



THE BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES OF WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS



Annual Report 2021

Cover Photograph "Robin" by Jonathan Poole



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Welcome to the 2021 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bird Report

The impact from the pandemic continued with high visitor numbers once lockdowns finished, along with increasing wear and tear on the Commons' habitats, particularly with the proliferation of new paths. Unfortunately, the cold and dry April of 2021 resulted in a long delay in vegetative growth and subsequent availability of food and cover while a very wet May was probably not ideal for nesting birds.

The total species count of 95 (85 - 2020) was certainly an improvement on the last couple of years, although this still masks a paucity in abundance for several species. Declines appear to be continuing for Meadow Pipit, Wheatear, House Martin and Swift while there were just two records for Stonechat and no records at all for Lesser Spotted Woodpecker or Sand Martin.

Nevertheless, some birds are clearly continuing to thrive, not least the Firecrest, Buzzard and Red Kite while the Commons still welcome back good numbers of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs each year. Kingfishers were seen more regularly on some of the ponds this year, while the Swallows returned once again for another year at the stables with a Dartford Warbler also coming back to the usual haunt at Ladies Mile in the autumn.

As usual, the year threw up its handful of surprises and with wet conditions in late summer and early autumn, water birds featured prominently with the likes of Water Rail, Goldeneye, Wigeon, Pochard, Gadwall, and Teal all featuring, albeit all for single records.

Anyway, please do keep your sightings coming in as it really does help maintain a picture of the Commons birdlife. I hope to see many of you out and about on the Commons again in 2022.

Thanks are extended to all contributors to this report, a full list of which may be found below and to Angela Evans-Hill for producing the report.

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DETAILS OF BIRDS RECORDED ON WIMBLEDON COMMON & PUTNEY HEATH 2021

Observers' initials are shown against records where appropriate

Species

Canada Goose

Status: locally breeding resident.

Greylag Goose

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

Four flew W over the cricket pitch on 29 Mar (TP).

Mute Swan

Status: prior to 2007, an irregular visitor to the Common's ponds, now a regular breeder at Queensmere in recent years.

A pair was at Kingsmere 6 Jan (AP), in addition to the resident pair at Queensmere (Caroline Woodley). There were nine including two juveniles at Rushmere 6 Oct (AP) with 16 altogether 5 Nov (AP) with 12 at Rushmere and four at Queensmere.

Egyptian Goose

Status: breeding resident –with goslings appearing very early in the year.

Mandarin Duck

Status: feral breeding resident.

A pair with five ducklings was seen at Fishponds Wood 4 May (Chris Taplin) with possibly the same family of seven at Bluegate 20 Jun (Alastair Brown). 14 were at Kingsmere 16 Aug (Michael Mac), away from their more usual haunt at Queensmere.

Shoveler

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

Unusually, two records away from Kingsmere with a male in eclipse on Bluegate 21 Sep (JR) and a pair at Queensmere 5 Nov (AP). A male was then at Kingsmere 6 Dec (JR) and 12 Dec (LEH) with two males there 22 & 26 Dec (AP/JR).

Gadwall

Status: once a regular visitor to Queensmere, only occasionally seen now.

Rare visitors these days, a pair was at Queensmere 21 Apr (Andrew Harding).

Wigeon

Status: very occasional visitor usually in the colder winters

A remarkable sighting with a male in eclipse on Bluegate 19 Sep (Alastair Brown). A very early autumn arrival anyway, these ducks usually only appear on the Commons in very cold winters where the last records were for 2005, 6 and 7 and before then 1979.

Mallard

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

Teal

Status: occasional visitor to the Commons ponds although can be in good numbers where the Beverley Brook reaches the Thames

Three were at Kingsmere (2m1f) 5 Nov (AP).

Pochard

Status: infrequent visitor

A female was actively diving and feeding at Queensmere 7 Dec (AP).



Tufted Duck

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

Goldeneye

Status: rare autumn / winter visitor

An extraordinary record of a juvenile on one of the pools near Ladies Mile 22 Oct (JR). The last two records were from 1985 and 1986.

