

THE BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND
DRAGONFLIES OF
WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY
COMMONS



Annual Report 2018

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Welcome to the 2018 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bird Report

Highlights for the year included a Woodlark and flyover Arctic Skua (both records awaiting acceptance by LNHS) and just when we thought another winter would pass without one, a Dartford Warbler appeared in December for a short stay. A Redstart in the spring was a very rare sighting for the Commons while Spotted Flycatcher and Lesser Whitethroat were useful records of departing summer migrants.

Sightings of Firecrest still appear to be on the rise particularly in areas where there is a dense understorey of yew and stands of holly, while Red Kite is another visitor on the increase.

Populations of the main warblers appeared stable while it felt like Blackcaps had a bumper spring with birds singing from seemingly every corner of the Commons. However, the worrying decline in Willow Warblers continues unabated with fewer spring records each year – it does appear though that they prefer the younger birch thickets than mature stands so the regenerating birch at Ladies Mile may provide some more attractive habitat.

Certainly, while 93 species were recorded for the year, this does mask the fact that there is a noticeable decline in overall abundance. This is most apparent with species such as House Sparrow, Starling, Greenfinch and House Martin.

As ever there are likely to be a host of reasons but one recent study has shown that as frequency of use of forest trails and recreational paths increases, there is a corresponding decrease in bird species and numbers. The conclusion is that the perception that birds just adapt and habituate to disturbance is not true.

Nevertheless, with all the heathland, woodland and grassland work carried out over the last few years, there is clearly some quality habitat establishing on the Commons, but it just has to be hoped that disturbance does not negate its potential value and all the hard work that has gone into achieving it.

Anyway, please do keep the sightings coming in and hope to see many of you out and about on the Common in 2019.

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 AND PUTNEY COMMONS IN 2018

Observers' initials are shown against records where appropriate

Species

Mute Swan

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

The resident pair produced 5 cygnets this year but 2 were taken by pike. Several of the pike have since been removed from Queensmere (PH) so any cygnets may fare better next year.

Canada Goose

Status: breeding resident.

Greylag Goose

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

1 flying SW over Beverley Meads on 22 January (SRS) with 3 flying over the Plain 4 March (AP).

Egyptian Goose

Status: breeding resident

2 at Queensmere 13 February (LEH) and 2 at Rushmere 18 April (PH).

Mandarin Duck

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

15 at Queensmere 2 February (AP) with 17 there 4 March (TS).

Northern Shoveler

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

4 (2m 2f) at Kingsmere between 7 and 17 February (LEH / AP).

Mallard

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

Eurasian Teal

Status: scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

3 on Beverley Brook 23 January (PH) while a lone female was feeding in the shallows at Kingsmere 11 November (AP et al).

Tufted Duck

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

18 at Queensmere 13 February (AP) with 29 there 8 April (AP).





Grey Heron

Status: regular non-breeding visitor.

A juvenile at Beverley Brook 12 June (PH).

A juvenile most of December at Rushmere (LEH/AEH).

Little Egret

Status: scarce visitor, but increasingly observed in recent years.

1 was feeding in Beverley Brook 25 March (JD). Sightings of an individual at Kingsmere 23rd October (Neil Amor), flying over Mounds 27 October (AP) and again at Kingsmere 30 October (BC), 31 October (NC-H) and 3 November (AB) were presumed to be for the same bird.

Cormorant

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

Honey Buzzard

Status: rare passage migrant.

1 high over the Windmill 2pm 18 October (JW) was a good sighting.

Sparrowhawk

Status: breeding resident.

Red Kite

Status: increasingly observed over the Common in recent years.

1 over Fishponds Wood 4 March (TS), 1 low over Plain 18 April (AP), 2 over Ladies Mile and Windmill 22 April (AP), 1 over Thatched Cottage 24 April (LEH), 3 over Thatched Cottage 10 May (LEH), 1 over A3 15 July (Simon Osborn), 1 over Kingsmere 31 August (AP), 1 over Plain 30 September (JR), 1 over Ladies Mile 20 November (AP).

Common Buzzard

Status: regular migrant and visitor in recent years and possibly now resident.

1 calling at Putney Vale Cemetery 3 February (LEH), 1 on 17 February (PS), 1 at Beverley Meads 21 February (SRS).

In the spring, a possible pair were reported at Fishponds Wood (Chris Taplin) while 7 above Warren Farm Paddock 18 April (GG) and 4 flying over Putney Heath (3 heading NE) 15 May (RK) were presumed to be migrants.

Summer records included 1 at Putney Heath 1 August (RK) and 1 over the Plain 31 August (AP) while 6 seen on 13 September (SR) may also have been migrants.

Kestrel

Status: breeding resident.

2 juveniles 3 September (LEH).

