

*Regent's Park Bird Report*

*2008*



*by Tony Duckett*



**The female feeds the seven day old young**



**The youngsters are losing their down**



**The young are almost as big as their mum**



**A successful fledging**



**Chilling out in the sun**



**Watching the world go by**

### **Front cover and inside page.**

These photographs show the Wetland Pen Kestrels; these have bred here for the last four years. It shows that there is enough food within the park to sustain these birds and another pair on Primrose Hill. The birds at this location managed to successfully fledge and rear three young. A major problem that the young have to contend with is the harassment by members of the corvid family, in particular Carrion Crows.

## Review of the Year

**January:** A walk on New Years day produced three high flying Pintail, as well as our adult Yellow-legged Gull and four Siskins. Due to know really significant cold weather, duck numbers on the lake remained about average for this time of year. The less common species peaked at 3 Common Teal, 15 Gadwall, 8 Ruddy Duck, 14 Mandarin and 28 Red-crested Pochard. The pair of Little Owls could be seen on the warmer sunnier days. A female Kingfisher arrived towards the end of the month and was then regularly seen around the lake, though she preferred the Hanover Bridge end. A group of 6 Redwings took up home on Gloucester Green from 28<sup>th</sup>. A pair of Peregrine Falcons were seen on 29<sup>th</sup>, plus 20 fly over Siskins. **February:** A 1<sup>st</sup> winter Caspian Gull was on the lake at 8.20am. This was the parks first record of this species. 14 Song Thrushes began to proclaim their territories within the first few days. The first Grey Heron young could be heard calling 15<sup>th</sup>; one Lesser Redpoll and a Rook flew through 23<sup>rd</sup>. The first Little Grebes had returned by the end of the month. **March:** A Common Snipe was flushed from the Wetland Pen 4<sup>th</sup>; 25 Redwings landed briefly on the open spaces 9<sup>th</sup>; a female Stonechat spent four days in the Cricket Pen from the 11<sup>th</sup>. A male Reed Bunting sang from the reed bed at the old boathouse from 13<sup>th</sup>. On the 19<sup>th</sup> a flock of 300 Redwings flew east at 6.30am, 6 Chiffchaffs were present and a Snipe was flushed from long grass. A second male Reed Bunting arrived 25<sup>th</sup>, this time in the wetland pen. A male Ring Ouzel landed briefly in a hawthorn 26<sup>th</sup>, the day the first Mallard with ducklings were on the lake. A Rock Pipit circled the open spaces for ten minutes 30<sup>th</sup>. Further excitement was had later in the day when a fellow birder phoned to say that a large raptor was flying above my house. Rushing outside I looked up to see a splendid Black Kite, soaring higher and higher above my house, before drifting off eastwards. After making a few phone calls to the bird keepers in London Zoo, I was informed that a hole had appeared in the Snowden Aviary and this was the second one to escape. Over the course of the next few days the remaining two kites escaped. These birds caused a lot of excitement as they roamed around the country, with birders not knowing if they were genuine migrants or not. **April:** Willow Warbler and Blackcap arrived 2<sup>nd</sup>. Three Yellow Hammers, early House Martin and Swallow 3<sup>rd</sup>, as well as a Common Buzzard, which was to be the first bird of 21 seen during 2008. A female Brambling spent four days feeding in Nursery Lodge from the 2<sup>nd</sup>. A Hobby flew north 4<sup>th</sup>: our second Ring Ouzel flew east 16<sup>th</sup>, Sedge and Reed Warbler sang from reed beds 20<sup>th</sup>. The 22<sup>nd</sup> was a red letter day with Osprey, Hobby, 2 Common Buzzards, Whimbrel and Whinchat. Two Meally Redpolls fed in an Oak tree 23<sup>rd</sup>, the first genuine record the park. The local adult Peregrine chased off an immature male at 7.40am 25<sup>th</sup>. One local member of the public that had won the chance of a personal bird walk around the park was rewarded with fantastic views of an Osprey circling over Queen Mary's 25<sup>th</sup>. The first Northern Wheatears of the spring put in an appearance 27<sup>th</sup>, about a month later than was expected. **May** 2<sup>nd</sup> saw the first Common Sandpiper of the year flying over the lake, continuing the water bird theme a Common Tern flew east 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two birds that are in serious decline in the UK were seen on the 4<sup>th</sup>, a Turtle Dove flew north east, and a Wood Warbler was found late in the day by one diligent observer. The second Common Sandpiper was around for half an hour 10<sup>th</sup> and at mid-day a Red Kite drifted north. A male Firecrest was singing from inside the Leaf Yard Wood 11<sup>th</sup>. The male Little Owl appeared to be feeding young on 8<sup>th</sup>. **June.** The first of three Cuckoos were seen 9<sup>th</sup>, another was in the Wetland Pen 16<sup>th</sup> and then that or another was again in the Wetland Pen 23<sup>rd</sup>. If it was not the same bird it could be the fact that birds are being attracted by the increase in the number of Reed Warblers in the park. **July:** Signs of the invasion of Common Crossbills into the UK finally reached us when one flew north-west 14<sup>th</sup>, there were to be a further five sightings. Two Common Sandpipers and a Hobby were recorded later in the month. **August:** A Nuthatch was calling from the wildlife garden early morning on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Passage migrant numbers increased as the month progressed. Twelve Blackcaps arrived overnight 14<sup>th</sup>. One Lesser Whitethroat and over thirty Willow Warblers were in the park 17<sup>th</sup>. A Wood Warbler was in the Goose Pen 22<sup>nd</sup> and the first of seven Common Redstarts to be seen during the autumn turned up 23<sup>rd</sup>, the best park tally for many years. A pair of Little Grebes 26<sup>th</sup> finally managed to bring off one chick. **September:** The last Swift of the year flew west 4<sup>th</sup> and a Common Redstart turned in the grounds of the old golf school staying until the 7<sup>th</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> saw Merlin, Woodlark, Yellow Wagtail, 550 Swallows and the first Siskins of the autumn all fly through. A Pied Flycatcher spent three days in the grounds of the old golf school from 11<sup>th</sup> being joined by Wood Warbler 12<sup>th</sup> and briefly by a Tree Pipit 13<sup>th</sup>. A Firecrest was with the tit flock in the Longbridge Sanctuary 17<sup>th</sup>. What could have been the same Hobby was seen on four dates between 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. On 19<sup>th</sup> a Honey Buzzard flew north-east with a Common Buzzard at 4.30 pm, five minutes later a different Common Buzzard flew south-west. While these were being watched 2 Common Redstart were feeding in the Cricket Pen. Two Dunlin flew over 25<sup>th</sup> the day the first Fieldfare, Redwing and Song Thrushes on the move. A flock of 7 Crossbills flew through 27<sup>th</sup> and seven Bramblings 28<sup>th</sup>. **October:** The Firecrest was seen again in the same area 7<sup>th</sup>. Ring Ouzels were seen 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. A Little Egret flew east 13<sup>th</sup>. Two Water Pipits flew north-west 18<sup>th</sup> calling frequently. **November:** Woodcocks were seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> in two different areas. On the 11<sup>th</sup> the only large scale movement of the autumn saw 1400 Wood Pigeons fly north, they normally head south-west. On the 17<sup>th</sup> a Water Rail was in the rail ditch, the following day another was heard calling from across the lake. The second Little Egret of the year flew east on 26<sup>th</sup>. **December:** A female Firecrest was found feeding in the Avenue Gardens 3<sup>rd</sup>. A Little Owl found roosting in the Goose Pen, could have been one of this years youngsters. A Woodcock was flushed from by the Inner Circle 9<sup>th</sup>. A flock of fourteen Siskins were still feeding in and around the Cricket Pen, they had arrived in November. Two Water Rails were seen in the ditch 17<sup>th</sup> and were still present into January 2009

