



# THE BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES OF WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS



## Annual Report 2019

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# Index

<b>The Birds of Wimbledon and Putney Commons - Report</b>	<b>Page 1</b>
<b>Details of Birds Recorded on Wimbledon And Putney Commons in 2019</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>A Guide to Place Names used in this Report</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>Butterflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2019</b>	<b>Page 15</b>
<b>Moth News</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>Dragonflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2019</b>	<b>Page 18</b>

## **Welcome to the 2019 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bird Report**

As ever, a year of highs and lows with a Black-tailed Godwit on Rushmere probably providing the biggest surprise. Other good news included at least two pairs of breeding Swallows that fledged several youngsters at the Windmill complex, while Goldfinches and Pied Wagtails also appeared to have had good breeding seasons. The Firecrest population is still going from strength to strength while sightings of Bullfinch and Spotted Flycatcher were also very welcome along with the Dartford Warbler staying into January.

With regards to the Common's other warbler populations, as in recent years, it seemed Blackcaps had taken up residence wherever there was a suitable clump of bramble. However, Chiffchaffs didn't seem quite so numerous while Whitethroats also seemed to be somewhat reduced in numbers, particularly around the Plain where the bramble patches are usually one of their major strongholds.

Low numbers of Greenfinch and House Martin continue while the annual flocks of well over 200-300 juvenile Starlings that used to gather on the Plain in early summer have not been seen for a decade now. There were no records at all for either Skylark or Siskin this year which are almost certainly unwelcome firsts while Meadow Pipits and Redpolls were in low numbers too.

The total species count was for 85 (93 - 2018) which is one of the lower totals in recent years.

Clearly a huge amount of work is carried out by the rangers, volunteers and staff with a varied range of useful habitat being created. Nevertheless, the Commons can be oddly quiet sometimes in terms of birdlife and while the decrease in our biodiversity is a phenomenon that is happening across the country, the ever-increasing pressure on our open spaces, particularly in the larger urban areas, is not showing any signs of abating.

Anyway, please do keep your sightings coming in and hope to see many of you out and about on the Commons in 2020.

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 2019

*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.*

2 flying S over Fishpond Wood 2 Feb (SRS), 4 at Rushmere 23 May (PH), 20 flew SW over the Common at 7am on 7 Oct (SRS).

### **Mute Swan**

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

4 cygnets hatched on 17 May at Queensmere although quickly reduced to just 2 with one injured by a pike and the other sustaining injuries from an unknown cause. (PH/AP).

### **Egyptian Goose**

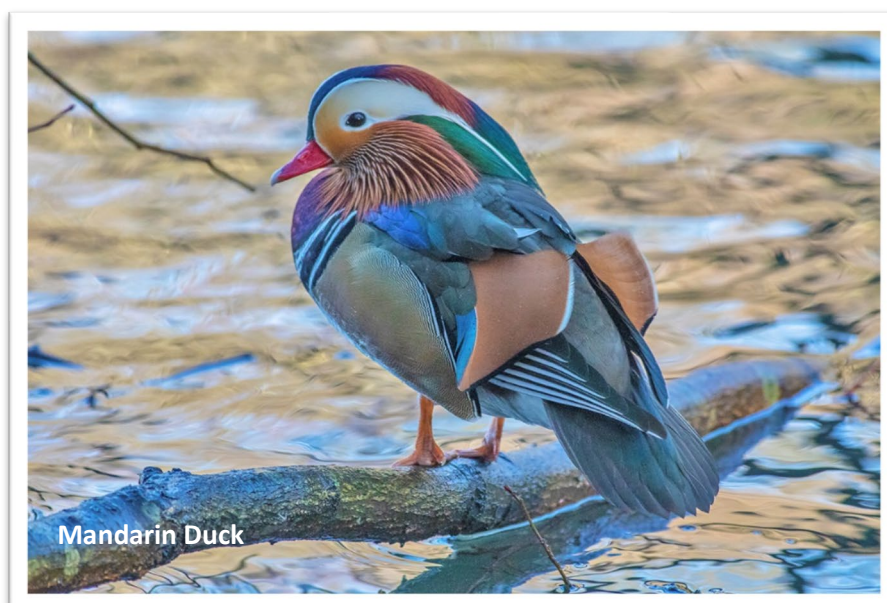
*Status: breeding resident –with goslings appearing very early in the year.*

A pair were at Queensmere 30 Apr (PH) and 5 May (Robin Touquet) and then with one youngster at Rushmere 23 May (PH).