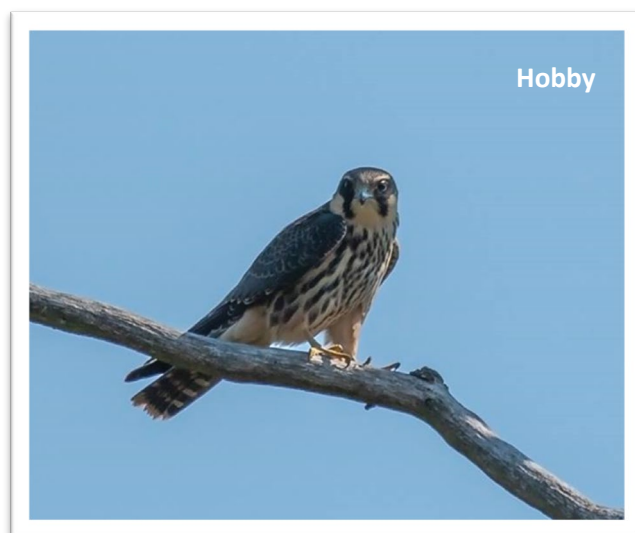
Hobby

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrivals of the year were 2 flying over the Windmill 29 April (LEH) followed by singles over Thatched Cottage 13 and 22 May (LEH). Further records included 1 chasing a Swallow over Windmill car park 3 June (JR), 1 at Ladies Mile 14 June (AP) and 2 on 28 June including a first summer bird hawking for insects over the Plain (JW).

2 were seen over the skip area 20 July (LEH), 1 at the Plain 30 July (JR), 1 at Putney Lower Common 8 August (JD) with singles seen on 16, 19 and 28 August at the Mounds (JR).

2 on 2 September at Putney Heath included a juvenile (LEH) while the last sighting of the year was for 1 over the Mounds 13 September (JR).



Peregrine Falcon

Status: scarce visitor, usually flying over

Single birds flew over Thatched Cottage 17 January, 24 April and 22 May (LEH).

Moorhen

Status: breeding resident.

A pair with four young at Scio Pond 19 May (NC-H) with one on a nest there on 8 August (JD).

Coot

Status: breeding resident.

Lapwing

Status: occasional passage migrant and winter visitor.

3 flew over Queensmere 27 February (MW) with 2 on the Plain 28 February attracted seemingly by the unfrozen pools of water on the horse rides – a further 25 flew over the Windmill heading SW, part of a widespread hard weather movement of this species across London (AP).

Woodcock

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

1 flushed from the new heather clearance at Ladies Mile on 8 February (PH), 1 at Ladies Mile 4 March (AP) and second or same at Jubilee Ride (LEH), 2 at Inner Windmill Road 21 March (RK), 1 at Thatched Cottage 25 March (LEH).

In the second winter period, 1 was flushed on the Plain 10 November (JW) with 1 flushed near Windmill Ride north ride 2 December (JR).

Common Snipe

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

Single birds were flushed from Ladies Mile 22 February (PH) and 28 February (AP) with a further 2 on the Plain 28 February (AP). 2 were on the Plain again 4 March (AEH/LEH) with 3 at Ladies Mile 11 March (LEH).

Illustrating a wet spring, records from the Plain included 1 on 13 April (TS), 2 on 25 April (LEH), 1 on 27 April (AP) and 1 on 1 May (LEH).

Arctic Skua

Status: rare passage migrant.

1 flying E 20 April (LEH) – presumably a bird heading overland and tracking the Thames before heading out to the North Sea.

Black-headed Gull

Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.

124 on Beverley playing fields on 10 March (SRS).

Common Gull

Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Great black-backed Gull

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

1 flew over RE playing fields 9 May (NC-H).

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

1 over the Plain 14 September (AP).

Herring Gull

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

Flock of c 40 S over Beverley Meads on 20 February (SRS).

Common Tern

Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

1 flying SW over the Plain carrying a fish 20 June (AP), 1 seen fishing at Queensmere 22 June (Bill Budd) and another over the Plain heading east June 24 (AP). Clearly on commuting duties between the Common's ponds and perhaps Richmond Park.

1 at Rushmere 20 July (LEH/AEH).

Feral Pigeon

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

Stock Dove

Status: breeding resident.

Song heard at Warren Farm on 13 and 19 January with one display-flying at Fishponds Wood on 26 January and a confirmed pair there 18 April (SRS).

7 on the Plain 31 August (AP).

Woodpigeon

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

Ring-necked Parakeet

Status: naturalized breeding resident.

Common Cuckoo

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

1 at Ladies Mile 8 April (AP et al) – appeared to call for most of the day.

Tawny Owl

Status: breeding resident.

1 heard at Beverley Meads 29 April (SRS).

In mid-May two adults with three youngsters were seen at an undisclosed site (PR).

A pair throughout the year near Thatched Cottage (LEH/AEH).