**Little Grebe**

Summer visitor. This year no birds over-wintered, but a pair were present from 7/3. Other birds began arriving from the end of February and by the 4/4 there were seven males and four females present. The problem these birds then had to contend with was the lack of suitable habitat for nest sites. Most of the pairs departed when they could not find a site. Two pairs remained, with one pair finally being seen with one chick 26/8. Two birds were still present at the years end.

**Great Crested Grebe**

Resident. With the lack of any significant cold weather, 3 bird remained throughout the winter period. Numbers peaked at ten birds 31/3, but only three pairs remained to try and breed. This they found difficult partly due to disturbance from rowing boats and the other reason was the amount of rain they had to deal with. Eventually two pairs managed to bring off some young, but overall a disappointing year.

**Cormorant**

Resident. Seen daily throughout the year. Large numbers are still roosting during the winter months, though no counts were taken. The trees are beginning to look the worse for wear, with all the droppings that are gradually accumulating on them.

**Heron**

Resident. Twenty nine pairs were on the nests in April. There were again more young reared in the summer months after all the first broods had left their nests.

**Little Egret**

Occasional visitor. There were two records of single birds flying high eastwards on 13/10 and 26/11.

**Mute Swan**

Resident. One pair was present on the lake but there was no attempt to nest. Other birds dropped in, but were quickly moved on by the resident pair.

**Greylag Goose**

Resident.

**Canada Goose**

Resident

**Egyptian Goose**

Regular visitor. One pair bred, but the young were all lost. This represents the first breeding record for the park, as well as Central London. Their numbers remained around the twenty mark. The bird often roosting on the boats on the lake, though there was often an early morning arrival of a small group from west of the park.

**Mandarin Duck**

Resident. Two pairs bred on the lake, with a third pair breeding alongside the canal. During December the number of birds roosting on Heron Island reached twenty-eight birds.

**Gadwall**

Resident. Again birds failed to breed. There was a peak count of fourteen on 17/12.

**Common Teal**

Winter visitor. Up to four birds were present during the first three months of the year. There was only one record at the end of the year on 17/12.

**Mallard**

Resident. Another bad year with only eight pairs breeding.

**Northern Pintail**

Winter visitor. Two drakes and a duck flew in from the north 1/1. With another drake present on 17/12,

**Northern Shoveler**

Winter visitor. Again no large numbers present, birds peaked at eleven 6/1 and nine 17/12.

**Red-Crested Pochard**

Resident. This species now has an increasing feral population in Central London. Again due to predation by foxes and a cold damp spring, the number of birds attempting to breed was restricted. However three pairs on the main lake reared small broods. Birds peaked at thirty-two 8/2 and thirty-six 17/12.

### **Greater Scaup**

Resident. A drake remains present at the Longbridge Sanctuary for its twelfth year.

### **Eurasian Pochard**

Resident. As with the all the waterfowl in the park breeding was restricted by the bad weather and predation by foxes. Eleven pairs bred and numbers peaked at one hundred and ninety 17/12

### **Tufted Duck**

Resident. The same problems affected this species with breeding pairs were down to eight pairs. There was a peak count of one hundred and seventy-five 17/12.

### **Ruddy Duck**

Resident. During the first two months of the year there were nine birds present. Two pairs summered but failed to breed. There were only four birds present 17/12.