Common Swift

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

35 on the Plain 6 Jun (LEH) as the highest count received for the summer was very disappointing.

Common Cuckoo

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

A good spring, beginning with two on Robin Hood Ride near Springwell Cottage 11 Apr (Graham Guthrie). Birds were also heard calling on the Plain 3 May (TP), Caesar's Camp 5 May (James Dee), Springwell car park 19 May, Caesar's Well 20 May (Julia Hardy), Stag Bog 20 May (Andrew Harding), Bluegate 22 May (Mike Caldwell) and Caesar's Well again 26 May (Andrew Harding). It seems reasonable to suppose that at least three birds were involved.



Feral Pigeon

Status: fairly common feral resident.

Stock Dove

Status: breeding resident

Woodpigeon

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

Water Rail

Status: very rare visitor

Another remarkable record for the Commons – one heard squealing near one of the pools at Ladies Mile 30 Oct (JR). Dave Wills had no records at all for this species from 1974-2008 and there have been no other records since then.

Moorhen

Status: breeding resident.

Coot

Status: breeding resident.

Little Grebe

Status: has bred on Bluegate in previous years but susceptible to unreliable water levels

During the spring, single birds were at Bluegate 17 Mar and 25 Mar (JR) and 27 Apr (PH). There were three records in the autumn with singles at Bluegate 4 Oct (JR), 6 Oct (JR/AP) and 10 Oct (JR).

Curlew

Status: occasional flyover usually in the summer months

One heard calling, flying W over the Mounds at 8.30am 27 Jun (AP / LEH et al).

Woodcock

Status: a once common autumn / winter visitor, seemingly now in decline

There was clearly a small influx for March with single birds seen over the Plain 3rd, Ladies Mile 6th, the Plain 15th, Ladies Mile 17th, Windmill Ride North 25th and Bluegate 25th (JR). However, there were no records at all in the autumn or later winter period.

Jack Snipe

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, particularly following spells of wet weather on the Plain

Two were flushed from the Plain 7 Mar (JR), while the autumn saw singles on the Plain 10 & 11 Oct and two there on the 13th (JR). There was a further bird on the Plain 22 Dec (R.Kaye).

Common Snipe

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, particularly following spells of wet weather.

Just one record from the first winter period with a single flushed from the Plain 16 Mar (PH).

An unusual record for the time of year was a bird on the Plain 2 Aug (JR), evidencing how wet the summer had been. Singles were then at Bluegate 3 Sep, the Plain 6 & 22 Sep (JR), two there 24 Oct (AP/LEH), one there 25 Oct (JR) and one at Ladies Mile 29 Oct (JR).

Black-headed Gull

Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.

One at Rushmere 20 Feb with ring / yellow tag suggested a bird possibly ringed in Norway (Neil Grover). A high percentage of these Gulls that appear on the Commons in winter are likely to be of Scandinavian origin. There was a pre roost gathering of 250 at Rushmere 5 Nov (AP).

Common Gull

Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Herring Gull

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

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Common Tern

Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

One was at Rushmere 8 Jul (AP) with two there 14 Jul (R.Thomas). One of these birds was seen to head off NW, presumably in the direction of Richmond Park. There were two again on 27 Jul (James Owen).

Cormorant

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

Grey Heron

Status: regular non-breeding visitor.

Little Egret

Status: increasingly observed in recent years.

Singles in the Brook near REMPf pavilion 24 Apr (PH), 2 May (Chris Chalmers) and 24 May (Chris Taplin).



Sparrowhawk

Status: breeding resident.

Red Kite

Status: increasingly observed flying over the Common in recent years and breeding nearby.

Two over the golf course 5 May (Greg Aldridge), one over the Plain 5 Jun (TP) and again 6 Oct (AP)

Common Buzzard

Status: resident and almost certainly breeding – passage migrants also occur.

In the spring, there were seven south of the A3 on 27 Feb (LEH) with five on 21 Mar (Natalie Mathieu), six on 24 Mar (Jan Wilczur) and five on 30 Mar (LEH). A pair was over the Plain 5 Jun (TP).

