Oct. to the end of the year, but never exceeding more than one or two birds (DW, FH, GC, MG).

Tufted Duck

Status: breeding resident (since 2000), winter visitor and passage migrant.

There was no positive evidence of breeding this year. Two pairs were present at Bluegate GP during the spring but are thought to have eventually been deterred by falling water levels. Pairs were also present at Kingsmere but they too appear to have failed to breed, although a lone duckling was observed with a female Mallard in July - possibly a result of an egg being deposited in the wrong nest. The best count of the year came from Queensmere where 32 were present on 21 Feb. (DW, GC, MG).

Pheasant

Status: scarce visitor these days, having last bred on the Common during the 1970s.

All records are given: single birds were found near the SE corner of the Plain on 26 March (PH); at the southern end of Windmill Rd on 27 March (TG); on the edge of the western playing fields on 19 April (SRS) and near Springwell Cottage on 6 June (GG).

Little Grebe

Status: chiefly a passage, but an occasional breeder, water levels at our ponds permitting.

Birds were first noted at Bluegate GP this year on 7 March, with a pair apparently building a nest on open water on 12 May. On 17 May two pairs were present, after which things unfortunately started to go downhill when the pond rapidly began to dry up, culminating in the departure of all birds by 1 June (DW).

Cormorant

Status: a regular visitor to our larger ponds, primarily in the winter months.

Birds were Present at both Kingsmere and Queensmere during the winter months and, to a lesser extent in autumn, usually involving twos and threes, but six were present at Queensmere on 22 Dec. (mo).



Little Egret

Status: scarce visitor, increasingly observed flying over in recent years.

There were two records this year: one flying N over Fishponds on 12 Feb. (SRS), and one observed at Beverley Brook on 25 Nov. (JD).

Grey Heron

Status: regular non-breeding visitor.

A familiar sight at most of the Common's ponds throughout the year, with maxima of three birds at Bluegate GP on several dates in the spring (mo).

Red Kite

Status: scarce passage migrant, exclusively observed flying over.

All records are given: one above Ladies Mile on 9 April (PC), one over the Windmill on 28 April (JWr), one flying SW over the Causeway on 17 May (LH) and one above Putney Heath on 9 Aug. (JWr).

Species

Sparrowhawk

Status: breeding resident.

It is very likely that the number of breeding pairs of this hawk on the Common remains stable (usually about five pairs). However, due to poor coverage, an approximate number was not established this year. A pair was present and probably bred in the Exeter House woods, but that apart, additional evidence remained elusive (DW). One interesting observation was of four birds soaring above the western woods on 14 April (JWc).

Common Buzzard

Status: regular migrant and visitor in recent years.

As was the case during the last few years, there were a good number of records received of this now familiar visitor. However, evidence of any breeding remains elusive - the vast majority of sightings during the year coming from a variety of areas in and above the western woods (AE, AP, BC, CB, CT, DH, JD, JR, LH, PH, SRS).

Kestrel

at least 5 territories

Status: breeding resident.

Pairs were reported as being frequently seen this year in the following areas: Beverley Meads, Clockhouse Wood, Bluegate Ride, Ladies Mile and the Reservoir Wood on Putney Heath, with juveniles being noted in three of the five sites later in the year (DW, SRS).

Hobby

1 pair bred

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

This graceful falcon has now bred on the Common during at least the past sixteen years, and may well have done so undetected prior to 2000. At least one pair bred successfully this year, producing two juveniles, the pair arriving on 24 April and the family dispersing in early Sept. Birds were also reported at two further sites, but inadequate coverage meant that the areas in question were not subsequently revisited on a regular basis (DW).



Peregrine Falcon

Status: scarce visitor, usually airborne.

There were just two observations reported this year: a pair above the Plain on 27 March (LH, AE) and two juveniles were surprisingly present for awhile in the Stag Bog area on 11 Oct. (AH).