### **Mandarin Duck**

*Status: feral breeding resident.*

Highest count was for 15 at Queensmere 12 Feb (AP). A female with four ducklings on Beverley Brook 30 May (PH /AP) was seen pulling down stems of pendulous sedge so the ducklings could eat the seeds as they floated on the water.



**Shoveler**

*Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.*

3 flew N (1m 2f) over the Mounds 13 Oct (AP et al) followed by 5 (2m 3f) at Kingsmere 12 Nov (AP) with a max of 8 (3m 5f) there 19 Dec (JR).

**Mallard**

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

**Eurasian Teal**

*Status: scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.*

20 at Ashlone Wharf 31 Jan (PH).

**Tufted Duck**

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

The highest count was for 27 at Queensmere 12 Feb (AP).

**Little Grebe**

*Status: has bred on Bluegate in previous years but an increasingly rare visitor*

1 briefly at Kingsmere 13 Oct (LEH).

**Grey Heron**

*Status: regular non-breeding visitor.*

**Little Egret**

*Status: increasingly observed in recent years.*

1 on Beverley Brook 6 Jun (Ros Taylor / PH), 1 at Kingsmere 23 Sep (Jan Wilczur) with 2 there on 24th (LEH).

**Cormorant**

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

10 at Kingsmere 16 Nov (Tim Straw).

**Sparrowhawk**

*Status: breeding resident.*

### **Red Kite**

*Status: increasingly observed flying over the Common in recent years.*

All records were for singles beginning with the Windmill 1 Mar (Mike Caldwell), KRR stone 1 Apr (JD), Ladies Mile 11 Apr (AP), Thatched Cottage 20 Apr (LEH), low over the Windmill 12 May (AP), the Plain 21 May (S.Riley) and RE memorial 25 May (JD). Oddly, no further records were received for the rest of the year.



### **Common Buzzard**

*Status: resident and very likely breeding – passage migrants also occur.*

Singles on 2 Feb (LEH), in trees on Inner Park Road Feb 12 (JR), at Fishponds Wood 16 Mar (Tim Straw), over Putney Heath 10 Apr (JD) and over Thatched Cottage 20 Apr (LEH). There were 4 soaring over Rushmere 1 May (AP), 1 over RE memorial 25 May (JD), 1 over the Plain 6 Jun (John Weir), 3 over the Plain 9 Jul (AP) and 4 over the golf course 29 Aug (Bella Covill), 3 at Putney Heath 8 Sep (LEH) and two regularly seen in the woods between Gravel Pit Cottage and Kingsmere in November and December (AEH). Very likely this species is now nesting on the Common.

### **Moorhen**

*Status: breeding resident.*

Two broods of 4 and 5 chicks at Queensmere 30 May (AP).

### **Coot**

*Status: breeding resident.*

5 chicks at Queensmere 30 May (AP).

### **Black-tailed Godwit**

*Status: very rare visitor*

A lady sent in two photos of a bird wading in the shallows at Rushmere at 11.30am on 5 Aug (Antoinette Urwick). On showing it to various observers, all agreed that it was indeed a Black Tailed Godwit – a remarkable record - there had been sightings of a single bird at Wetlands at the start of August so possibly the same bird but hopefully an encouraging sign of the conservation work that is being conducted for this species around the country.

**Woodcock**

*Status: increasingly irregular passage migrant and winter visitor.*

Just two records with singles flushed along Warren Farm Ride 4 Dec (Robert Aston) and Ladies Mile 14 Dec (LEH). Woodcock is probably one of the bird species that are most prone to disturbance on the Common, although the lack of any appreciable cold weather during the winter months will be another factor in a poor year.

**Jack Snipe**

*Status: passage migrant and winter visitor.*

1 flushed from the heather patch on the Plain 27 Mar (AP).

**Common Snipe**

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

2 flushed from the Plain 14 Mar (Paula Graystone) and 1 flushed along Ladies Mile 26 Dec (LEH). Considering how wet the autumn was, records were disappointing.

**Black-headed Gull**

*Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.*

150 feeding on the waterlogged Plain 20 Dec (AP).