### **Common Buzzard**

Annual. Last years record with twenty-one birds seen on thirteen dates was not quite matched. This year we had twenty birds on twelve dates. There was one record 25/2, but the spring passage lasted from 4/4 until 7/5. Autumn passage got underway 14/8 finishing with two birds 19/9. The maximum number seen was three birds 12/9. Overall the winds were not really favourable for drift migrants from the continent.

### **Honey Buzzard**

Rare migrant. Again birds were recorded on two dates. Once in spring 7/5, when one was caught up in a movement of Common Buzzards that had past over the Wetland Centre at Barnes, heading in our general direction. I had picked up two single C. Buzzards minutes before this bird drifted over. The other bird was also seen with a C. Buzzard on 19/9 heading norh-east.

### **Red Kite**

Passage migrant. There was only one confirmed sighting this year on 10/5. There was another report of two birds high over London Zoo 26/7, the observer thought they were Red Kites or were they the escaped Black Kites popping back for one last look.

### **Sparrowhawk**

Resident. Sightings were again very limited between late March and August. It is thought that the birds are not breeding within the parks boundaries at present, but very close by. Two juveniles were present from 15/8, causing havoc at the feeding stations. The 14/4 saw six birds pass over, these were thought to been birds on passage rather than our resident birds.

### **Merlin**

Occasional passage migrant. There was one record of a female heading south-east at 7.20am 8/9. It scared the living daylight out of a large group of Starlings that were feeding on the open spaces.

### **Eurasian Hobby**

Summer visitor and passage migrant. This year almost mirrored last year's totals. There were thirteen birds seen on twelve dates as opposed to sixteen on eleven dates. There were two records in spring, on 4/4 and 22/4. During the autumn birds were seen from 31/7 through to 10/10.

### **Kestrel**

Resident. Two pairs bred. The pair in the Wetland raised four young while the pair on Primrose Hill raised five. It goes to show that there is enough food locally for this small falcon. It had been suffering due to the decline of the House Sparrow.

### **Peregrine Falcon**

Occasional visitor. There were fourteen sightings over the park. These involved the birds that breed in the city and another pair that are sometimes seen just to the west of the park. An unusual event happened 25/4; Dave Johnson had been observing the birds in the city. He phoned me to say that the male from there was heading my way. I said it is here already and chasing another male, I had picked it up as it flew past the BT Tower. I then witnessed the speed and agility of this species, I thought I was about to witness a kill. Wrong it was like a dog fight between two jets as the adult Peregrine chased off an immature male just above my head. I could actually hear the sound of the rush of the air as they shot by.

### **Moorhen**

Resident. Numbers are difficult to assess because of their secretive behaviour.

### **Coot**

Resident. A large flock of up to one hundred and twenty can be seen on the lake by Clarence Bridge.

### **Water Rail**

Scarce Visitor. There had been no sightings of any rails in last years two areas, we were a little disappointed but the weather hadn't been to severe. I was amazed however when a member of the public whom I was speaking to in April said that he had been surprised to see a Water Rail rush out and take food beneath the viewing platform in the Long Bridge Sanctuary. It was apparently present from the end of February until the end of March. A wintering bird arrived in the Old Boathouse reed bed 17/11 and another bird was heard calling from the reed bed opposite a day later. A cold snap brought both birds together 17/12, where they remained in to the New Year.

### **Common Snipe**

Annual visitor or passage migrant. Two records; A bird was flushed from the side of the Wetland Scrape 4/3. The other bird was flushed from long grass by the golf and tennis school 19/3 before being seen later as it flew across the lake.

### **Woodcock**

Winter visitor. Only two records both towards the end of the year. One flew in to the American Ambassadors Residence 11/11 and the other flew towards Queen Mary's 9/12.

### **Common Sandpiper**

Passage migrant. A better showing this year. In spring four birds recorded on five dates between 2/5 and 28/5. During the autumn four birds were recorded on six dates between 26/7 and 21/8.

### **Black-Headed Gull**

Winter visitor. Birds were seen in every month of the year, the wintering birds had departed by 16/3.

### **Mediterranean Gull**

Scarce visitor. The bird that has been wintering in Hyde Park/Kensington Gardens popped in to see us 14/3.

### **Common Gull**

Winter visitor. Maximum numbers are usually recorded during February. An adult was present 18/8, but the first of our wintering birds was recorded on 16/10.

### **Great Black-Backed Gull**

Occasional visitor. After last years above average showing, we were back to normal this year. Birds were observed on five days this year, with a maximum of three 21/5. The species is probably over-looked as they tend to fly over at quite high altitudes. There was a very obvious 1<sup>st</sup> winter on a post on the lake 13/4.

### **Lesser Black-Backed Gull**

Summer visitor. Small numbers occur during the winter months.

### **Herring Gull**

Resident. Their numbers increase during the winter period, large flocks gather just after first light on the open spaces from late February until breeding commences on nearby buildings. Two pairs bred on Heron Island but failed to rear their young.

### **Yellow-Legged Gull**

Winter visitor. The number of sightings was well down this year with only an adult bird present off and on from 1/1 until 14/3. An adult bird was seen on two dates in June.

### **Common Tern**

Summer visitor. The first record of the year was two birds over the lake 4/5. Then these or another pair were then present from 24/5, they remained until 19/7. Although they were seen going through most aspects of courtship they failed to use our tern raft. They preferred to sit on the rowing boats or the posts in the lake. On the 8/7 a pair was seen feeding a recently fledged juvenile on the side of the lake, a first record for the park. The following day two pairs were feeding single juveniles, another juvenile was present the next day.