Moorhen

13 pairs bred

Status: breeding resident.

The number of pairs present and thought to have bred at our pond/brook during the year are as follows: Beverley Brook (4); Bluegate GP (2); Kingsmere (2); 7 Post Pond (1); Ravine Pond (1); Fishponds (1); Hookhamslade Pond (1); and Scio Pond (1). (DW, GC, ME, SRS).

Coot

7 pairs bred

Status: breeding resident.

Bred at Queensmere (3 pairs); at Bluegate GP (2 pairs) and at Kingsmere (2 pairs) (mo).

Species

Jack Snipe

Status: scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

All records are given: one was flushed in a flooded area of Ladies Mile on 21 Jan. and single birds were noted on the Plain on 9 and 11 Nov., and 28 Dec. (DW).

Common Snipe

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, can be numerous following wet spells of weather.

The vast majority of records this year were received during the first-winter period, occurring primarily in the flooded areas at the Plain and Ladies Mile. In all there were 27 records involving 50 birds, with a maximum of six at Ladies Mile on 25 Jan. Later in the year, between 28 Oct. and 14 Dec., a further eight birds were recorded on the Plain (DW).

Woodcock

Status: regular passage migrant and winter visitor - can be elusive.

There were seven records involving single birds during the year: one on Putney Heath near Inner Park Road on 9 Jan. (PH); one at Bluegate Ride south on 27 Feb. and 7 March (DW); one at Farm Bog on 8 March (AH); one in the Triangle Wood on 18 March (JWr); one near Hookhamslade Pond on 27 March (LH, AE). Perhaps owing to the unseasonably mild weather later in the year, the second-winter period only produced one record of a bird at Ladies Mile 29 Nov. (TG).

Common Sandpiper

Status: scarce passage migrant.

One in a flooded area of Ladies Mile on 15 May was the only record received this year (VP).

Black-headed Gull

Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.

130 were present at Queensmere on 22 Nov. (DW).

Common Gull

Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Lesser Blacked-backed Gull

Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Single birds were noted on the western playing fields on 17 and 30 of Jan., and on 2 Aug. Singles were also present at Kingsmere on 17 Jan. and Rushmere on 22 Dec. In addition single birds were occasionally seen flying over. (DW, MG, JWc, SRS, KV).

Herring Gull

Status: uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, mostly seen flying over.

There were just two records of grounded birds this year: one at Kingsmere on 25 Jan. and one on the western playing fields on 2 Aug. Notable airborne movements included 50+ over Fishponds Wood on 22 May and c40 over Beverley Meads on 3 July (DW, SRS).

Great black-backed Gull

Status: rare winter visitor and passage migrant, occasionally observed flying over.

Common Tern

Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

This elegant bird has become a scarce visitor during the past few years, and alas there was no improvement this year, with just one sighting of a bird at Queensmere on 26 June (AS).



Species**Feral Pigeon**

Status: fairly common feral resident, confined chiefly in the Common's perimeter.

As in previous years, this familiar town-dwelling pigeon is mostly encountered near or on the Common's perimeter, with a few pairs breeding annually under the Beverley Bridge on the A3.

Stock Dove**c30 pairs**

Status: breeding resident.

The Stock Dove is a fairly widespread species throughout our woodlands these days, and one that has truly thrived in recent years. Comparatively small flocks were reported on the western playing fields during the year, with the best counts being ten in June and eight in July (SRS).

Woodpigeon

Status: common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Collared Dove**1 territory**

Status: scarce breeding resident.

The only records received this year came from what now appears to be a well-established territory at Beverley Meads where a pair are thought to have bred in the area of the pavilion (SRS).

Ring-necked Parakeet**c30 territories**

Status: naturalized breeding resident.

A fairly widespread breeding resident in our woodlands these days, but perhaps one that does not appear to be increasing as rapidly as was once feared.

Common Cuckoo

Status: passage migrant, has become increasingly scarce in recent years.