**Common Gull**

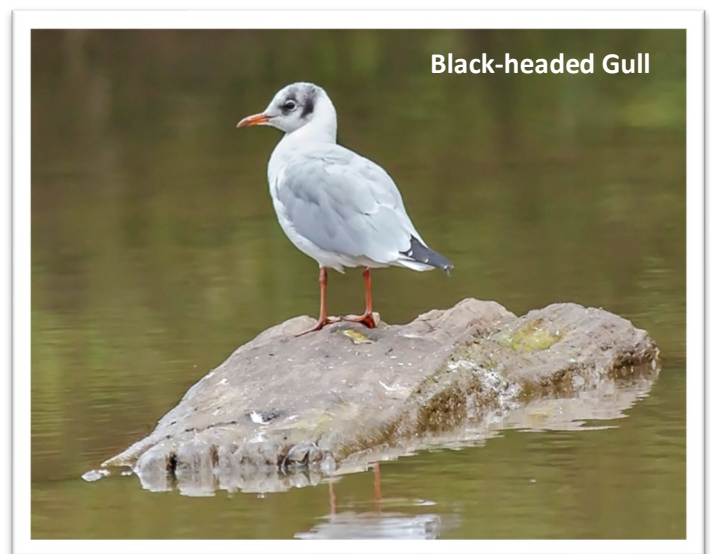
*Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.*

**Herring Gull**

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

**Lesser Black-headed Gull**

*Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.*

**Common Tern**

*Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

1 flying E near the Plain 23 Jun (AP) was the only record for the year.

**Feral Pigeon**

*Status: fairly common feral resident.*

**Stock Dove**

*Status: breeding resident*

A pair singing at Fishponds Wood 6 -10 Apr (SRS) with a good count of 16 feeding on the Plain 28 Aug (JR).

**Woodpigeon**

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

**Common Cuckoo**

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

Presumably the same bird was heard at Green Ride 8 May, Ravine Pond 9 May (Gilly/PH) and near the golf course/burning dump on 10 May (AEH, Mike Caldwell). A Cuckoo was also heard near the golf course 10 Jun (Andrew Head).

### **Tawny Owl**

*Status: breeding resident.*

### **Short-Eared Owl**

*Status: an occasional visitor in the autumn months*

1 appeared from the north and flew west over Windmill Ride North 17 Nov (JR).

### **Common Swift**

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

The first bird of the year was seen over the Windmill 28 Apr (LEH) while 40-50 were over the Plain 10 May (JR) and at least 80 feeding there 23 Jun (AP et al). 2 over Gravel Pit Cottage on 15 Aug (AEH) were the last of the season.

### **Kingfisher**

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

All sightings were from the Beverley Brook with 1 at the Tractor Bridge 11 Jan (per PH), 1 near REM playing fields 22 Jul (Susannah Camell per PH) with reports of 2 birds during July (PH) and 1 on 7 Aug (Kate Gibson).

### **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker**

*Status: resident but extremely elusive*

1 on 19 Jan (LEH) and 1 drumming 29 Jan (AEH).

### **Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Status: breeding resident.*

Drumming was first heard at Fishpond Wood 6 Feb (SRS) with 6 on 27 Feb (Hugh Nicholson).

### **Green Woodpecker**

*Status: breeding resident.*

### **Kestrel**

*Status: breeding resident.*

### **Hobby**

*Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

First of the year was a bird flying N over Putney Heath 26 Apr (AP) followed by singles at Ladies Mile 1 May (JD), Inner Park Ride 13 May (JR), over RE memorial 25 May (JD), low over heather patch 30 May (AP), on 7 Jun (H.Nicholson) and heading over Putney Vale Cem 16 Jun (JR). A nesting pair was found on Putney Heath in July (Jan Wilczur) after which one was seen hunting over Rushmere 13 Aug (AP) with two over Gravel Pit Cottage 24 and 27 Aug (LEH). The final record of the year was for 1 over the Mounds 30 Aug (AP).

### **Peregrine Falcon**

*Status: scarce visitor, usually flying over*

Singles flew over Thatched Cottage 13 Jan (LEH), Putney Heath 2 Feb (LEH), the Windmill 17 Mar (AP) and Putney Heath 28 Apr (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.*

**Coal Tit**

*Status: breeding resident.*

**Blue Tit**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Great Tit**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Barn Swallow**

*Status: passage migrant, but has started to breed again in recent years.*

The first of the year flew over Rushmere 5 Apr (LEH). A single at the Windmill 13 Apr (AP) and 2 at the Windmill car park 18 Apr (AP) may have been returning birds but the first seen back at the stable yard were 2 on 27 Apr with 1 seen visiting the barn by a Keeper on 30 Apr (per PH).