### **Feral Pigeon**

Resident. A few pairs breed under Clarence Bridge, numbers in the park have risen possibly due to the lack of food provided in Trafalgar Square

### **Stock Dove**

Resident. At least ten pairs were present, though the number of juvenile birds was very low. Birds are often seen at the feeding stations, though the garden by St Marks Bridge regularly gets up to 22 birds.

**Wood Pigeon**

Resident. This year there was no significant movement of birds heading south-west in the autumn. The largest movement was one thousand four hundred and fifty birds heading in a roughly northerly direction.

**Turtle Dove**

Scarce passage migrant. Two records of single birds, one in spring 4/5 and another in the autumn 25/9.

**Collared Dove**

Passage migrant. Birds were recorded on four dates during the spring and once in the autumn. Numbers of birds seen are almost the same as last year's total and a decline on the previous average yearly totals.

**Ring-Necked Parakeet**

Occasional visitor. Birds were seen throughout the year normally in ones and two's. A flock of six birds regularly visited the feeders in Nursery Lodge in January. Last year the birds looked as if they originated from Hampstead Heath. This year there seem to be more occasions when birds were seen to fly in from the west.

**Cuckoo**

Passage migrant. Three birds were seen this year, or was it the same bird returning. Birds were seen on 9/6, 16/6 and 23/6. The last two birds were seen in the wetland, almost in the same trees.

**Tawny Owl**

Resident. This year the pair in the Leaf Yard Wood were not proven to have bred. While there was good news from Queen Mary's where three young were raised. The first time that a pair had bred there, or in that vicinity for over thirty years.

**Little Owl**

Occasional visitor. Again the pair that bred last year, Central London's first breeding record managed to rear three young. Just to be awkward they used a new nest site, after we had put in place restriction on any event that might have disturbed them at last year's site.

**Common Swift**

Summer visitor. First sighting of the year was a bird on 26/4. As with most insectivorous birds they appear to have had another poor breeding season. The largest number seen above the lake was forty on 4/5. The last bird of the year was seen on 4/9.

**Kingfisher**

Scarce passage migrant. This year we never saw a male and female together. A female was present on and off from 28/1 through to 2/4. Our only spring male was seen on 21/4. Then we had sporadic sightings of a male from 4/6 until 13/10.

**Green Woodpecker**

Resident. Again two pairs bred. This species is becoming very tolerant to the presence of the public, often allowing you to approach quite closely.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker**

Resident. Six pairs bred. Birds regularly use the peanut holders at the feeding station.

**Skylark**

Passage migrant. A very disappointing year with three birds recorded on three dates. This was 13/10, when a bird was present on the ground for twenty minutes and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12/11.

**Sand Martin**

Passage migrant. A disappointing year with birds only recorded on three dates, twice in the spring 1<sup>st</sup> and 13/4. In the autumn four flew through on 12/9.

**Swallow**

Passage migrant. The first bird of the year flew north 4/4, overall numbers during the spring were fairly low. Autumn passage started with eight birds 1/9, peaking at five hundred and fifty 8/9. The last bird flew south 14/10.

**House Martin**

Summer visitor. The first bird of the year was seen on 4/4. For the first time in all my years in the park House Martins were seen coming down to collect mud from the pitches. No count was taken of the nearby colony on Park Road. During the autumn there were no large movements noticed, the largest being one hundred on 11/9. The last bird was recorded on 10/10.

**Tree Pipit**

Passage migrant. The only sighting of the spring was one north 24/4. Autumn passage saw twelve birds pass through on five dates, with a maximum of seven on 14/9. Two of the single birds were flushed, one from long grass on the open spaces, the other flew up and perched in a tree in the grounds of the old golf and tennis school.

**Meadow Pipit**

Passage migrant. Spring passage commenced on 26/3 and peaked at thirty-six on 4/4. The autumn passage began on 8/9 and peaked at fifty on 14/9.

**Water Pipit**

Scarce passage migrant. Two birds flew north-west at 9.20am, 18/10. The months March, April, October and November are the months when this species can be heard flying over.

**Rock Pipit**

Scarce passage migrant. Like the above, to see this species the same months apply. On 30/3 one appeared to circle the open spaces, it was seen and heard twice within four minutes.

**Pied Wagtail**

Resident. The first birds were not seen until 19/2 when two pairs were present. Again one pair bred close to the park. There were no large gatherings, though a flock of up to eleven birds were seen feeding on the open spaces from 18/7 until the end of the month.

**White Wagtail**

Annual passage migrant. One bird was on the open spaces 1/4.

**Grey Wagtail**

Resident. Birds were recorded in every month of the year, with two pairs breeding just outside the parks boundaries. Two juveniles were regularly found feeding in the waterfowl breeding boxes. Autumn passage was light with a maximum of four birds seen passing.

**Yellow Wagtail**

Passage migrant. Another disappointing year with twenty-two birds recorded on six dates. Singles were seen on two dates in spring, 20/4 and 27/4. During the autumn birds were recorded from 30/8 to 18/9, passage peaked with fourteen over on 14/9.

**Wren**

Resident. Widespread in areas that have a suitable habitat.

**Duncock**

Resident. Very secretive, easily overlooked once the males have stopped singing in spring.

**Robin**

Resident. Widespread in areas that have a suitable habitat.

**Northern Wheatear**

Passage migrant. Things were back to normal after last years dismal showing. Birds were recorded on five dates in spring, the first on 26/4. Birds of the Greenland race were seen on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28/4. The first bird of the autumn was seen 28/8, with birds recorded on a further six dates, the last two birds were present on 25/9.