In contrast to last year's excellent total of 23 records, there were just two this year: one calling near White Cottage on 15 April (AE) and one at Brickfields on 28 April (CT).

Tawny Owl**c6 pairs present**

Status: breeding resident.

There were fifteen records submitted this year, coming from a wide variety of woodland sites, all records being restricted to birds either found roosting or heard calling, but with no positive evidence of breeding being received. (AE, DD, MV, PH, SR, SRS).

Short-eared Owl

Status: rare passage migrant.

Two were flushed from separate areas of heathland in the Ladies Mile area on 23 Oct. (DW).

Common Swift

Status: regular summer visitor, appearing to breed outside of the Common's perimeter.

The first birds of the year were noted on 5 May, with the last coming on 27 Aug. The best counts of the year involved some 20+ birds occasionally feeding low over the Plain during both June and July (DW).



DW

Short-eared Owl

Species**Kingfisher**

Status: an occasional non-breeding visitor to our ponds and Beverley Brook.

All records are given: single birds were noted along Beverley Brook on 2 Feb., 24 March and 28 April (PH, CT, SRS) and two, possibly a pair, there on 20 March (SRS). Elsewhere, one was at Bluegate GP on 24 March and one at Scio Pond on 12 July (DW).

Green Woodpecker**c15 pairs**

Status: breeding resident.

On the evidence gathered during the year there does appear to have been a reduction in the number of breeding pairs this year (c20 pairs in 2014). However, this may be the result of poor coverage rather than a significant decline in numbers, only time will tell.

Great Spotted Woodpecker**c45 pairs**

Status: breeding resident.

Continues to be our most abundant and successful breeding woodpecker on the Common, with a dozen or so nesting holes containing young being evident during the latter part of May and during June. However, as with the Green Woodpecker, the estimated number of pairs this year has been reduced slightly, owing to a lack of adequate coverage in some woodland areas.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Status: scarce visitor in recent years.

There was an unexpected influx of birds this year during the spring, not just on the Common but also in the London area as a whole. On the Common, birds were reported from eight sites between 10 March and 20 April, with one pair at Ladies Mile being heard and seen regularly. However, this promising incursion had petered out by May with no evidence of breeding having taken place (last bred in 2005). Later in the year, there was just one more observation of bird at Ladies Mile on 9 Nov. (AP, AH, DW, LBC, LH, MG).

Skylark**one pair bred**

Status: passage migrant, very occasionally breeding.

Bred successfully on the Common for the first time since 2007, with at least one brood being produced, possibly two, but there was no positive evidence of the latter. Birds were first noted in the uncut section of the Plain on 18 March, but the first singing bird there was not until 27 May. Thereafter juveniles were eventually noted towards the end of June, followed by the male continuing to sing up until 1 Aug.....certainly time enough for a second brood! (mo).

Sand Martin

Status: scarce passage migrant.

Twos and threes were noted in mixed migrating flocks of hirundines feeding over the Plain on 17 and 18 Sept. (DW).

Swallow**one pair bred**

Status: regular passage migrant, has started to breed in bred again in recent years.

One pair bred successfully in a stable at the Ranger's Office for the second successive year, producing five young. A second nest was discovered in a shed at the same site but remained unused. The first sighting this year came on 12 April, with the last occurring in the form of a migrating flock of c30 birds feeding across the Plain on 18 Sept. (AP, DW).



Species

House Martin

Status: currently a scarce passage migrant, much declined in recent years - last bred in 2004.

This bird continues to be an extremely scarce migrant these days, this after once being a very familiar sight during the year, particularly in the Rushmere area. All records are given: four over on 15 Sept. (AP), two on the same date (KV) and c20 feeding over the Plain on 17 and 18 Sept. (DW).

Meadow Pipit

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly bred but not since 2003.

Present, primarily on the Plain, from the beginning of the year to 20 April, with a maximum of eight birds on 1 Jan., and, later in the year, from 6 Sept. to the year's end, with 12 on the 26 Oct. being the best count. (DW, JWf).

