



Female Common Redstart (Dean Eades)

August 2011 Sightings at Wormwood Scrubs

August was a hot month, maybe not in temperature but certainly in The Scrubs birdlife. As ever records were broken and new bars set – our beloved patch continues to excite and thrill us. Record numbers of **Sand Martins** used our airspace plus larger than average numbers of scarcer migrants like **Spotted Flycatchers, Common Redstarts, Garden** and **Reed Warblers** were recorded. Plus, our first ever **Coal Tit** graced the area in the company of its fellow congeners. Fantastic stuff. Great birding months at The Scrubs always serve to energize and focus The Scrubbers into finding even more avian jewels.

Other points of interest included five young **Common Lizards** in Chats Paddock on the 12th and a **Common Buzzard** flew over Little Wormwood Scrubs heading for the 'Big' Scrubs on the 24th.

We just need 10 more species to hit our first ever 100 for the year. They're out there somewhere!

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Cormorant

Two birds headed west on the 25th and were the first to be noticed during the month. Are these birds being overlooked or is there a genuine decrease in their numbers?

Mute Swan

A male circuted the grassland at a very low altitude on the 31st.

Canada Goose

The biggest counts were the 21 that flew over low in three flocks on the 14th and the 22 that flew in from the canal on the 25th.

Sparrowhawk

As ever, birds were seen on an almost daily basis. Interesting insights to their private lives were noted during the month including a female that was watched unsuccessfully attacking a Meadow Pipit on the grassland on the 3rd. A male was also seen on regular occasions.

Kestrel

An immature was noticed quite frequently during the month as it sat on a Hawthorn in the grassland. A female was also regularly seen around the same area too. The peak count was three seen hunting over the grassland on the 10th.

Hobby

Unlike last year's bountiful sightings of this gorgeous falcon, this year has been a bit of a washout. So the bird seen heading north on the 12th was a welcomed addition to The Scrubs avian scene.

Black-headed Gull

Small numbers continued to trickle through with 50 on the 3rd.

Herring Gull

At least 20 were counted on the 23rd.

Lesser Black-back

Small numbers were noted heading over during the month. We rarely break double figures at any point in the year.

Stock Dove

Around three were seen on three separate dates during August. Birds were very patchily seen thereafter. The peak count was nine on the 25th.

Wood Pigeon

A common resident, around 50 were counted on the 23rd.

Collared Dove

The odd one or two were seen throughout the month. This species is yet to establish a foothold at The Scrubs.

Swift

A singleton high overhead on the 3rd opened our account of sightings for the month. Drips and drabs were noticed for the remainder of August with the peak being six on the 5th. Four on the 18th became the last birds of the summer. Will now have to wait until the end of April 2012 to see this aerial beauty again.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

The usual high numbers noisily left the roost every morning as per usual. Around 800 were seen leaving in on the 3rd with a further 200 seen clinging to the outside wall of the school on Braybrook Street chewing at the mortar.

Green Woodpecker

Up to a couple of birds may have been present throughout the month.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

There was a marked increase in the number of times that we saw one or two birds this month. On the 12th four birds were recorded and was the peak count for August.

Sand Martin

An unprecedented 60 plus birds passed over north in a single wavering flock on the 23rd. It was our largest single count ever of this uncommon migrant.

Swallow

Our first autumn migrant passed through over the grassland on the 14th. A further 14 or so migrated over The Scrubs during the remainder of the month.

Meadow Pipit

The usual August dearth occurred as expected with a minimum of five birds seen on the 3rd and the 8th.

Tree Pipit

A single bird was heard calling on the 23rd and was subsequently flushed from the grassland from where it proceeded to head off north. It was our only record for the autumn thus far. Last year we recorded a singleton in the grassland on 30th August and two birds into September.

Yellow Wagtail

We had a total of 12 birds passing through The Scrubs during August that was kicked off by the two juveniles seen on the 18th - our first returning autumn birds. Two more separate birds headed over calling on the 24th whilst another went west later that day. Three more birds headed through on the 27th with four making the same voyage the following morning.

It is sad to think that this nationally once common bird was a relatively common breeder in certain parts of the capital that contained the rough pasture it desired. Even more incredible is the thought that they used to breed at The Scrubs during the Second World War.