Little Owl

Status: irregular visitor, likely to come from Richmond Park

1 near Royal Wimbledon Golf Course adjacent to Warren Farm 19 October (GG).

Common Swift

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

First seen over Ladies Mile with 2, 5 May and up to 50 feeding over Ladies Mile 8 May presumably birds passing through (AP). 30 feeding over the Plain 8 June (AP) was a poor count although 110 at the Windmill 9 July (JW) was an improvement with one over the Mounds on 15 August being the last sighting for the year (AP).



Kingfisher

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

1 at Tractor Bridge 28 January (Bill Rowland) with 2 at Beverley Brook 5 April (JD).

Green Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

3 on Putney Lower Common 5 April (JD).

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Status: scarce visitor in recent years.

1 on feeder at Thatched Cottage 30 January (LEH) and 1 heard calling near there 19 February (LEH).

1 drumming Inner Windmill Road 5 March (LEH), 1 seen and possibly a second bird drumming 10 March (LEH), a female between Springwell and White Cottages (Colin Williams) and a male photographed by Catherine Beazley on 11 March, 1 drumming on 13 March (Nick Baker) 20th (LEH) and 21st (RK), a female seen 26th (Bill Haines).

Records then tailed off for this very elusive species with 1 NW of Ravine Pond 14 April (Stephen Bound) and 1 heard there 2 May (LEH).

Skylark

Status: passage migrant, very occasionally breeding.

1 on the Plain 4 March (AP/LEH)

1 heard on the Plain and then seen later 13 May (LEH, BC), singing again on 14th (BC) and 18th (LEH) with two seen 3 June (JR) and singing again June 6 (SR).

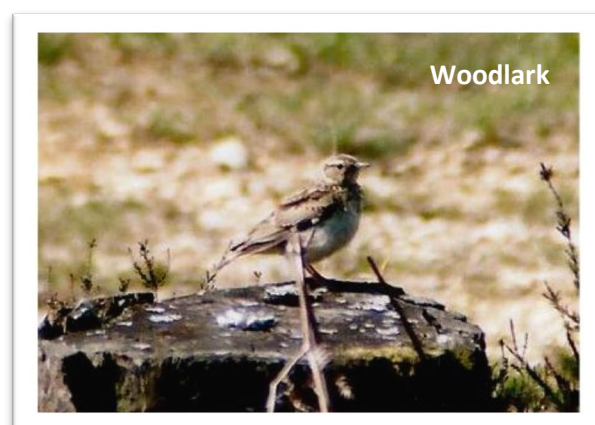
On June 8 at 8.00am, 1 bird rose up from the Plain and flew straight over the Windmill heading due west, with presumably the same bird returning half an hour later from over the Windmill and landing back on the Plain (AP) - can only presume it had visited Richmond Park which may well be the likely origin of these and previous breeding Skylarks on the Common.

2 were seen again on the Plain 30 July (JR) with autumn migrants including 1 W over Mounds 27 October (AP) and one that flew up from the heather patch on the Plain 11 November (AP et al).

Woodlark

Status: rare passage migrant

1 briefly heard near Ladies Mile on the evening of 12 June (Mark July). If accepted by LNHS, this would be a significant record. Woodlark was last recorded on the Common in 1981 while it appears that there were up to 3 pairs in the fifties. Richmond Park had one in 2008 with the next record in 1967!



Sand Martin

Status: scarce passage migrant.

1 over Thatched Cottage 9 May (LEH) and 1 heading NE over Putney Heath 15 May (RK).

Swallow

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

The Swallows returned to the Windmill on 19 April with 3 on 21st (PH). However, there was just one pair this year with the first youngster leaving the nest on 12 June (PH).

20 were at the Windmill 16 August (JR) while 3 on 14 September over the Mounds were the last record for the year (AP).

House Martin

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

No records were received for the spring or early summer continuing the worrying decline for this species.

30 were at the Windmill 16 August and part of mixed flock of 80 there with Swallows 28 August (JR).

80 headed SW over the Mounds in one hour 14 September (AP).

Tree Pipit

Status: scarce passage migrant, formerly bred but not since 1990.

1 flew over Ladies Mile calling 14 September (AP).

Meadow Pipit

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

2 on the Plain 2 February to 4 March with 3 there 11 April (AP / LEH) – hopes for a breeding pair were not to be and birds were not seen again until the first autumn sighting of a single on 7 September on the Plain (AP). Over 100 passed through in 45 minutes heading SW over the Plain September 22 (AP).

Grey Wagtail

Status: scarce breeding resident and passage migrant.

A female was seen feeding a youngster near the Memorial at the Richardson Evans Playing Fields 11 May with both adults and juvenile there on 16th (NC-H). 3 were at Queensmere 6 June (Hugh Nicholson).