Grey Wagtail

Status: scarce breeding resident and passage migrant.

There was no positive evidence of breeding having occurred during the year, although a pair may well have done so unnoticed at Beverley Brook. Either side of the breeding months birds were regularly noted at several of the Common's ponds, including several juveniles (mo).



Grey Wagtail

DW

Pied Wagtail

Status: irregular breeding resident and winter visitor.

As in previous years, birds were frequently encountered in the Rushmere area, but are thought to have bred just outside the Common's perimeter. The best count of the year came at Rushmere plain in August where 12 ground-feeding birds were counted on several occasions, the majority being juveniles (mo).

Yellow Wagtail

Status: scarce passage migrant.

There were two records this year, both flyovers: one south over the Mounds on 3 Sept. (AP) and one south over the Plain on 17 Sept. (DW).

Wren

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Duncock

Status: common breeding resident.

Robin

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Whinchat

Status: regular passage migrant, occurring mainly in the autumn.

All records came from the Plain this year: two on 25 Aug.; two on 27 Aug.; one on 2 Sept.; three on 3 Sept.; one 17 Sept. and one on 9 Oct. (AP, DW).

European Stonechat

Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

The vast majority of records this year came from the Plain, and fell between 6 March and 2 April, and from 17 Sept. to 24 Oct., involving a total of 30 birds, with a maximum of six on 4 Oct. Elsewhere, one was at the Scout Field, near Brook Cottage on 6 Jan. and singles were found at Ladies Mile on 8 March, 30 March and 6 Oct. (AH, AP, CT, DW, JWf).

Species

Northern Wheatear

Status: regular passage migrant.

All records are given: Plain: one on 6 April, two on 10 April, one on 12 April, two on 13 April, three on 14 April, one on 16 April, two on 26 April, one on 25 Aug. and one on 4 Sept. Rushmere: one on 12 April, two on 13 April. Ladies Mile: two on 8 April. Log Pile: one on 15 April (AP, DW, JWc).

Blackbird

Status: common breeding resident.

A flock on nine birds feeding in a small hawthorn on the Large Mound was an unusual find on 6 Oct. (DW).

Fieldfare

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce in some years.

Owing mainly to the comparatively mild temperatures during both winter periods, this has been a very poor year for this wintering thrush, with just two records: one at Bluegate GP on 15 Feb., and two at Beverley Meads on 3 Feb. (DW, SRS).

Song Thrush

Status: fairly common breeding resident.

Redwing

Status: regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

Present from the beginning of the year to 4 April, with flocks of 50+ noted in the Clockhouse wood on 23 Feb. and in the Green Ride woods on 20 March. Later in the year, the first incoming birds were noted at Beverley Meads on 15 Sept., comprising a flock of eleven. Birds were less numerous during the second winter period, with c80 on the Large Mound on 22 December proving the exception. (BC, CT, DW, SR, SRS).



Mistle Thrush

c15 pair

Status: breeding resident.

Records during the year suggest that this once common breeding thrush may have declined somewhat in recent years (c20 territories in 2012), with reports of pairs coming from just nine sites this year. (DW, SRS).

Blackcap

c70 breeding pairs

Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird wintering.

The year's first record was of a singing bird on the discrete part of Putney Heath on 26 March, with the last being seen on the Large Mound on 17 Oct. The number of breeding pairs remains healthy but may have declined slightly over the past few years (DW).



Garden Warbler

c16 territories

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

Thankfully this beautiful songster remains a fairly common breeding bird in areas of open scrubland, with the first record of the year coming from Warren Farm on 12 April (SRS, DW).

Lesser Whitethroat

Status: a passage migrant in recent years, formerly more numerous, but has not bred since 2002.

The only record of the year came from the Large Mound where one was heard to sing briefly on 29 April (DW).