Birds were seen regularly throughout the year with one notable sighting of a Buzzard taking a Woodpigeon that was eating holly berries 5 Oct (LEH). In the autumn, five were over the Windmill 6 Oct (AP) with an impressive eight circling over the Mounds 2 Nov (JR).

Tawny Owl

Status: breeding resident.

Little Owl

Status: increasing visitor and probable breeding resident.

Reports of a bird heard calling were received on 23 Feb with confirmation of two birds heard calling and photographed 25 Feb (Greg Aldridge / Neil Grover). Single birds have appeared sporadically over the years but to my knowledge this is the first record for two birds. Heard again near the golf course 9 Apr (Neil Grover) and 23 & 25 Jun (Neil Grover / Greg Aldridge). Two were seen feeding amongst the gorse bushes between the fairways on the golf course 29 Dec (Graham Guthrie).



Kingfisher

Status: an increasing visitor to the Beverley Brook and the Commons ponds

Singles at Beverley Brook 26 Sep (PH), 28 Sep (Rebecca Doyle) and unusually, two sightings away from the Brook, with one near the pool at Ladies Mile 30 Oct (JR) and one, clearly with a sense of humour, sat on the 'No Fishing' sign at Scio Pond 31 Oct (Thomas Purvis).

A single bird was at Beverley Brook 19 Nov (Julia Hardy), followed by further sightings from the ponds, including one at Kingsmere seen diving from a branch on the north bank 25 Nov (JR) while another was again at Scio Pond 13 Dec (Peter Trimming per AEH).

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

Green Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

Kestrel

Status: breeding resident.

Hobby

Status: elusive breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

First bird of the year was seen on 23 Apr (M.Mac) with another over Putney Heath 30 Apr (LEH). Individuals were at the cricket pitch 15 May (TP), Gravel Pit Cottage 26 & 27 May (LEH) and Putney Heath 28 May (JR). Two were at the golf course 5 Jun (Neil Grover), with birds over Kingsmere 27 Jun (AP et al) and Putney Heath 14 Jul (TP). In the autumn, there were two hawking insects at Putney Heath 14 Sep (LEH), while individuals were at Ladies Mile 16 Sep & 27 Sep and over the Plain 4 Oct (JR) with the final sighting of the year there 6 Oct (AP).

Peregrine Falcon

Status: occasional visitor, usually flying over

Singles over Putney Heath 7 May (Martin Honey) and the Mounds 6 Sep (JR).

Interestingly, one was seen stooping at the Carrion Crows along Windmill Road on 4 Dec (LEH) and presumably the same bird was repeating this behaviour on 31 Dec (LEH).

Ring-necked Parakeet

Status: naturalized breeding resident.

Jay

Status: breeding resident.

Magpie

Status: breeding resident.

Jackdaw

Status: common resident and occasional breeder.

Carrion Crow

Status: breeding resident.

Raven

Status: increasing flyovers

One mobbed by three Buzzards over the Mounds 6 Oct (JR) and two over Putney Heath 21 Nov (Norbert Jakab) demonstrate the continuing expansion in range of this species.



Coal Tit

Status: breeding resident.

Blue Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Great Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Skylark

Status: occasional migrant and increasingly scarce summer visitor

Single birds were on the Plain 6th and 20 Feb (Alastair & Kath Brown) while five were seen heading SW over Ladies Mile 24 Oct (AP). The Plain did not seem to attract any birds at all this year, possibly due to the very late and cold spring.

Barn Swallow

Status: passage migrant, but has started to breed again in recent years around the Windmill complex.

An early bird flew over the golf course 29 Mar (Neil Grover) while the first birds back at the Windmill complex were seen over the Ranger's Office 3 Apr and at the stables 8 Apr (PH). Four flew over 26 Apr (Martin Honey). There were probably two pairs at the stables with five there on 27 Jun (AP et al). A second brood of Swallows was being fed 4 Aug (PH) while five were over the Windmill 24 Aug (AP). One flying S over Ladies Mile 6 Oct (AP) was the last record for the year.