Pied Wagtail

Status: breeding resident and winter visitor.

2 juveniles at Beverley playing fields 24 August (AP).

Wren

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Dunnock

Status: common breeding resident.

Robin

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Common Redstart

Status: passage migrant through London but rare on Common

A female was observed for half an hour near the Windmill on 14 April (JR) - while this species clearly migrates through London as evidenced by Richmond Park and Wetlands, it has seemingly never taken a liking to the Common. Dave Wills told me had never seen one himself in the entire time he had birded on the Common!

Whinchat

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

An early returning bird was on the Plain 3 August (PH) with 3 there 24 August (AP).

European Stonechat

Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

There were no records at all for the first winter period – the first autumn record was a female / juvenile 14 September (AP), with further singles 18 September (JR) and 27 September (AP), followed by 3 (2m 1f) September 30 (JR), 2 on 1 October (LEH), 3 (1m 2f) on 2 October (LEH) and 2 on October 7 (JR) providing a reasonable autumn passage.

Northern Wheatear

Status: regular passage migrant.

A poor year with 2 males on the Plain 18 April (AP) being the only spring record. A female on the Plain 19 and 20 August (JR) and a female / juvenile at Ladies Mile 31 August (AP) were the only autumn sightings.

Blackbird

Status: common breeding resident.

8 on the Mounds 17 October with some showing very dark bills akin to continental birds (AP).

Fieldfare

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

A steady stream of flocks of a dozen birds or more flying S 28 February (AP) with probably 250+ birds involved while 20 flying over Ladies Mile 4 March (AP) was the last sighting for the first winter period.

The first autumn record was for a single individual on October 13 flying over the Plain (JR) with another singleton over Ladies Mile 11 November and 9 on 2 December (LEH).

Song Thrush

Status: common breeding resident.

Redwing

Status: regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

21 at Beverley Meads on 15 February (SRS) with a big influx of birds at the end of February with 100+ at Queensmere 27 February (Mike Waller) and 80 at Clockhouse Wood 28 February (AP).

40 were at Beverley Meads on 23 March with 2 singing there 24 March (SRS).

4 over Ladies Mile 15 October were the first of the autumn (AP) with 30 at Beverley Meads on 28 December (SRS).

Mistle Thrush

Status: breeding resident.

9 on Beverley playing fields 12 July (SRS).

Blackcap

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

1 male at Bluegate 17 January (Mike Waller) – very likely a continental bird that had travelled west to winter in the UK. The first returning migrant was heard at Thatched Cottage 6 April (LEH) with a good count of 7 on 12 May at Beverley Meads (SRS). Overall, the impression was of high numbers of returning migrants for this species. The last record of the year was a female on 14 September at the Mounds (AP).



Garden Warbler

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first bird of year was at the Mounds 27 April (AP) with 1 at Fishponds Wood 29 April (DF). Birds were heard singing at the Mounds, Beverley Meads, the Triangle and Lades Mile (AP, LEH, SRS).

Lesser Whitethroat

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

1 singing at the Mounds 18 April (AP) – seemingly part of a large influx across London at the time while a smart male at the Mounds 31 August was a rare autumn record (AP).

Common Whitethroat

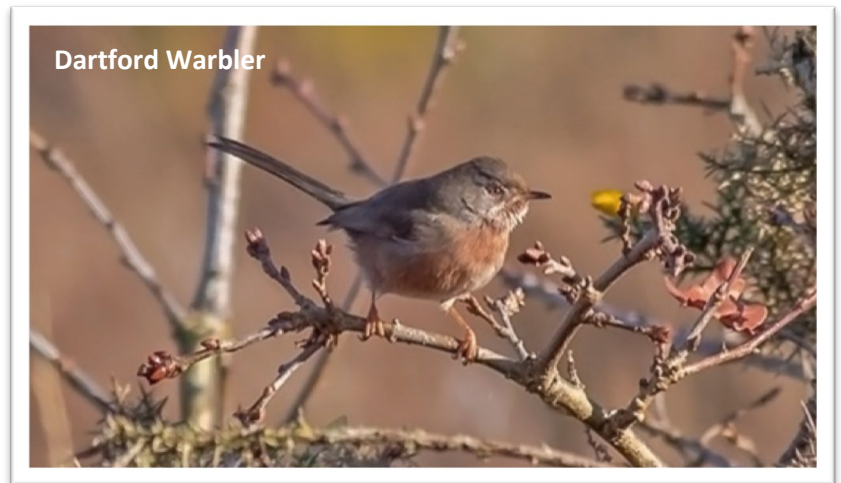
Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first arrivals were 3 on 22 April (AP et al) – one at the Mounds and two around the Plain. 1 singing at Beverley Meads on 19 June was the first this observer had seen there since 2012 (SRS).