Species

Common Whitethroat

28 territories

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

Breeding birds were found in nine open areas of bramble scrub during the year, comprising 28 pairs, five fewer than last year (DW). The first record of the year was on the 2 April at the Causeway Scrub, which is one of the earliest dates on record for this summer visitor to have arrived on the Common (AS).

Common Chiffchaff

c40 territories

Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird wintering.

The first record of a singing bird this year came at Ladies Mile on 13 March, with the last coming at Kingsmere on 17 Oct., as with most of our visiting warblers, the number of breeding pairs was slightly down this year (45 in 2014) (DW).

Willow Warbler

1 pair bred

Status: formerly a common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant - much declined over the last two decades.

This once very common breeding warbler continues to cling on to its status as a breeding bird, but its future as such remains precarious, with just a single pair proved breeding this year, as was the case in 2014. It is perhaps worth recalling that back in 1983 no less than 111 territories were estimated on the Common! The first record of this year was of a singing bird in the Cabbage Patch area on 8 April (DW).

Goldcrest

c35 territories

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

This easily overlooked little bird of our woodlands is in fact more numerous than one might imagine. Once learnt, it is made easier to identify by its faint but distinctive song during the spring. 35 singing birds were mapped during limited coverage of woodlands, which may in reality be a rather conservative estimation (DW, KV).

Firecrest

Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

All records are given: one in hollies near the Putney Vale cemetery on 14 Jan, and two in the same area on 29 March (PC); one near Queensmere on 16 Feb. (MG); one south of Queensmere on 2 April, and one singing in the Reservoir Wood on Putney Heath on 26 April (DW).

Long-tailed Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

This often conspicuous little bird continues to thrive on the Common, despite two thirds of nests discovered eventually being predated. They are one of the earliest birds to commence nest building, with several pairs busily constructing their elaborate, domed nests during late Feb., with young often seen abroad as early as mid-April. A flock of c35 near the Large Mound on 20 Oct. was the best flock noted (DW).



Blue Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

The best foraging flock of the year (c60) came from Willow Ride on 23 Oct. (DW).

Species

Great Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Coal Tit **c45 territories**

Status: breeding resident.

Marsh Tit

Status: scarce visitor.

One at Ladies Mile on 28 March was the first to be found on the Common since 2011 (per LBC).

Nuthatch **c30 territories**

Status: breeding resident.

There were an encouraging number of records submitted from our woodlands this year, resulting in at least 30 territories being mapped during limited coverage. (DW, PP).



Treecreeper **at least 24 territories**

Status: breeding resident.

Unless one is familiar with a Treecreeper's sweet but somewhat abrupt song, this elusive woodland dweller can often go undetected; as a result the number of territories mapped each year should be regarded as being somewhat conservative (AE, BC, DW).

Jay **c20 pairs**

Status: breeding resident.

This, the most colourful of the corvids, remains a familiar breeding bird with us, and one which uses a variety of habitats on the Common in which to nest, but is also a bird that can sometimes prove elusive, with their whereabouts, particularly in woodland, being more often betrayed by their raucous calls. It is estimated that the Common currently supports some 20 to 25 pairs.

Magpie

Status: breeding resident.

Little information was received this year concerning this fairly common breeding bird, other than a cluster of 14 being noted on the western playing fields on 14 March (SRS).

Jackdaw

Status: common resident and occasional breeder.

The Jackdaw is more often seen flying over the Common these days, sometimes in their hundreds. A few do join Crows feeding on the Plain during the spring, but there has been no evidence of pairs breeding since 2012.



Carrion Crow

Status: breeding resident.

Pre-roosting numbers on the Plain this year reached a peak of c1000 birds at dusk on 13 Jan. (JWr).

Species

Starling

Status: scarce breeding resident.