The resident pair were seen were picking up horsehair from the yard on 12 May for nest building while 5 flying around the Windmill on 22 Jun suggested successful fledging (Simon Lee).

However, on 12 Aug there were 2 pairs at the stable yard with nests of 2 and 4 youngsters. By the 15<sup>th</sup>, the nest of two had fledged and gone while one had fallen out of/left the other nest and had re-located in the nearby garden - the remaining three fledged on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Oddly on the 20<sup>th</sup> there were no Swallows to be seen anywhere at all in the vicinity of the Windmill, seemingly having deserted the Plain and all left for good. A late individual on 19 Oct over the Plain was last record of year (John Weir).

**House Martin**

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

A single bird with swifts on 10 May (JR) was the only spring record while 20 heading south over Rushmere 30 Aug (AP) with 4 over the Windmill 8 Oct (AP) were the only autumn records. Clearly the worrying decline for this species continues.

**Long-tailed Tit**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Willow Warbler**

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

Singles singing at the Mounds and Ladies Mile 11 Apr (AP) with another single between Inner Park Ride and Windmill Ride North 20 Apr (JR).

The first returning bird was at the Mounds 13 Aug (AP) with one singing weakly at Ladies Mile 20 Aug (AP).

### **Common Chiffchaff**

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

First heard on 20 Mar (LEH) with high counts of 10 on 25 Mar (Hugh Nicholson) and 8 on 5 Apr (LEH).

### **Blackcap**

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

First heard singing at the edge of Plain 20 Mar (LEH) – there was an impressive count of 22 on 19 Apr (LEH) while 5 singing at Beverley Meads 12 May (SRS) demonstrate the widespread abundance of this species and what looks to be yet another bumper year. One at the Mounds 13 Oct (LEH) was the last record for the year.

### **Garden Warbler**

*Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first bird of year was singing at Ladies Mile 26 Apr (AP) with birds also heard at the Mounds, Beverley Meads and Ladies Mile with 2 singing at Warren Farm 15 May (SRS).

### **Common Whitethroat**

*Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.*

The first birds of year were 4 at the Plain on 19 Apr (LEH) with a high count of 7 on 7 Jun (Hugh Nicholson) – in the breeding season it was seemingly absent from its usual stronghold of the large bramble patches around the Plain.

### **Dartford Warbler**

*Status: occasional winter visitor*

1 at Putney Heath 1 Jan (S.Woolfenden) and then seen again on the 19<sup>th</sup> (LEH) and 20<sup>th</sup> (Nick Croft).

### **Firecrest**

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

1 at Putney Vale 2 Jan (Peter Carlill) and 1 at Queensmere 7 Jan (JR). In the spring, there was an impressive record of a minimum of 9 singing birds that were discovered on Putney Heath (Jan Wilczur/Rupert Kaye). The dense stands of holly, ivy and yew here are clearly to their liking. The last record of the year was 1 at Paradise (N of REMPF war memorial) 4 Dec (Joanne Martin).



Firecrest, photo by  
Mike Young ARPS

**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.*

**Blackbird**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Fieldfare**

*Status: occasional passage migrant and winter visitor particularly in harsh weather.*  
1 at Putney Lower Common 1 Feb (PH) and 1 at Ladies Mile 19 Dec (JR).

**Redwing**

*Status: regular winter visitor and passage migrant.*

In the first winter period, a max of 25 were around Queensmere 3 Feb (AP), while one was singing at Beverley Meads on 21 Mar (SRS) with the last sighting of the winter being a single at Beverley Brook 18 Apr (per PH). First autumn sightings were 10 at the Mounds 13 Oct with 50+ in loose flocks moving SW (AP et al). A very quiet autumn / late winter with a high count of just 10 around the Plain on 15 Dec (AP).

**Song Thrush**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Mistle Thrush**

*Status: breeding resident.*

**Spotted Flycatcher**

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

2 birds were at the Mounds 22 Aug (JR) with a single there 30 Aug (AP), 1 on 1 Sep (Sarah Morrison) with another performing admirably on the dead tree at Ladies Mile for the bird walk on 15 Sep (AP et al). Clearly, London saw a good passage of flycatchers this autumn.