**Whinchat**

Passage migrant. This year only recorded on two dates in the spring, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29/4. Hopefully if we can plant a few more gorse patches in the areas of rough grassland it might encourage other birds to stop off.

**Stonechat**

Uncommon passage migrant. The rarest of the three common UK chats, sightings have increased in recent years. This year a bird was present in the cricket pen for four days from 11/3.

**Blackbird**

Resident. Widespread, the numbers being boosted by the arrival of birds from the continent in late October, which stay until all the berries have been consumed.

**Mistle Thrush**

Resident. This year was like 2007 with no large gatherings of birds noted





Great crested Grebe pair, mating



Great crested Grebe feeding young



Mediterranean Gull, popped over from Kensington Gardens



Common Sandpiper on the bank in The Holme



**Common Tern feeding a juvenile**



**Common Tern female trying to swallow a Stickleback**



**Water Rail in the rail ditch**



**Grey Wagtail female in the Wetland Pen**



**Little Owl adult**



**Little Owl recently fledged owlet**



**Great spotted Woodpecker at nest hole**



**Skylark on the open spaces**



**Tree Pipit in the grounds of the old Golf and Tennis School**



**Common Redstart in the grounds of the old Golf and Tennis School**



**Spotted Flycatcher in the grounds of the old Golf and Tennis School**



**Pied Flycatcher Long Bridge Sanctuary**



**Blackcap male**



**Greater Whitethroats in grounds of old Golf and Tennis Shool**



**Common (Mealy) Redpoll, a first record for the park**



**Siskin, one of several that brightened up the end of the year**

### **Fieldfare**

Passage migrant. Recorded on more dates this year than last, though overall the numbers were low. Birds were recorded on four dates in the first quarter, the lack of a big freeze meant that there was know cold weather movements. The first bird of the autumn passed through 25/9. Again weather conditions throughout the autumn meant that there was again know large scale movements. Passage peaked with thirty-six birds west 12/11.

### **Song Thrush**

Resident. Numbers seem to stable; a possible problem now is the ever increasing number of shrubberies and borders that are mulched. These areas are devoid of worms and other invertebrates as they tend to become to dry. There were fourteen singing males ½. Fifty birds from the continent flew north-west 25/9.

### **Redwing**

Passage migrant and winter visitor. This year there were six birds wintered in the park. Twenty five landed briefly 9/3 and on the 19/3 three hundred birds flew east at 6.30am. The first birds of the autumn were ten 25/9, this year however there was no large scale movements noted.

### **Ring Ouzel**

Scarce passage migrant. A good year with single birds recorded on five dates; four in spring on 26/3, 16/4, 26/4 and 5/5. The only autumn record was a bird seen flying east 10/10.

### **Reed Warbler**

Summer visitor and passage migrant. The number of males holding territories increased to eight. Those that managed to attract a mate again suffered due to the wet weather. Birds that failed at their first attempt were more successful later on. The only migrant seen away from the lake, was one in the scrub by the leaf yard wood 5/9.

### **Sedge Warbler**

Passage migrant. A disappointing showing with only two birds recorded, both in spring on 20/4 and 5/5.

### **Lesser Whitethroat**

Passage migrant. Like last year only recorded once in spring 26/4. During the autumn birds were recorded from 17/8 through to 6/9. Numbers peaking at four 22/8.

### **Common Whitethroat**

Passage migrant. The first of the year was a male in the cricket pen on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28/4. Another male was present here 25/5. During the autumn birds were recorded between 16/8 and 29/9, peaking at two 6/9.

### **Blackcap**

Summer and winter visitor. A male was seen in London Zoo 25/2 as we conducted a bird survey. The first male to proclaim a territory arrived in the Leaf Yard Wood 15/3. A further nine males took up territories around the park. During the autumn numbers peaked at fourteen 8/9.

### **Garden Warbler**

Passage migrant. There were two sighting in spring 17/5 and 6/6. Autumn passage was disappointing after last years good showing. Birds were recorded on seven dates between 11/8 through to 12/9, with a maximum of three on 12<sup>th</sup> and 29/8.

### **Chiffchaff**

Summer visitor and passage migrant. The first birds of the year were four on 15/3, spring passage peaked at six on 19<sup>th</sup> and 29/3. One pair nested again in the leaf yard wood. Autumn passage got underway with six on 14/8, numbers peaking at twelve on several dates before the end of the month. The last bird of the year was seen on 16/10.

### **Willow Warbler**

Passage migrant. The first bird arrived on 2/4, with spring passage peaking at fifteen 16/4. The first southward moving bird arrived 27/7, autumn passage peaked at over twenty-five birds 22/8. The last birds of the year were four on 8/9.

### **Goldcrest**

Resident, passage migrant. The breeding numbers remain about the same, seven males held territories. Due to an easterly air flow in November, the park seemed to be full of birds with over thirty-two present 3/11.

### **Firecrest**

Passage migrant and winter visitor. Birds were recorded on three dates this year. A male sang and showed very well in the leaf yard wood 17/5. There were two sighting in the autumn, one with the tit flock in the Long Bridge Sanctuary 17/9 and the other a female feeding in the Avenue Gardens 3/12. These birds probably stayed longer than these dates suggest, but they were not really searched for.

**Spotted Flycatcher**

Passage migrant. Again there were no spring records. So the first birds of the year were four 22/8, passage peaked with seven 29/8. The last birds of the year were seen 13/9.