Much declined in recent years, this once familiar hole-nesting bird once seen throughout our woodlands is now confined to a few pairs breeding at the Windmill complex and possibly in one or two other buildings on the Common or its perimeter; thus sadly resulting in the once customary post-breeding flocks of a decade ago, often comprising two to three hundred birds, now seemingly a thing of the past.

House Sparrow

Status: scarce breeding resident.

The status of the House Sparrow on the Common has remained very much the same over the past few years or so, with small pockets of birds breeding on its perimeter at The Green, Wimbledon, and, further west, at Vale Crescent and at the foot of Stag Lane. There were no reports of birds being seen at the Windmill during the year, indeed one has to go back to 2011 to find the last record of birds being present there.



Chaffinch

c35 pairs

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Little information was gathered during the year regarding this fairly common breeding finch. Territories were last counted in 2013 when 35 pairs were estimated, since when it would appear that the population has remained stable.

Brambling

Status: scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

One calling over Mounds on 20 Oct. was the only record this year (DW).

Greenfinch

c20 pairs

Status: breeding resident.

A breeding resident but localised, preferring habitats such as those found in the gardens and hedges adjacent to the various staff cottages on the Common (DW).

Goldfinch

Status: scarce breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

A few pairs breed, but this colourful finch is more likely to be encountered during the months of autumn and winter when foraging flocks visit sites offering a plentiful supply of seeds, such as the Large Mound, from where the year's highest count of 35 was noted on 22 December (DW).

Siskin

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

This has been a particularly poor year for visiting Siskin, with just two records of note, these coming from the Large Mound where 12 were present on 15 Sept., and a similar number were found feeding on alders at Queensmere on 3 Dec. (AP).

Linnet

Status: scarce visitor these days. Formerly bred but not since 1987.

All records this year relate to birds flying over: three over Ladies Mile on 8 April, one across the Plain on 9 April, five going north on 14 April and two over the Plain on 20 April (AP, JWc).

Species

Lesser Redpoll

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

Present in small groups during the relevant months either side of their breeding period, with nine at Lower Gravelly Ride on 16 Feb. (MG), 22 at the Triangle clearing on 20 Nov., and 12 on the Large Mound on 22 Nov. being the best counts (DW).

Common Crossbill

Status: scarce visitor.

Four calling above the Mounds, heading west on 30 Oct., was the year's only record (DW).

Snow Bunting

Status: very rare visitor.

One on the Large Mound on 4 Jan. was the first to be recorded on the Common since annual records first began in 1974, bringing the total number of species now recorded to 148 (DW).



Reed Bunting **1 pair bred**

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.

Having failed to breed during any of the seven years prior to 2014, it was encouraging to establish that a pair bred successfully on the Plain again this year, where they were observed feeding juveniles on 25 June. Elsewhere, wintering birds reached a peak 12 at Ladies Mile on 1 Jan. (DW).

Total Species	96	(91 in 2014)
Bred or probably bred	45	(47 in 2014)



Singing
Blackcap

DW

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS RECORDED ON THE COMMON/HEATH DURING 2015