Dartford Warbler

Status: occasional winter visitor

1 heard initially and then seen characteristically flitting over the gorse bushes at Ladies Mile 16 December (AP) – seen again on 22nd, heard on 23rd and photographed on 24th (LEH).



Common Chiffchaff

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

First heard on 25 March at Memorial Ride and Ladies Mile (LEH) with 5 singing April 6 (SR) and 6 in song April 8 (AP). The last record of the year was 1 with the tit flock at Ladies Mile 20 November (AP).

Willow Warbler

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

3 on Putney Heath 24 April (LEH) were presumably part of a small fall. With just a single bird singing at Ladies Mile 29 April (AP), there was no indication of any birds even attempting to set up a territory highlighting the continuing decline for this species. Willow Warblers are fond of younger, denser birch thickets so some new stands at Ladies Mile may provide some more attractive habitat.

The first returning bird was at the Plain 8 August (JR) followed by several records of birds moving through with a maximum of 3 on 31 August (AP).

Goldcrest

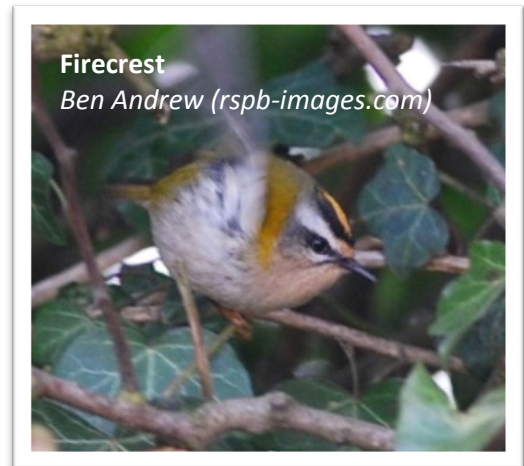
Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Firecrest

Status: once a winter visitor and passage migrant, increasing sightings suggest resident and possibly breeding.

1 on 9 January (Peter Carlill), 2 singing birds near Green Man Pub and Scio Pond 14 March (RK) and 2, presumed a pair at Queensmere 29 April (PR). 2 males were seen on 7 May (PR) while one bird was in full song on the edge of the Plain near Parkside 23 May (SR).

The only record for the autumn and second winter period was a bird at Queensmere 30 December (AP).

**Spotted Flycatcher**

Status: passage migrant, becoming much scarcer.

Single birds were seen around the Mounds area on 15, 24 and 31 August (AP). Although possibly the same bird each time, it was encouraging that there was enough habitat and food to sustain it rather than passing straight through in a day as is more usually the case.

Long-tailed Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Blue Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Great Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Coal Tit

Status: breeding resident.

Marsh Tit

Status: scarce visitor, the last positive evidence of breeding being in 1979.

1 near Kingsmere with Long Tails 5 January (AP).

Nuthatch

Status: breeding resident.

Treecreeper

Status: breeding resident.

Jay

Status: breeding resident.

Magpie

Status: breeding resident.



Jackdaw

Status: common resident and occasional breeder.

Carrion Crow

Status: breeding resident.

Rook

Status: rare visitor

2 over the Windmill on 13 March (Nick Baker).

Starling

Status: an increasingly scarce breeding resident.

House Sparrow

Status: increasingly scarce breeding resident – last pair at Windmill 2011
7 at Frensham Drive near Putney Vale Cemetery 15 March (NC-H).

Chaffinch

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Brambling

Status: scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

1 at Thatched Cottage 25 March (LEH) - generally seen in autumn so a spring record is quite unusual.

Greenfinch

Status: significantly declining breeding resident

Just three records highlighting the continuing decline of this species - 4 near the horse field 4 March (TS), 2 at Rushmere on 27 April (AP) while half a dozen were seen at the Causeway near the Fox & Grapes 29 April (TS).

Goldfinch

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

14 were at the Windmill on 13 February (AP).

At least 2 pairs frequented the pine trees around the Windmill complex during the spring and early summer and were presumed to have bred.

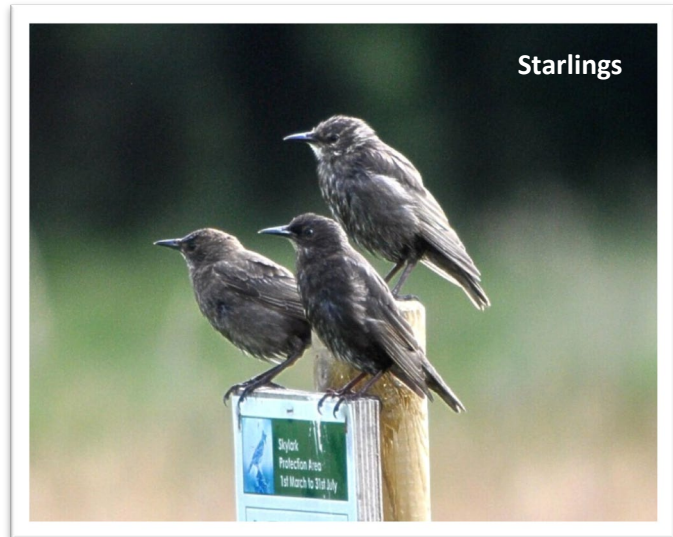
A flock of 11 juveniles were at the Mounds 15 August (AP) with a high count for the year of 32 there 22 September (AP).