**Pied Flycatcher**

Passage migrant. It was good to see a slight improvement in the number of birds recorded this year. One was present from 11<sup>th</sup> to 13/9, another on 18/9 and finally a bird present for three days from 25/9.

**Long-Tailed Tit**

Resident. Due to the wet spring numbers may have suffered, as there was a definite lack of family parties observed in the early part of summer. The largest post breeding flock was one of sixty-five birds on 23/8.

**Coal Tit**

Resident. Six pairs breeding. The best locations in the park to see this, the smallest member of the tit family are the areas that have yew trees especially Queen Mary's. They are also seen at all of the parks feeding stations

**Blue Tit**

Resident. Birds make good use of the nest boxes that have been erected in the park.

**Great Tit**

Resident. The number of pairs are slightly less numbers than the above species.

**Jay**

Resident. This species is the most secretive member of the crow family. They have now grown accustomed to using the peanut feeders.

**Magpie**

Resident. This species has a pre-roost gathering site on Primrose Hill, before moving on to Hampstead Heath.

**Crow**

Resident. There is a flock of non-breeding birds that move between the side of the main lake and the open spaces. This flock tends to have a large number of weak looking individuals. Probably due to the fact that they rely largely on the public to feed them, rather than foraging for natural food stuffs.

**Rook**

Passage migrant. Single birds were recorded on two dates in spring, 23/2 and 13/4. Normally clear crisp sunny mornings are best for seeing this species.

**Jackdaw**

Passage migrant. Birds were recorded on eight occasions this year. These were on seven dates in the first half of the year from 17/3 through to 26/6, with a flock of seven over on 19/3. During the autumn the only record involved two birds on the 23/10.

**Starling**

Resident, passage migrant. The new areas of rough grassland surrounding the sports pitches continue to offer the birds food away from the aviaries in London Zoo. Autumn passage was very light with know large movements witnessed heading west.

**House Sparrow**

Resident in London Zoo. The only records away from London Zoo were again in the garden by St Marks Bridge. Male birds were recorded here on three occasions.

**Chaffinch**

Resident, passage migrant. This attractive finch can be seen at all the feeding stations in the park. The largest movement witnessed this autumn involved two-hundred and twenty birds heading west in small groups.

**Brambling**

Passage migrant, winter visitor. Birds were recorded on nine dates this year, of those six were before 23/4. The largest flock saw sixty birds heading north-east 31/3. The only bird to visit a feeder visited Nursery Lodge 2/4. The first seven birds of the autumn flew west 28/9, small numbers were recorded on two further dates.

### **Greenfinch**

Resident. Exact breeding numbers are not known, but there strong hold appears to be the more formal garden areas. There was almost a complete exodus of birds during the early part of the autumn, with hardly any visiting the feeding stations.

### **Goldfinch**

Resident. Three pairs bred, resulting in a small flock of eighteen birds being visiting various thistle patches in the summer. In the autumn over forty-four were present, some feeding in Alders in the Cricket Pen and others the feeding station in the Leaf Yard Wood.

### **Common Crossbill**

Rare passage migrant. This was one of those invasion years, where birds leave the continent in large numbers in search of food. As this species breeds very early in the year, birds started arriving in the UK in June. The first of what turned out to be a record number of sightings flew over 14/7. Birds were then recorded as follows;

three flew NE at 8.15am 24/7  
one flew N at 7.42am 1/9  
one flew N at 7.50am 11/9  
one flew NW at 6.50am 16/9  
seven flew NW at 10.40am 27/9

### **.Eurasian Siskin**

Passage migrant. A group of four birds 1/1 increased to eight birds on 26/1. A larger flock of twenty birds dropped in on 29/1 but didn't stay. The group of eight remained until 8/2 but declined to four on 23/2. The last birds of the spring flew east 3/4. Autumn passage commenced with six birds west 8/9. Birds were seen in small groups heading west during October, the largest bird day count being nineteen 23/10. On the 6/12 a small party arrived in the Alders in the Long Bridge area. They increased to fourteen 17/12 and remained into the New Year.

### **Lesser Redpoll**

Passage migrant. Singles were recorded on five dates in the first third of the year. Sightings in autumn were even lower, with two birds seen on 16<sup>th</sup> and 23/10. The last record of the year was a single bird wets 7/12.

### **Common/Meally Redpoll**

Scarce winter visitor. A pair were located by their distinctive call, feeding in Oak trees by Hanover Bridge 23/4. They had turned up just after the mornings rain had moved away. This is the first confirmed parks record.

### **Linnet**

Passage migrant. This had to be the worse year on record for this once common farmland species. Birds were recorded on three dates; three on 4/4, six on 21/4 and two 12/11.

### **Reed Bunting**

Summer visitor, scarce passage migrant. The male returned to the Old Boat House reed bed 13/3, then another male was in the Wetland 24/3. Unfortunately neither male managed to attract a mate, the last one departing 23/6. During the autumn a single bird flew over 14/9 and a male was in the Wetland 12/10.

### **Acknowledgement:**

Thanks to Dave Johnson for his sightings.