* -Indicates bred or probably bred

f -Species observed only flying over

Mute Swan	Common Tern	Mistle Thrush*
Whooper Swan	Feral Pigeon*	Common Whitethroat*
Greylag Goose	Stock Dove*	Lesser Whitethroat
Canada Goose*	Woodpigeon*	Garden Warbler*
Egyptian Goose	Collared Dove*	Blackcap*
Mandarin Duck	Ring-necked Parakeet*	Common Chiffchaff*
Mallard*	Cuckoo	Willow Warbler*
Shoveler	Tawny Owl*	Goldcrest*
Common Pochard	Short-eared Owl	Firecrest
Tufted Duck	Common Swift	Long-tailed Tit*
Pheasant	Kingfisher	Blue Tit*
Little Grebe	Green Woodpecker*	Great Tit*
Cormorant	Great Spotted Woodpecker*	Coal Tit*
Little Egret	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Marsh Tit
Grey Heron	Skylark*	Nuthatch*
Red Kite <i>f</i>	Sand Martin <i>f</i>	Treecreeper*
Sparrowhawk*	Swallow*	Jay*
Common Buzzard	House Martin <i>f</i>	Magpie*
Kestrel*	Meadow Pipit	Jackdaw*
Hobby*	Grey Wagtail	Carrion Crow*
Peregrine Falcon <i>f</i>	Pied Wagtail	Starling*
Moorhen*	Yellow Wagtail <i>f</i>	House Sparrow*
Coot*	Wren*	Chaffinch*
Common Snipe	Duncock*	Brambling <i>f</i>
Jack Snipe	Robin*	Greenfinch*
Woodcock	Whinchat	Goldfinch*
Common Sandpiper	European Stonechat	Siskin
Black-headed Gull	Northern Wheatear	Linnet <i>f</i>
Common Gull	Blackbird*	Lesser Redpoll
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Fieldfare	Common Crossbill <i>f</i>
Herring Gull	Song Thrush*	Snow Bunting
Great Black-backed Gull <i>f</i>	Redwing	Reed Bunting*

Additions compared with the 2014 list are Whooper Swan, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Lesser Whitethroat, Marsh Tit, Yellow Wagtail, Common Crossbill and Snow Bunting. Absentees were Ring Ouzel, Tree Pipit and Gadwall.



Wren

DW

The Birds of Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath 2015

The following list shows the number of species recorded each year on the Common/Heath since 1974, and the number of them that bred or probably bred.

However, it should be emphasised that the total recorded in any given year may reflect the amount of coverage during that year rather any significant changes in the number of species occurring.

Year	Species	B or pb
1974	86	51
1975	86	49
1976	86	48
1977	82	49
1978	88	51
1979	84	50
1980	83	50
1981	77	45
1982	82	49
1983	82	50
1984	83	49
1985	90	51
1986	89	49
1987	88	51
1988	86	49
1989	78	48
1990	74	48
1991	71	45
1992	68	45
1993	74	41
1994	77	42
1995	89	42
1996	77	41
1997	85	39
1998	87	45
1999	87	44
2000	81	47
2001	96	48
2002	91	46
2003	96	50
2004	92	48
2005	95	48
2006	95	49
2007	99	49
2008	91	47
2009	96	46
2010	102	44
2011	104	43
2012	103	44
2013	96	46
2014	91	47
2015	96	45

Yearly averages: Species 87, B or pb 47

The total number of species over the whole period stands at 148, thirteen of which were recorded flying over.

Coordinators of bird records since 1974

E. D. McMillan	1974-1982
D. L. Wills	1983-1990
R. H. Kettle	1991-1997
D. L. Wills	1998-2015

* * * * *

Estimated breeding territories of selected species during 2015

	2015	2014
Canada Goose	2	2
Mandarin Duck	0	1
Tufted Duck	0	3
Hobby	1	1
Moorhen	13	13
Coot	7	7
Grey Wagtail	0	0
Common Whitethroat	28	33
Garden Warbler	16	16
Willow Warbler	1	1