House Martin

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

Just one record of two flying SW over the Mounds 6 Oct (AP) marked the end of a woeful year for sightings of this charismatic species.

Long-tailed Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Willow Warbler

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

There were just three spring records with a very early bird singing on 28 Mar (N.Moll), two singing 13 Apr (R.Kaye) and one at Springwell Cottage 23 Apr (Andrew Harding). An early returning bird was at Putney Heath 14 Jul (TP) followed by one singing briefly at Ladies Mile 3 Sep (AP/LEH/JR), two there 6 Sep (JR) while one at Kingsmere 12 Sep (TP) was the last sighting for the year.

Common Chiffchaff

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

A bird at the Mounds was heard singing on the exceptionally early date of 8 Feb. (Caroline Woodley). Clearly it must have had no sense of the impending week of snow and icy weather that was due! Highest count was for six at Putney Heath 15 Mar (LEH) while the last bird of the year was singing at Ladies Mile 6 Oct (AP).



Blackcap

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

First heard singing at Putney Heath 27 Mar (LEH), then at Queensmere 3 Apr (TP) with a maximum of seven on 13 Apr (Martin Honey). A juvenile was at the Mounds 1 Oct (AP).

Garden Warbler

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

First bird of year was at Putney Heath 13 Apr (R.Kaye) with birds singing at Beverley Meads 10 May (SRS), Ladies Mile 10 May (JR), 21 May (AEH) and 25 May (JR) with three at Putney Heath 19 Jun (LEH).

Lesser Whitethroat

Status: once bred but now just occasional spring and autumn migrant

One in copse at the Plain, near the Skylark area 28 Apr (Neil Grover).

Common Whitethroat

Status: decreasing breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

Late this year with first sighting on 29 Apr on west side of Plain (JR). Worryingly, still seems to be absent from its usual haunts round the Plain, while the lack of vegetation and food due to the cold and late spring probably didn't help matters either.

Dartford Warbler

Status: increasing winter visitor

One heard calling and briefly glimpsed at Ladies Mile 24 Oct (AP/LEH et al) and there again 25 Oct (JR) – from the ensuing but often limited viewings, identified as a female but certainly heard more often than seen. The bird was still present up to 26 Dec (JR/AP/LEH/RKaye), but will hopefully stay for the remaining winter period.

Firecrest

Status: once a winter visitor and passage migrant, now an increasing breeding resident.

The first of the year was in a garden 10 Jan (LEH) after which regular sightings were received with maximums of four on the 28 and 31 Jan, both in the vicinity of the holly trees at Bluegate. There was another bird in the garden 21 Feb (LEH) with two still regularly at Bluegate by the end of February (JR / Alastair & Kath Brown / R.Dunne) and again on 6 Mar (JR). One was singing at Putney Heath 27 Mar (LEH) and another heard at Tibbets Ride Wood 10 & 12 Apr (TP).

There were no further sightings during the summer months with the next record being for one on 4 Oct (Norbert Jakab), followed by birds at Clockhouse Wood 5 Nov (JR), Putney Heath 5 Nov (AP), in holly at Kingsmere 8 & 25 Nov, 3 & 13 Dec (JR), with the last record of the year being two near Bluegate 20 Dec (JR).

Goldcrest

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Wren

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Nuthatch

Status: breeding resident.

Treecreeper

Status: breeding resident.

Common Starling

Status: an increasingly scarce breeding resident.

A flock of c200 flying around the tops of the trees on the south side of the Plain 2 Jun, was an encouraging sighting (AP et al). Unusually, there was a significant passage of Starlings interspersed with the arrival of the winter thrushes with about 300 moving SW 24 Oct (AP/LEH et al).

Ring Ouzel

Status: an increasingly irregular spring and autumn migrant

A wonderful sighting of this charismatic species with two males at Windmill Ride North 23 Apr (Sarah Lavender, Michael Mac).



Blackbird

Status: common breeding resident.

Fieldfare

Status: occasional passage migrant and winter visitor particularly in harsh weather.