## Checklist

Little Grebe	1	Dunlin	75	Black Redstart	146
Great crested Grebe	2	Jack Snipe	76	Common Redstart	147
Slavonian Grebe	3	Common Snipe	77	Stonechat	148
Black-necked Grebe	4	Woodcock	78	Whinchat	149
Leach's Petrel	5	Bar-tailed Godwit	79	Northern Wheatear	150
Gannet	6			Black-eared Wheatear	151
Cormorant	7	Whimbrel	80	Ring Ouzel	152
Shag	8	Curlew	81	Blackbird	153
Little Egret	9	Redshank	82	Fieldfare	154
Bittern	10	Spotted Redshank	83	Mistle Thrush	155
Grey Heron	11	Greenshank	84	Redwing	156
Mute Swan	12	Green Sandpiper	85	Song Thrush	157
Whooper Swan	13	Wood Sandpiper	86	Grasshopper Warbler	158
Bewick Swan	14	Common Sandpiper	87	Sedge Warbler	158
White fronted Goose	15	Turnstone	88	Eurasian Reed Warbler	159
Pink footed Goose	16	Arctic Skua	89	Melodious Warbler	160
Grey lag Goose	17	Pomarine Skua	90	Lesser Whitethroat	161
Canada Goose	18	Long-tailed Skua	91	Greater Whitethroat	162
Brent Goose	19			Blackcap	163
Egyptian Goose	20	Mediterranean Gull	92	Garden Warbler	164
Common Shelduck	21	Black-headed Gull	93		
Mandarin Duck	22	Little Gull	94		
Mallard	23	Common Gull	95	Wood Warbler	165
Eurasian Wigeon	24	Herring Gull	96	Willow Warbler	166
Gadwall	25	Yellow Legged Gull	97		
Northern Pintail	26	Lesser Black-backed Gull	98	Chiffchaff	167
Northern Shoveler	27	Great Black-backed Gull	99	Goldcrest	168
Garganey	28	Iceland Gull	100	Firecrest	169
Common Teal	29	Glaucous Gull	101	Spotted Flycatcher	170
Red Crested Pochard	30			Pied Flycatcher	171
Common Pochard	31			Red-breasted Flycatcher	172
Tufted Duck	32	Kittiwake	102	Long-tailed Tit	173
Ring-necked Duck	33	Sandwich Tern	103	Blue Tit	174
Feruginous Duck	34	Common Tern	104	Great Tit	175
Lesser Scaup	35	Arctic Tern	105	Coal Tit	176
Greater Scaup	36	Little Tern	106	Marsh Tit	177
Common Scoter	37	Black Tern	107	Willow Tit	178
Long-tailed Duck	38	Guillemot	108	Nuthatch	179
Common Goldeneye	39	Feral Rock Dove	109	Treecreeper	180
Smew	40	Stock Dove	110	Golden Oriole	181
Red Breasted Merganser	41	Collared Dove	111	Red-backed Shrike	182
Goosander	42	Turtle Dove	112	Great Grey Shrike	183
Ruddy Duck	43	Wood Pigeon	113	Jay	184
Common Buzzard	44	Rose-ringed Parakeet	114	Magpie	185
Honey Buzzard	45	Cuckoo	115	Carrion Crow	186
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Black Kite	47	Tawny Owl	117	Jackdaw	188
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Marsh Harrier	49	Short-eared Owl	119	Starling	188
Montagu's Harrier	50	Long-eared Owl	120	Waxwing	189
Northern Goshawk	51	Swift	121	House Sparrow	190
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	52	Kingfisher	122	Tree Sparrow	191
Osprey	53	Wryneck	123	Brambling	192
Common Kestrel	54	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	124	Chaffinch	193
Merlin	55	Great Spotted Woodpecker	125	Greenfinch	194
Eurasian Hobby	56	Green Woodpecker	126	Goldfinch	195
Red Footed Falcon	57	Woodlark	127	Hawfinch	196
Peregrine Falcon	58	Eurasian Skylark	128	Bullfinch	197
		Barn Swallow	129	Common Crossbill	198
Grey Partridge	59	Red-rumped Swallow	130	Siskin	199
Common Pheasant	60	Sand Martin	131	Serim	200
Water Rail	61	House Martin	132	Lesser Redpoll	201
Corncrake	62	Tree Pipit	133	Meally Redpoll	202
Moorhen	63	Meadow Pipit	134	Linnet	203
Coot	64	Rock Pipit	135	Twite	204
Common Crane	65	Water Pipit	136	Reed Bunting	205
Oystercatcher	66	Richards Pipit	137	Corn Bunting	206
Stone Curlew	67			Yellow Hammer	207
Little Ringed Plover	68	Pied Wagtail	138	Snow Bunting	208
Ringed Plover	69	Grey Wagtail	139	Black-headed Bunting	209
Golden Plover	70	Yellow Wagtail	140		
Grey Plover	71	Wren	141		
Knot	72	Hedge Accentor	142		
Lapwing	73	Robin	143		
Ruff	74	Nightingale	144		

# Key Birding sites in Regent's Park

## Nos 1 The Wetland Pen



**The Wetland in July 2008**

This is the first in a series that will describe areas of the park and their benefits mainly to birds but also other species of fauna. This area that lies alongside the extreme north-east end of the lake was once a grazing pen for the parks ornamental geese and ducks. As the collection was reduced in size, a different use of the pen was needed. This final outcome came about when this arm of the lake was drained. The cost of taking the silt off site in a liquid state was too expensive. To bring down the cost, pits were dug and the silt was then deposited here, allowing it time to solidify. It can then be taken off site. This was also turning out to be a little too costly. I put the idea forward that this area should be converted into a miniature wetland. At first the idea was laughed at, when explained that this would allow us the chance to create a unique piece of habitat within the park. The banks around the lake offer few opportunities to develop areas in to marginal habitats. Those areas that we have been able to turn in to reeds beds have established themselves very well, but the cost of building them is very high. This way we could mould an area without having to bring in any materials from outside, thus bringing down the costs. It was dug and shaped in September 2003 and planted the following summer with plants sourced mainly from the margins and surrounding flood plains of a gravel pit in Bedfordshire. It was thought that the clay from the immediate area would be suitable and hold water. Partly due to the very shallow nature of the area evaporation was to become a problem. We combated this by pumping water from the lake, as and when it was needed. Water was still seeping away and after some investigations, an area of the scrape was found to have a large amount of gravel embedded in it. This was probably from an old surface drain that used to run through the site. This would never be easily remedied without doing a lot of damage to what had and was developing into a superb habitat, unlike anywhere else Central London.