Siskin

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

1 was heard singing at Queensmere 27 February (Mike Waller) with another singing near the golf clubhouse 4 March (TS).

c30 2 December (LEH) on Putney Heath

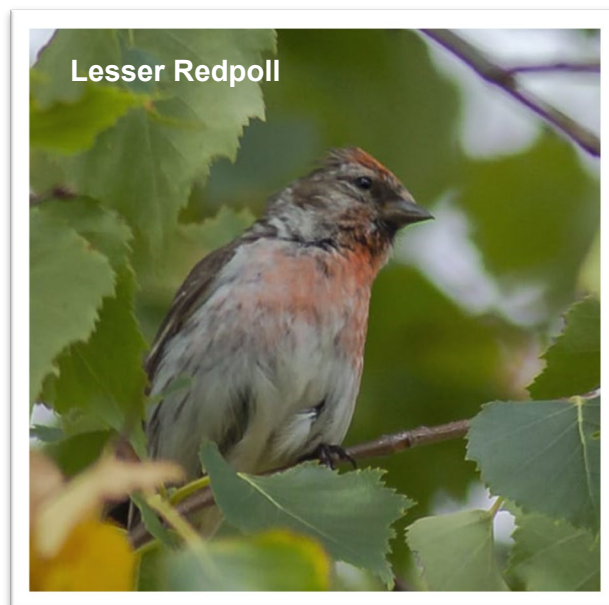


Lesser Redpoll

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the first winter period, 7 were at Warren Farm 30 January (SRS), 1 over Ladies Mile 2 February (AP), 6 there 9 February (LEH) and 10 at Hookhamslade 14 February (LEH). 14 were seen on 11 March (C.Beazley), with 7 at Windmill Rd on 14 March (LEH), 12 at Hookhamslade 27 March (LEH) and 2 flew over Ladies Mile 8 April (AP).

The first autumn sighting was for 20 flying over the Mounds 27 October (AP) while there were 20+ at Ladies Mile 11 November (AP) and 20 on 22 December (LEH).



Reed Bunting

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.

A male and female at Ladies Mile on 5 January (AP), 1 at Bluegate 20 January (LEH), 1 at Ladies Mile 7 February (LEH) and a male on the Plain 28 February (AP). 6 were at Bluegate 2 March (TS) and two there 19 March (LEH).

Although a male was on the Plain 13 May (AP) and 18 May (LEH), singing there 6 June (SR) and singing at edge of Plain's heather patch 24 June (AP), there was no evidence of any breeding.

3 were at Ladies Mile 17 October and 11 November (AP).