Ten at Ladies Mile 12 Feb (JR) while one at Putney Heath 15 Apr (LEH) was a late departure. The first of the autumn arrivals was for ten flying SW Oct 24 (AP/LEH et al) with four flying N over Putney Heath 8 Nov (JR).

Redwing

Status: regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

There were 20 at Kingsmere 18 Jan (JR) with a maximum of 80 at Putney Heath 15 Mar (LEH) in the first winter period of the year. Two flying SW over the Mounds 1 Oct (AP) heralded the first of the autumn with c100 in small flocks flying SW 24 Oct (AP/LEH et al). Generally in low numbers in the later winter period with a maximum of 30 at Ladies Mile 16 Dec (JR).

Song Thrush

Status: common breeding resident.

Mistle Thrush

Status: breeding resident.

Spotted Flycatcher

Status: once a regular breeding species, now an increasingly scarce passage migrant.

Just one autumn record with a single bird at Ladies Mile 6 Sep (JR).

Robin

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Whinchat

Status: increasingly irregular passage migrant.

One fly-catching at Ladies Mile 6 Sep (JR) with a later bird seen on the Plain 10 Oct (JR).

Eurasian Stonechat

Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

A very poor year indeed with just one spring record of a male at Ladies Mile 22 Feb (JR) and one autumn sighting with a juvenile at Ladies Mile 22 Sep (JR).

Northern Wheatear

Status: increasingly scarce spring and autumn passage migrant.

A male was on the Plain 11 Apr (JR), a female there 23 Apr (Martin Honey) and another male there 24 Apr (Jan Wilczur). A male and female at Ladies Mile / Inner Park Ride on 27 May (LEH) were late spring migrants. Autumn was very disappointing with just one record of a male on the Plain 10 Aug (JR).

House Sparrow

Status: increasingly scarce breeding resident usually on the edge of the Commons—last pair at Windmill 2011.

At least five territories at the Green 13 Jul (Derek Frampton).

Dunnock

Status: common breeding resident.

Grey Wagtail

Status: breeding resident and passage migrant.

A pair with two youngsters was seen at the Beverley Brook 10 Jun (JR).

Pied Wagtail

Status: breeding resident and winter visitor.

Seven at Rushmere 3 Sep (AP) included the usual juveniles.

Meadow Pipit

Status: passage migrant and decreasing winter visitor, formerly bred - 13 pairs in 1983 with last pair in 2003.

Two at Rushmere 26 Jan (JR) and one on the Plain 27 Mar (LEH) were the only records in the early part of the year. Birds appeared on the Plain in very low numbers during October with a max of eight 6 Oct (AP) followed by just two records of two birds on the Plain 1 Nov (JR) and 5 Nov (AP). The days of a resident winter population of at least a dozen or so birds appear to have passed.

Chaffinch

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Brambling

Status: irregular late autumn passage migrant.

One near Springwell Cottage car park 23 Nov (Andrew Harding) was a good record.

Greenfinch

Status: rapidly declining breeding resident

A pair was located along Portsmouth Road 10 Apr (TP) while one at Rushmere 5 Nov (AP) and three there 15 Dec (JR) suggests this is a favoured spot.

Linnet

Status: occasional visitor

A good sighting of three at Ladies Mile 3 May (LEH.)



Lesser Redpoll

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

Eight were at Bluegate 31 Jan (JR), followed by 20 at Ladies Mile 22 Feb (JR), 30 there 7 Mar (JR), eight on 15th (LEH), 2 on 17th (JR) and 20+ on 29 Apr (JR). The only autumn record was for two flying S over Ladies Mile Oct 24 (AP) with no flocks at all for the later winter period.

Goldfinch

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Ten were feeding on thistles at Windmill car park 28 Nov (TP). Numbers seem considerably down on previous years although there appears to be no lack of food plants available, particularly at the Mounds.

Siskin

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant

Some mixed in with Redpoll at Ladies Mile 7 Mar (JR) while one flew south over Putney Heath 11 Jul (R. Kaye).

Reed Bunting

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.