Pied Wagtail

Birds were seen on a regular basis during the month and local breeding was suspected. Over several dates we watched a male gathering food items from the mown grass between Chats Paddock and Central Copse and taking the food to a nest probably situated in the now defunct Channel Tunnel depot.

Furthermore, at least five juveniles were seen in the stadium car park on the 27th and the following day we had a big count of 17 in the car park with only four seeming to be adults.

Wren

This, the most common bird in the UK, was barely reported during August. Probably due to them being a secretive during the nesting season and the lack of reports from observers.

Robin

This common songster was barely reported this month.

Dunnock

This little was known about this common bird's numbers this month.

Common Redstart

It has been the best year for finding this beautiful double migrant since 2006 with as many as eight individuals found. Autumn is usually far quieter and we are not normally ensured visitations. Well, this autumn was the exception that started with our earliest autumn record in the shape of a first winter male in the grassland near the mythical 'Magic Bush' on the 14th - our previous earliest appeared on the 16th August 2006. An additional male was discovered in the grassland on the 24th.

Northern Wheatear

Our first returning autumn migrant arrived on the 8th four days later than our earliest recorded autumn record on 4th August 2004. Others were briefly seen on the 15th and the 28th with the latter being a fine male.

Whinchat

A singleton was noted on the 8th and immediately became one of the earliest recorded at The Scrubs. The actual earliest was a seemingly fresh looking juvenile that was glimpsed in the pouring rain on a tree top in Heron Copse on 5th August 2008.

Two new birds that appeared on the 12th sticking around until at least the 23rd although sometimes only a single bird was seen. They probably replaced

our original lone bird, seen on the 8th. Bucking the trend though were the four found in the grassland on the 24th that reduced to three the following day then increased again to five birds from the 27th until the 29^h. By the 30th, we could only locate three birds and eventually only two immatures by the 31st.

Overall it was a good August showing at The Scrubs for this scarce migrant, as they are usually more prevalent during September.

Song Thrush

A couple was seen on the 14th and at least five on the 23rd.

Blackbird

At least 10 were noticed on the 14th and the 23rd.

Garden Warbler

This has not been a bad autumn for this usually scarce autumn migrant. Two birds were seen in the dead bush on Lester's Embankment on the 5th. One of those birds or perhaps another was discovered in the same location on the 8th until the 12th. Finally, one was noticed briefly, again on the embankment, on the 29th.

Blackcap

At least six were foraging along Lester's Embankment on the 6th peaking to 10 on the 8th and the 15th. Birds were still being seen during the following weeks until the 26th when five were found. The Scrubs had a second wind of migrant birds on the 27th when as many as 17 were counted.

Lesser Whitethroat

Up to eight birds were seen across the month. The last birds of the month were seen on the 29th when at least four were found.

Common Whitethroat

An impressive count of some 40 birds was made on the 5th emanating from along Lester's Embankment, the grassland and in Chats Paddock. Most were immature birds and no doubt there could have been more to be found in Martin Bell's Wood and in the northeast corner. This phenomenal count was our highest since 2004.

There were still at least 30 around on the 8th and around 35 on the 14th. Thereafter, counts remained in the 20's until the 23rd when 12 were encountered. By the 27th 11 still remained. By the end of the month we could only muster two immature birds in and around the Magic Bush on the grassland.

Sedge Warbler

Our first bird of the autumn was recorded moving east along Lester's Embankment on the 5th. It was a typical date for this riparian warbler to visit The Scrubs on its way south.

Three days later two were seen on the 8th and the 9th and a singleton on the 15th.

Reed Warbler

After the two on July 25th a further bird was watched secreting itself into some Buddleia on Lester's Embankment on the 5th. A couple more birds were discovered at the same venue on the 27th.

Willow Warbler

A singleton was seen briefly on Lester's Embankment on the 5th with four seen on the 8th. Single birds were reported almost daily from the 11th through until the 24th when an immature bird was found along Lester's Embankment. On the 26th we experienced a small fall of six birds that were seen foraging predominately along Lester's Embankment with at least three remaining the following day. Numbers had dropped off by the month's end

Chiffchaff

At least 10 were seen on the 5th with fewer noticed over the ensuing days until the 27th when around 12 were seen increasing to around 15 the following day.

Goldcrest

Our first bird for the winter was found within a tit flock on the 29th.