Spotted Flycatcher

**Robin**

*Status: abundant breeding resident.*

**Whinchat**

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

A pair on the Plain 19 Apr (LEH) was a very good spring record but just a single first winter bird on the uncut meadow 5 Sep (AP) meant a poor autumn showing.

**European Stonechat**

*Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.*

A male flycatching from the top of the dead tree east of Windmill Ride North 21 Feb (JR) along with a female on the Plain 27 Feb (Hugh Nicholson) and 28<sup>th</sup> (AP) showed promise of a good spring passage which then failed to materialise with no records at all in March or April.

First of the autumn were 2 on the Plain 15 Sep (AP) and 17<sup>th</sup> (JR), followed by 2 on 30 Sep (JR) and 3 on 2 Oct (JR). A single was east of Ladies Mile on 14 Oct (LEH), with a pair there on the 15<sup>th</sup> (JR). Another individual was at the Plain on the same day (JR) and presumably the same bird, likely to be an immature, was seen on several occasions up to the 27 Oct. (JR/LEH/AP). Hard to be certain of number of individuals involved but a decent autumn passage although it would still be great if one or a pair were to stay for the winter.

**Northern Wheatear**

*Status: regular passage migrant.*

Spring records included a female on the Plain 19 Apr (LEH) with a male on Inner Park Ride the same day (JR) and another female on the Plain 22 Apr (LEH). A male was on the Plain 1 May (AP) and a female briefly landed in the dead tree at Ladies Mile 12 May (AP et al).

A poor autumn with just three records with singles on 17 Aug (James Owen), at Rushmere 6 Sep (Kate Veale) and Putney Heath 10 Sep (LEH).

**House Sparrow**

*Status: increasingly scarce breeding resident – last pair at Windmill 2011*

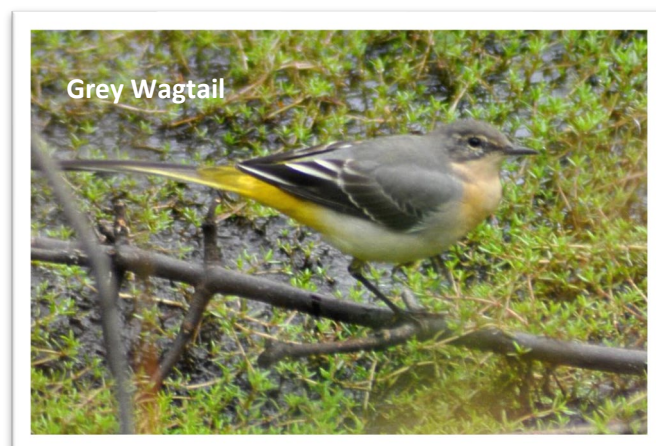
5 pairs counted at the Green near Rushmere 29 Mar (Derek Frampton), while there was an encouraging sighting of 20 feeding on the muddy bank of Rushmere 20 Aug (AP), possibly feeding on willow seeds.

**Dunnoek**

*Status: common breeding resident.*

**Grey Wagtail**

*Status: scarce breeding resident and passage migrant.* 3 were on the Beverley Brook 22 Feb (PH) while 4 juveniles at Queensmere 30 May (AP) was an encouraging sighting.



**Pied Wagtail**

*Status: breeding resident and winter visitor.*

A good count of 14 at Rushmere on 30 Aug (AP) with many juveniles, suggested a productive breeding season with at least two broods.

**Meadow Pipit**

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

There were occasional singles throughout the spring and autumn but with only a max of 6 on the Plain 17 Oct (JR), it was a very poor year.

**Chaffinch**

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

A steady passage of 100+ moving SW on 13 Oct (AP et al).

**Bullfinch**

*Status: a very scarce winter visitor*

A real rarity for the Common these days (22 territories in 1985) but a female was at the mounds 23 Oct (AP) and either the same or a second female there 16 Nov (Tim Straw).

**Greenfinch**

*Status: significantly declining breeding resident*

4 at Fishponds Wood 16 Mar (Tim Straw) and 2 at the REM war memorial 4 Apr (AP) – clearly a species still struggling.

**Lesser Redpoll**

*Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.*

6 at Thatched Cottage 20 Jan (LEH) and 2 there on 23 Jan (LEH).

2 flew N over the Windmill on 17 Mar (AP) with 2 W there 27 Mar (AP). Most unusually, there were no autumn records at all and no larger flocks for the entire year.