Three at Ladies Mile 18 Jan (JR), one at Bluegate 10 Feb (JR) with a male singing on the Plain 20 Feb (JR) and there again 15 Mar (LEH) and 17 Mar (JR). There were no further records until a male was heard singing on the Plain 16 Jun (Jan Wilczur), 7 Jul (LEH) and again on 12 Jul (Jan Wilczur).

After another gap, sightings of a male were made at the Plain 19 Sep (AP), Ladies Mile 1 Oct (JR) and Bluegate 13 Oct (JR). Two females were at Ladies Mile 24 Oct (AP et al) with a female on the

Plain 25 Oct (JR). Four (2m 2f) were at Ladies Mile 6 Dec (JR), two (2f) there 13 Dec (JR), one male at Clockhouse Wood 13 Dec (JR) finishing with a good count of nine, east of Ladies Mile 20 Dec (JR).

Butterflies and Dragonflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2021

Butterflies

Butterfly and Dragonfly recording on the Commons was limited during 2021, with ongoing concerns around COVID and a lack of volunteers. However, the two regular transects were recorded and along with some ad hoc sightings logged on i-Record, there were a total of 26 species of butterfly during 2021. That is down on the 30 species recorded in 2020 but then that was an exceptional year with a prolonged warm start to the spring.

Large Skipper	Marbled White
Brimstone	Meadow Brown
Large White	Ringlet
Small White	Small Skipper
Green-veined White	Clouded Yellow
Orange Tip	Common Blue
Small Copper	Painted Lady
Holly Blue	Silver-washed Fritillary
Red Admiral	Small Heath
Small Tortoiseshell	Purple Emperor
Peacock	White-letter hairstreak
Comma	Gatekeeper
Speckled Wood	White Admiral

A new addition for 2021 was a few Clouded yellows in July. These have been seen on the Commons before but we don't believe they have been formally recorded as part of the transects. To have 3 together was particularly nice.



Two other species of note were:

- White-letter hairstreak on Putney Heath in 16 July. Not surprising, as we now know that they can be found wherever there are elms, even if these are just suckers/in poor condition, but it is always good to have an actual sighting of this elusive species.
- Purple emperor - in addition to the regular sightings in the garden of one of the staff cottages on the Commons, there were several other sightings on Putney Heath in July.

DRAGONFLIES

We still don't have a regular formal recorder for Dragonflies so all our records this year have come from i-Record. If anyone has any experience in recording this species, we would love to hear from you.

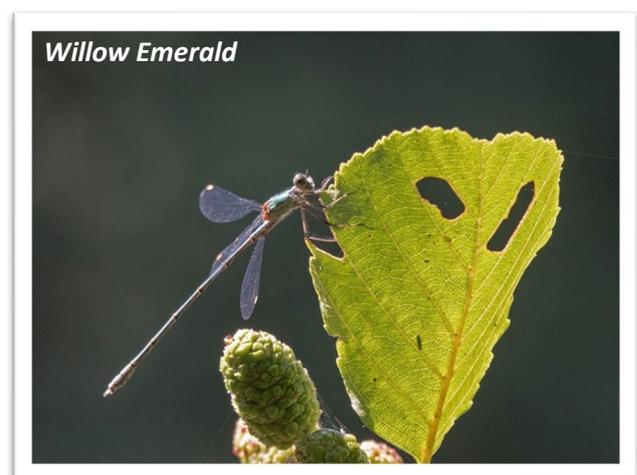
For 2021, there were records for:

Large red damselfly
Willow emerald
Emperor
Brown hawkler
Migrant hawkler
Southern hawkler
Broad-bodied chaser
Ruddy darter
Common darter



There were no records for

Blue-tailed damselfly
Azure damselfly
Common blue damselfly
Red-eyed damselfly
Small red-eyed damselfly
Emerald damselfly
Beautiful demoiselle
Banded demoiselle
Hairy dragonfly
4-spotted chaser
Black-tailed skimmer



Beautiful demoiselle may or may not be present on the Beverley Brook. It is a recent SW London colonist although it has been recorded on the Brook in previous years. We fully expect that the species with no records were present on the Commons, just under-recorded.



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