This picture shows the wetland in the early summer of 2004. As you can see the vegetation was mainly rushes and tough carex grasses, these had been transferred. We had left it for the first year to see how it would develop.

As the vegetation began to establish, so more species of wildlife were attracted to the site. The area around the scrape was allowed to develop in to rough grassland, a habitat that at the time that was very limited within the park. We erected a Kestrel box in one of the Lombardi Poplars, this was used by a pair two years later. This species had stopped breeding in the park in the early 1990's. The mixture of grasses and several species of thistle and other plants attracted seed eating birds, in particular Goldfinches. A small flock turned up one summer, with birds remaining to breed in the park, again after an absence of many years. This like any of the parks enclosed areas that have no public access, except for those on guided walks are magnets for birds that need to feed or breed, without being disturbed by people and dogs. Scarce migrating birds such as Green Sandpiper, Jack Snipe, Whinchat and Common Redstart have been recorded here. Winter visitors such as Common Snipe, Woodcock and Kingfisher have also been flushed from the waters edge.



The marginal areas of reeds and long grasses have resulted in Reed Warbler nesting here as well as the first record of breeding Reed Bunting in the park.

Flushing unusual visiting birds was and is frustrating, as viewing the area from a distance only offers limited viewing. We had planted a native hedge on the outside of the surrounding fence and the topography of the ground all made observing the scrape difficult. I kept an area of the hedge cut, and any tall vegetation that obscured the southern waters edge. This gave reasonable views of a fairly large section of the scrape and the Kingfisher (now an annual visitor) that is sometimes seen perched on one of the branches strategically placed for this purpose. The only other point that enables you a chance to see in to the pen is from the gate at the north east end.



**Reed Bunting male**



**Reed Bunting chicks in nest 2007**



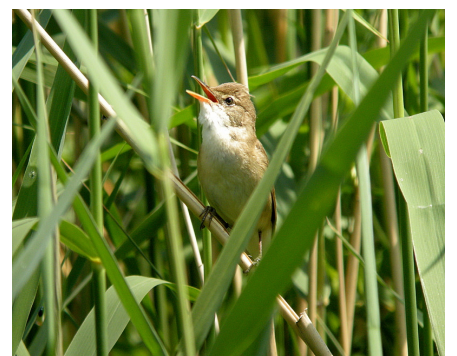
**Kingfisher**



**Green Woodpecker**



**Whinchat**



**Reed Warbler**

**The above photos show some of the birds that have been seen at the site**

As I mentioned before a leak and evaporation were problems that we had to address if we wanted the site to remain a wetland. With the help of Westminster Council we were able to acquire funding for a several reed bed projects in the park, of which an extension to the wetland was one. Extending this site would allow us to have a greater depth of water to one third of the site and allow the other to dry out slightly, when we wanted to attract different species of wading birds. The new arm of the site was created using puddle clay; the spoil from the hole dug was deposited over the rough grassland bordering the scrape. It was then levelled as best it could and once dry a light scattering of clay tolerant flowers and grasses were sewn. Two artificial Kingfisher banks were built with the hope that one day one might be used.



**Construction starts on the extension**



**Artificial Kingfisher nest site**



**View of the site taken from a cherry picker (hoist)**

Though the site has re-established itself, there are still elements that need looking in to. We hope to plant a few shrubs that would provide nesting opportunities for birds as well as food for them as well as insects. The site from early spring through to the autumn holds good numbers of butterflies, moths, dragonflies and damselflies. Fish have managed to get in to the water, may be not the best thing to happen in some peoples eyes. As attracting the Kingfisher to the site was one of my main aims, having a supply of food here has helped to prolong the stay of those that have visited in recent years. I have seen them eating caddice fly larvae and even a Smooth Newt, a species that spawned here in 2007. There is know other area of the park that has such a great diversity of wildlife species.





**Orange-tip Butterfly**



**Fox**



**Common Blue Butterfly**



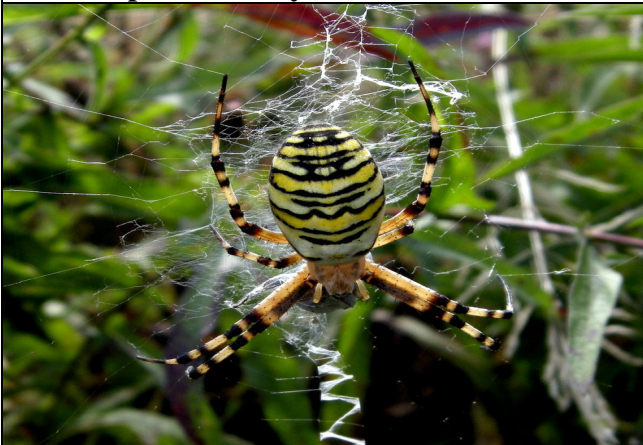
**Black-tailed Skimmer**



**Gatekeeper Butterfly**



**Common Darter**



**Wasp Spider**



**Roesel's Bush-cricket**

**Other species of wildlife that were seen during 2008**