**Goldfinch**

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

A good record of c80 on the Mounds 13 Aug (AP) with the majority being juveniles. Easily double the normal flock size seen most years, it appears this species may have had a bumper breeding season.

**Reed Bunting**

*Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.*

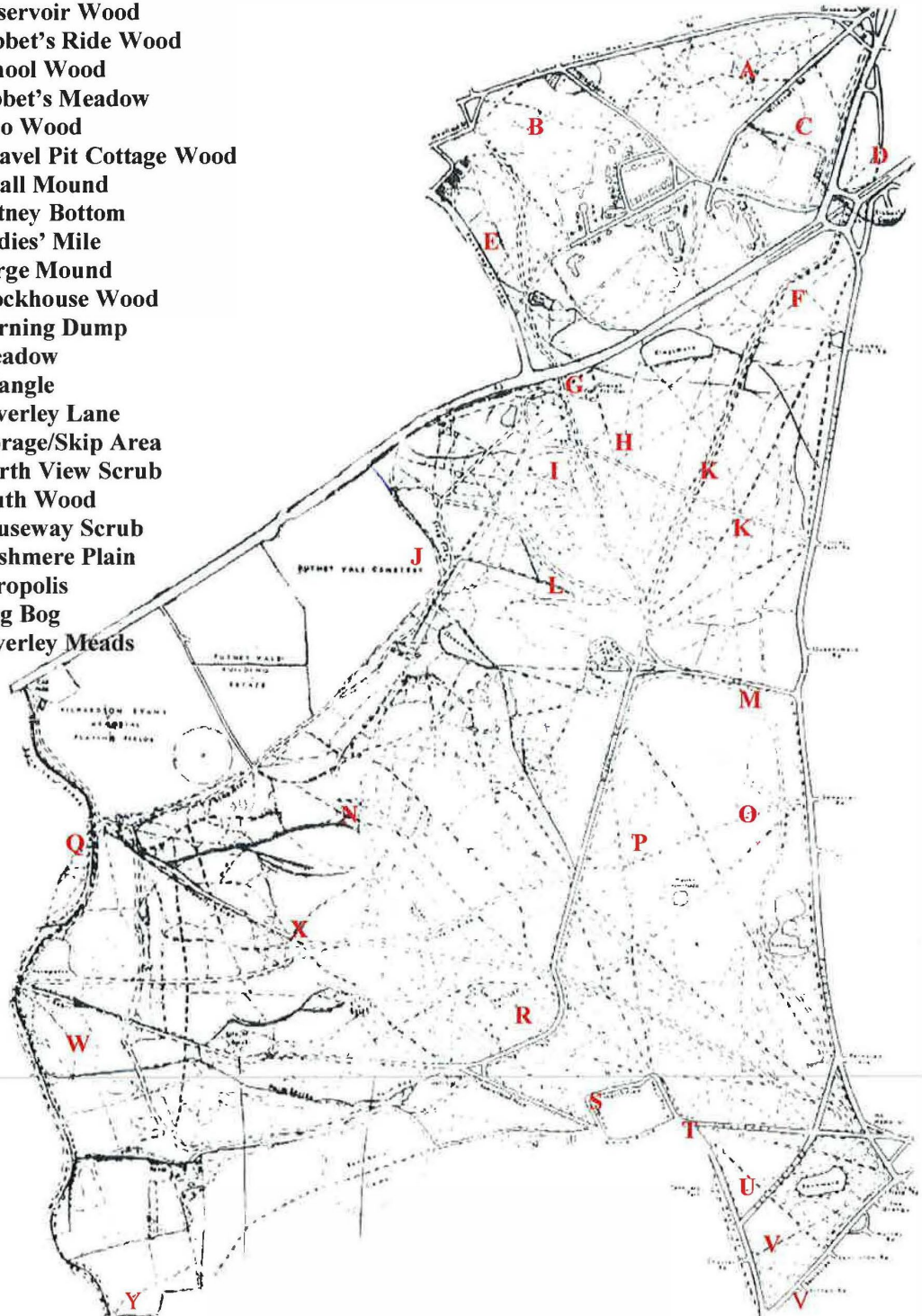
A female on Putney Heath 23 Jan (Hugh Nicholson), 1 there 12 Feb (JR) and 3 at Bluegate 24 Feb (JR).