Escapes and Feral

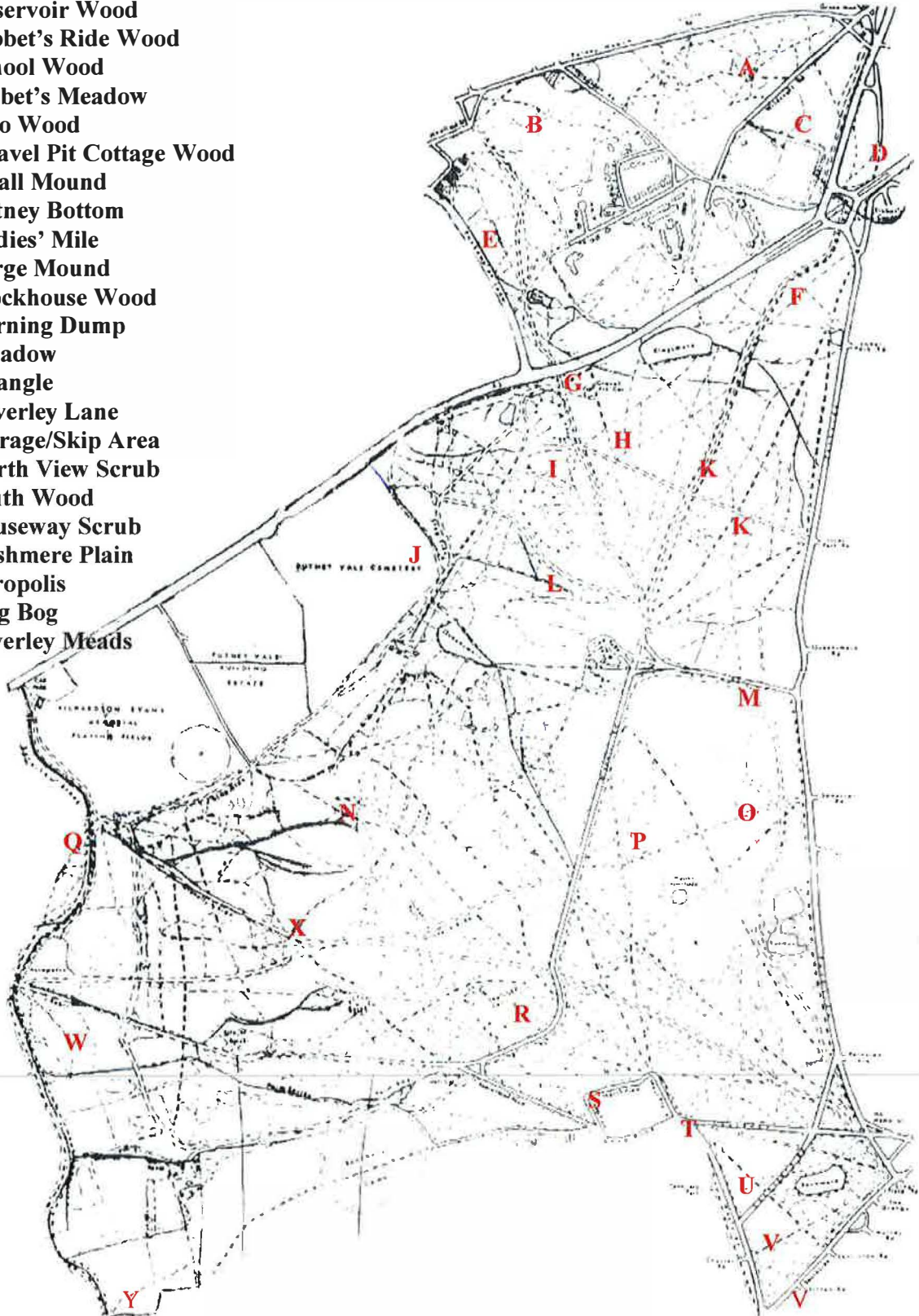
Black Swan

Status: rare visitor.

1 on Rushmere 21 March (Kate Collins-Cooke, PH) presumably one of the four that had been doing the rounds at Kensington Gardens, St James Park and Wimbledon Park Lake.

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

2018 will be particularly remembered for its hot and dry summer which resulted in higher absolute numbers of butterflies being recorded than in recent years.

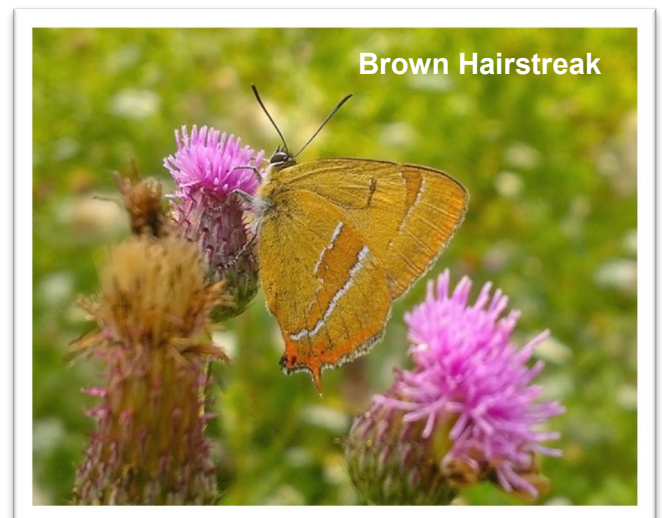
However, it will be interesting to see what effect this has on numbers when we start recording in 2019 as some larval food plants will have undoubtedly struggled in the drought, so depending on life cycles and timing of egg-laying, certain species may have suffered.

The hot weather also resulted in some more unusual records. There was one record in July of a stray Dark Green Fritillary nectaring on willow-herb near Hookhamslade Pond, a species only usually found on the chalk so it is possible this was a release.

In addition, the number of sightings of Purple Emperors was unusual, being seen on several occasions on Putney Heath from mid-June to mid-July. It is likely this butterfly breeds locally.

Excitingly, while eggs have been recorded before, we had our first record for an adult Brown Hairstreak. A UK BAP Priority species, it is locally distributed in southern Britain and mid-west Ireland and has undergone a substantial decline nationally due to hedgerow removal and annual flailing, which removes the eggs. The butterfly breeds on the young growth of Blackthorn and occasionally other Prunus species.

One species that was significantly impacted by the weather was Purple Hairstreak. This butterfly relies on oak trees, the adults rarely nectaring on flowers but preferring to feed on honeydew high up in the trees. While it is a common species on the Commons, because of its behaviour it is often not noticed. 2018 will be remembered for large numbers coming to the ponds for moisture although they often had dragonflies for company which could be seen plucking the butterflies out of the skies.