Spotted Flycatcher

This scarce migrant has enjoyed a good year at The Scrubs. Above average numbers were seen during the spring and this autumn started well with two birds briefly seen traversing Lester's Embankment on the 14th. It was the joint earliest with the lone bird described by our trusty groundsmen on the same date in 2009.

On the 27th, an adult and a juvenile were watched in Martin Bell's Wood and another was seen on the 29th.

Coal Tit

After many years of searching this woodland specialist was finally added to The Scrubs site list on the 29th. It was initially heard first then located within a large roving tit flock.

Great Tit

Counts were very poor for this month.

Blue Tit

Up to 15 were seen on the 14th.

Long-tailed Tit

At least six were noticed on the 14th. This is undoubtedly an underestimate.

Jay

A probable juvenile was seen on the 3rd and another lone bird was reported on the 27th and 28th.

Magpie

A minimum of 10 was counted on the 14th.

Carrion Crow

The peak count was 180 on the 25th.

Starling

Small numbers were present during the month with a peak of 40 on the 23rd. Numbers usually drop during August after the highs of July but this year the figures performed even less favourably against last year's larger flocks.

House Sparrow

Sightings were in short supply this month with the first report coming in on the 23rd when five were seen along Braybrook Street. The following day, over 30 were observed leaving their Braybrook Wood roost.

Linnet

The biggest count was of 10 on the 15th.

Goldfinch

At least 30 were at large around the grassland on the 5th and the 8th. Meanwhile, at least 40 were feeding on the thistles by Hammersmith Hospital car park on the 12th and again on the grassland on the 18th.

Greenfinch

A paltry nine were counted on the 27th.

Reed Bunting

A female was seen in the grassland on the 12th. A male and two female-types were seen on the 21st and another singleton recorded on the 27th and 28th.

2011 Year List

- 1. Cormorant**
- 2. Little Egret**
- 3. Grey Heron**

- 4. Mute Swan**
- 5. Greylag**
- 6. Canada Goose**
- 7. Egyptian Goose**
- 8. Shelduck**
- 9. Mallard**
- 10. Shoveler**
- 11. Teal**
- 12. Red Kite**
- 13. Common Buzzard**
- 14. Sparrowhawk**
- 15. Kestrel**
- 16. Hobby**
- 17. Peregrine**
- 18. Quail**
- 19. Ringed Plover**
- 20. Lapwing**
- 21. Bar-tailed Godwit**
- 22. Woodcock**
- 23. Snipe**
- 24. Black-headed Gull**
- 25. Common Gull**
- 26. Mediterranean Gull**
- 27. Herring Gull**
- 28. Lesser Black-back**
- 29. Great Black-back**
- 30. Common Tern**
- 31. Feral Pigeon**

32. **Stock Dove**
33. **Woodpigeon**
34. **Collared Dove**
35. **Turtle Dove**
36. **Swift**
37. **Rose-ringed Parakeet**
38. **Green Woodpecker**
39. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**
40. **Skylark**
41. **Sand Martin**
42. **Swallow**
43. **House Martin**
44. **Meadow Pipit**
45. **Tree Pipit**
46. **Pied Wagtail**
47. **Yellow Wagtail**
48. **Grey Wagtail**
49. **Wren**
50. **Dunnock**
51. **Robin**
52. **Nightingale**
53. **Common Redstart**
54. **Northern Wheatear**
55. **Whinchat**
56. **Stonechat**
57. **Song Thrush**
58. **Redwing**
59. **Fieldfare**

60. Mistle Thrush
61. Blackbird
62. Ring Ouzel
63. Garden Warbler
64. Blackcap
65. Lesser Whitethroat
66. Common Whitethroat
67. Sedge Warbler
68. Reed Warbler
69. Willow Warbler
70. Chiffchaff
71. Goldcrest
72. Spotted Flycatcher
- 73. Coal Tit**
74. Great Tit
75. Blue Tit
76. Long-tailed Tit
77. Jay
78. Magpie
79. Jackdaw
80. Carrion Crow
81. Starling
82. House Sparrow
83. Chaffinch
84. Brambling
85. Linnet
86. Lesser Redpoll
87. Goldfinch

88. Greenfinch

89. Yellowhammer

90. Reed Bunting

90 species for the year thus far

(83 species in August 2010 & 79 in August 2009)