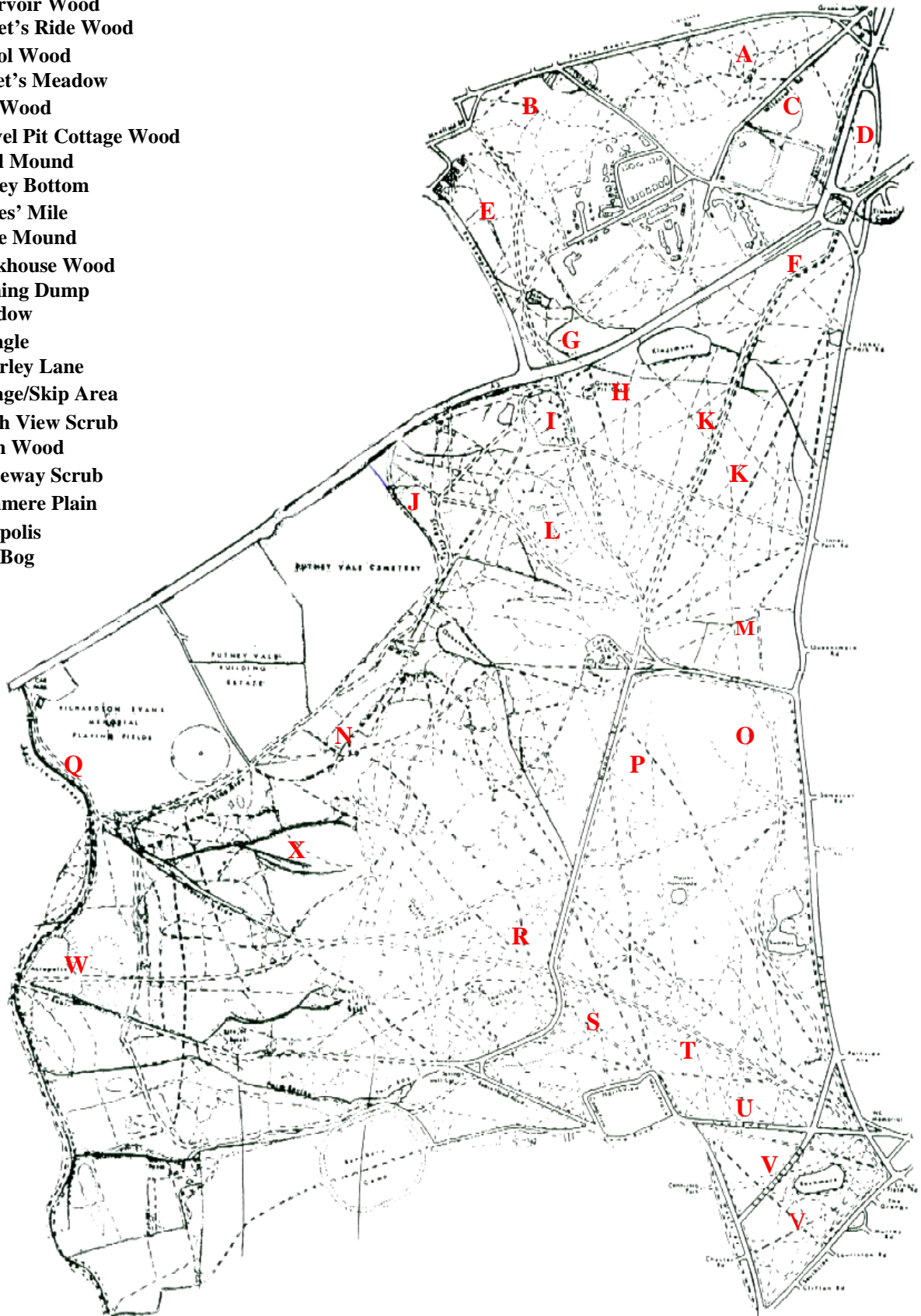


Song
Thrush

DW

A GUIDE TO FORMER, OR IMPROVISED, PLACE NAMES USED IN THIS REPORT

- A** Exeter House Wood
- B** Church Wood
- C** Reservoir Wood
- D** Tibbet's Ride Wood
- E** School Wood
- F** Tibbet's Meadow
- G** Scio Wood
- H** Gravel Pit Cottage Wood
- I** Small Mound
- J** Putney Bottom
- K** Ladies' Mile
- L** Large Mound
- M** Clockhouse Wood
- N** Burning Dump
- O** Meadow
- P** Triangle
- Q** Beverley Lane
- R** Storage/Skip Area
- S** North View Scrub
- T** South Wood
- U** Causeway Scrub
- V** Rushmere Plain
- W** Acropolis
- X** Stag Bog





Dunnock eyeing a snack