In the spring, a pair was on the Plain 22 Apr (LEH). The male was spotted or heard singing from the same clump of birch trees at the heather patch by several observers during the remainder of April and into May and June. The pair were last seen on 27 Jun (JR/AP) with the male last seen on 2 Jul (JR) – during this whole time, there was no evidence of any breeding activity with no sightings of birds carrying any nesting material or food. Pressure and disturbance from people, dogs and the ever-attendant crows may all have been factors.

A male was back on the Plain 19 Sep (JR) with a female there on 4 Oct (AP). There were 3 at Inner Park Ride (1m 2f) 15 Oct (JR), 3 at Ladies Mile 4 Nov (JR), 4 there (1m 3f) 2 Dec (JR) and 3 again 28 Dec (JR).

**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
- Y** Beverley Meads



# Butterflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2018

2019 was a more typical year in terms of summer weather and the butterflies behaved accordingly.

The following are a few observations:

- 28 species are known to have been recorded on the Commons this year:

Small Skipper	White Admiral
Large Skipper	Red Admiral
Brimstone	Painted Lady
Large White	Small Tortoiseshell
Small White	Peacock
Green-Veined White	Comma
Orange Tip	Purple Emperor
Purple Hairstreak	Silver-Washed Fritillary
White-Letter Hairstreak	Marbled White
Green Hairstreak	Speckled Wood
Small Copper	Gatekeeper
Holly Blue	Meadow Brown
Common Blue	Ringlet
Brown Argus	Small Heath.

- Common Blue seemed very scarce this year, despite the ideal habitat on the Plain with its abundant birds-foot trefoil, the larval food plant for this species.

- Purple Emperors were again seen in low numbers but, being a treetop species, they are easily missed, despite their size.

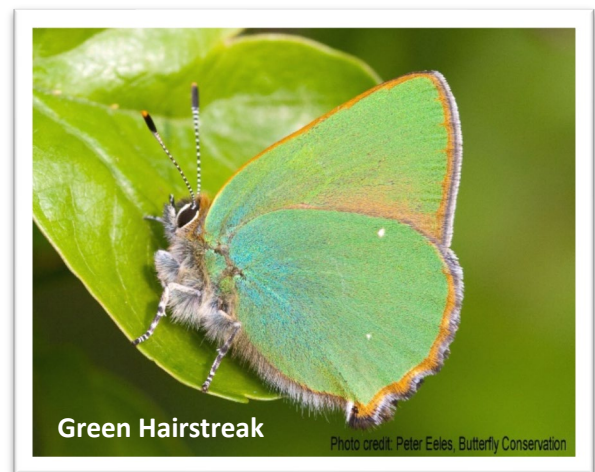
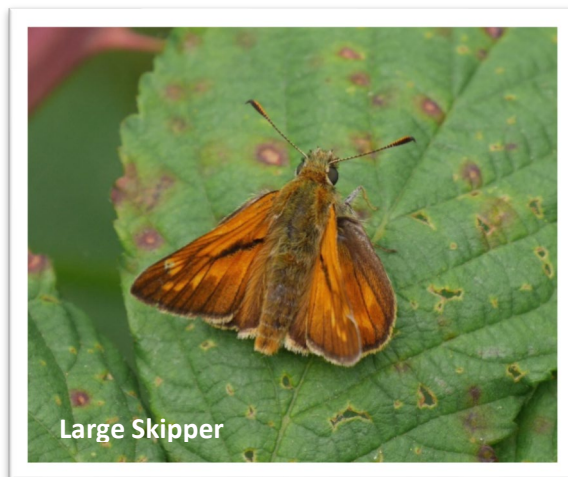
- White-letter Hairstreak was found at another new site on the Commons this year. This species is wholly reliant on elm and tends to be found (with perseverance) wherever there is elm even if there is only one tree or a small area of suckering. Surveys over the past 5 years show that they are present throughout most of SW London.

- More Green Hairstreaks were observed in their known core area this year compared to last and may well have increased their range on the Commons, in line with the overall picture of expansion in South West London. However, they are difficult to detect as they fly in small numbers so they may actually be more widespread than we think. Much of the Commons would appear to be suitable habitat and although



they are known to form small colonies in what looks like homogeneous habitat, it's really not always apparent why they like some areas over others.