In total, 31 species of butterfly were recorded on Wimbledon Common and Putney Heath in 2018.

Small Skipper
Essex Skipper
Large Skipper
Brimstone
Large White
Small White
Green-veined White
Orange-tip
Green Hairstreak
Brown Hairstreak
Purple Hairstreak
White-letter Hairstreak
Small Copper
Brown Argus
Common Blue
Holly Blue
White Admiral
Purple Emperor
Red Admiral
Painted Lady
Small Tortoiseshell
Peacock
Comma
Dark Green Fritillary
Silver-washed Fritillary
Speckled Wood
Marbled White
Gatekeeper
Meadow Brown
Ringlet
Small Heath



If anyone would like to help with monitoring and recording the butterflies on the Commons, please contact me on the email address below.

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January 2019

2018 – Damselflies and Dragonflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

2018 was another record year for the number of Dragonfly species seen on the Commons with 21 recorded altogether. Most of the summer was even drier than 2017 with Bluegate Pond completely dry for much of the season, while all the other ponds were also quite low. Perhaps surprisingly, many species were still seen in good numbers, although breeding success may have been affected which could impact on future population levels. The Commons are fortunate to have a variety of ponds which does give some protection against climatic variation. As well as the 9 ponds, river and bog, interesting sightings were also made near the two wet areas adjacent to Ladies mile.

Damselflies

Banded Demoiselle – seen in good numbers on Beverley Brook, occasionally turning up elsewhere on the Commons

Willow Emerald Damselfly – were seen regularly in the later part of the season on at least five of the ponds, with particularly good numbers on Queensmere in 2018

*Willow Emerald Damselfly,
Hookhamslade Pond,
August 2018*



Emerald Damselfly – fairly common on Bluegate and Hookhamslade Ponds, in spite of the shortage of water.

*Emerald Damselfly,
Hookhamslade Pond,
July 2018*



Large Red Damselfly – fairly common on several of the ponds in early season

Azure Damselfly – common on several of the ponds

Common Blue Damselfly – abundant on Queensmere and common on several of the ponds



*Common Blue Damselfly
Queensmere
June 2018*

Blue-tailed Damselfly – recorded occasionally on several of the ponds, but possibly less frequently than might be expected.

Red-eyed Damselfly – regular in small numbers on Queensmere in 2018

Small Red-eyed Damselfly – fairly common on Queensmere in 2018

‘True’ Dragonflies

Hairy Dragonfly – recorded more in 2018 than the two previous years, with good sightings on Bluegate, Hookhamslade and Ravine ponds, as well as the wet areas near Ladies Mile.



*Hairy Dragonfly
Hookhamslade Pond
May 2018*

Migrant Hawker – quite commonly seen in late season on several of the ponds and often met with away from water

*Migrant Hawker
Bluegate Pond
September 2018*



Southern Hawker – regularly seen on several ponds and met with occasionally away from water

Brown Hawker – regularly seen on several ponds and met with occasionally away from water

Southern Migrant Hawker – a rare Dragonfly recorded for the first time on the Common in 2018, where it was seen intermittently on the dried-up Bluegate Pond over a period of two weeks. The nearest breeding population on the South Essex coast had a very successful year, which led to dispersal to a number of new locations.



*Southern Migrant Hawker
Bluegate Pond
July 2018 © Simon Riley*



*Southern Migrant Hawker
Bluegate Pond
July 2018*

Emperor Dragonfly – fairly common on Queensmere and regular on most other ponds and away from water

Four-spotted Chaser – regular on Bluegate Pond and Hookhamslade Pond, as well as being seen on the wet areas near Ladies Mile.

Broad-bodied Chaser – good numbers were seen on Farm Bog in 2018, and also recorded regularly on Bluegate, Hookhamslade and Ravine ponds, plus Rushmere.

*Female Broad-bodied
Chaser Farm Bog
June 2018*



Black-tailed Skimmer – regular on Bluegate Pond and occasionally recorded on Rushmere and the wet areas near Ladies Mile

Keeled Skimmer – one seen on Farm Bog in 2018; only the second record for the Common and the first since 1996.

*Keeled Skimmer, Farm Bog
July 2018 © Simon Riley*



Common Darter – seemed less common than usual in the very driest weather in midsummer 2018, but became common again once the first rain came, using every pool and puddle available to lay eggs.

Ruddy Darter – quite common around Bluegate Pond in the driest part of the summer, but less so once the rain came. Also regular at Hookhamslade and occasional at several other ponds



Mating Ruddy Darters, Bluegate Pond, August 2018

Bill Budd
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January 2019



Common Tern, Wimbledon Common