- Brown Argus had a really good year. While only one was seen in 2018, in 2019 they were seen in a number of dispersed areas including 7 Post Pond as well as 3 on some of the acid grassland near the Village. This is a species that has been undergoing an expansion in range in the UK, thought to be because whereas historically the Brown Argus was largely confined to warm chalk areas and its larval plant of common rockrose, it now seems this butterfly is able to use cranesbills and storks-bills as well.



Simon Riley

**If you are interested in becoming involved with helping with the surveying for butterflies, please contact Simon at [simonriley41@virginmedia.com](mailto:simonriley41@virginmedia.com)**

## Moth News 2020

Although this Report does not usually cover moths, 2019 saw two new exciting and closely related moth species on Wimbledon and Putney Common that are worthy of note in this report.

### **Clifden Nonpareil/Blue Underwing**

*Status: new to site 2019.*

Slowly recolonising the south of the Britain since around 2007 after being considered extinct as a breeding species for nearly 50 years. First recorded at 'sugar', a single specimen close to Gravel Pit Cottage, Putney Heath, near stands of its foodplant aspen 27 August; subsequently recorded at light and 'sugar' on 5 September, 2 on 6 September, 17 September, 23 September, 24 September and 10 October (LEH/AEH).



### **Dark Crimson Underwing**

*Status: new to site 2019.*

Although resident in the New Forest, there was a major influx of this species into the British Isles during 2019 from Eastern Europe, which is the likely provenance of these individuals. First recorded at light, 2 individuals at Gravel Pit Cottage, Putney Heath on 22 August; subsequently recorded at light and 'sugar' – 2 on 23 August, 2 on 24 August, 3 on 25 August (1 near Bluegate), 2 on 26 August, 3 on 27 August and 4 September (LEH/AEH).



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## Report on the Damselflies and Dragonflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2019

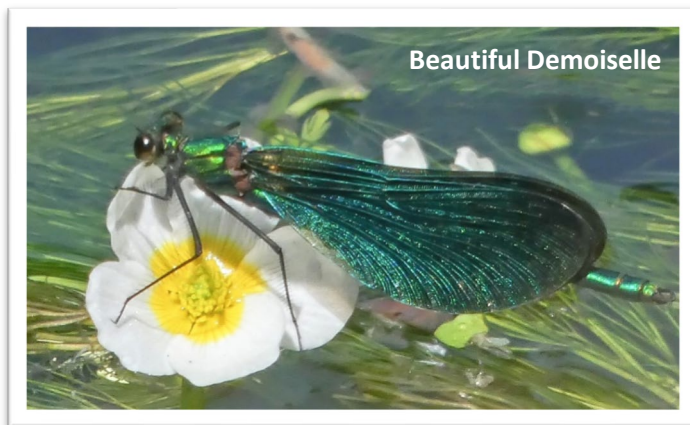
2019 was a relatively uneventful year for the Common's dragonflies compared to the previous year.

Unfortunately, a relatively dry 2018/2019 winter meant that some of the best ponds for seeing these species had either very low water levels (e.g. Hookhamslade) or had dried out completely (e.g. Bluegate), so both numbers and diversity of dragonflies and damselflies seemed down on 2018, although this may also be a function of recording effort as recorders generally will have gone elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the drying out of ponds is not necessarily catastrophic as there are a number of dragonfly and damselfly species that can exploit this scenario, Willow Emerald damselfly and Ruddy Darter being two. Additionally, the drying of ponds can help eliminate species that prey on dragonfly eggs and nymphs but now that the ponds are full again, we can anticipate a noticeable increase in activity in 2020.



On better fed ponds (e.g. Queensmere) things seemed more normal with abundant damselflies as well as good numbers of the larger hawk dragonflies including Emperors and Brown Hawkers in particular.



Most encouragingly, the Beverley Brook hosted at least 5 Beautiful Demoiselles in May (Bill Budd). These are the first records since 1994, when a presumed vagrant was recorded and suggests that this species is spreading into the area which is consistent with a similar range expansion that has been witnessed on the Wandle.

Last winter's work on the Beverley Brook, reinstating riffles and pools, as well as the removal of some bank side vegetation should also benefit our other demoiselle, the Banded Demoiselle, as the restoration work settles down.

We await 2020 with interest.



Simon Riley/Bill Budd

**If you are interested in becoming involved with helping with the surveying for our dragonflies and damselflies, please contact Simon at [simonriley41@virginmedia.com](mailto:simonriley41@virginmedia.com)**



Emerald Damselfly

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