

January 2011 Sightings at Wormwood Scrubs



Yellowhammer (Russell F Spencer)

After last month's mammoth and ultimately unsuccessful chase to achieve the magical 100 species mark for 2010, many of the core Scrubbers had exhausted themselves and needed to recuperate during January. Therefore, very few visits were made and as a consequence, birds were missed.

Having said that, we still managed to get off to a good start with birds like **Mediterranean Gull**, **Great Black-back** and **Lapwing** all safely on the list. A mystery unidentified godwit was an annoyance but bird of the month was a gorgeous male **Yellowhammer**. A rare bird in London these days, you would have to go back at least 30 years to when they were more widespread. They probably stopped occurring regularly at The Scrubs well before that but if there were Scrubbers watching the site during the 60's and 70's they would have surely recorded a few of those rural buntings.

February will be the last month of winter according to the ornithological diary. It will be interesting to see what shows up.

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Cormorant

This urban seabird was barely recorded this month with the first reported on the 13th.

Canada Goose

The largest count was 20 on the 18th.

Mallard

Our first for the year was the pair that headed over the northeast corner on the 18th.

Sparrowhawk

A female was seen on several dates during the month.

Lapwing

Our first for the year was a single bird on the 16th consorting with the gulls on the pitches.

Godwit sp

Either a Black-tailed or Bar-tailed Godwit was seen heading southwest high beyond the prison in bright sunlight on the 18th. Frustratingly, it was seen too late, it was too distant and the light was too bright to sort out any diagnostic plumage details. It was not picked up at the Wetland Centre either.

Black-headed Gull

At least 260 were present on the 8th rising to over 400 on the pitches on the 13th and the 16th plus 550 on the 15th.

Common Gull

Around 25 graced the football pitches on the 8th. By the 15th up to 40 were counted.

Mediterranean Gull

Our wintering adult remained sporadically seen throughout the month.

Lesser Black-back

At least 12 were drifting around on the 15th.

Great Black-back

Our recent good run of sightings of this large gull continued and this month we saw more birds than what we normally clock in a year. Our sightings started with an adult watched flying over on the 13th. On the 15th two 1st winter birds were seen and an adult headed north on the 18th.

Stock Dove

A singleton headed over on the 10th and three were seen on the 15th. Finally, another loner headed east over the grassland and landed in Central Copse on the 31st.

Wood Pigeon

The average count was around 50 birds.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

An organized count of birds coming into roost in Central Copse on the 9th resulted in nearly 3000 birds.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Birds were regularly seen throughout the month.

Skylark

Two birds were watched on the 8th and a further two came in from the north on the 16th. Finally, a lone bird was found on the 25th.

Meadow Pipit

Only two birds were seen on the 8th rising to a peak of at least eight on the 14th.

Pied Wagtail

At least five were present on the 8th. A subsequent period of heavy rain resulted in several flooded areas of the grassland that attracted at least 14 on the 18th.

Wren

A single bird was seen on the 16th. Obviously this was a gross undercount.

Dunnock

No counts were received for this common Scrubs resident.

Robin

A singleton was noted on the 18th. There were obviously many more present.

Song Thrush

At least eight birds were in song on the 10th.

Redwing

The five reported on the 8th was the highest count.

Mistle Thrush

One was seen on the 25th and a pair found by the picnic area on the western end on the 31st.

Blackbird

At least five were seen on the 16th – a vast undercount.

Great Tit

A paltry four were counted on the 16th.

Blue Tit

Around seven were seen on the 16th.

Long-tailed Tit

Around 15 on the 8th was our biggest count.

Jay

Our first bird of the year was seen at the western end on the 13th and the following day at least two were seen.

Magpie

The usual mob was present during the month with around 10 on the 16th being the most.

Jackdaw

Our first record of 2011 concerned an immature seen on the 18th, followed by two on the 25th. Finally, four showed up on the 31st.

Carrion Crow

At least 200 were around on the 13th.

Starling

At least 70 were noted on the 8th by the 15th at least 600 were seen.

House Sparrow

The peak count was of around 16 on the 5th in their usual Braybrook Street and Erconwald Street quarters.

Chaffinch

A few were seen throughout the month with around eight on the 14th being the most.

Linnet

At least seven were counted on the 13th.

Goldfinch

Tiny numbers were noted early in the month.

Greenfinch

Around six were seen on the 16th.

Yellowhammer

A male was discovered in the southern edge of Central Copse on the 8th. It hung around for a few minutes before heading off towards Braybrook Street. This was our second record of this decreasing, largely rural bunting. Our first was in November 2006 when a male was watched flying low over the grassland, circuiting the observer before heading of west.

2011 Year List

- 1. Cormorant**
- 2. Canada Goose**
- 3. Mallard**
- 4. Sparrowhawk**
- 5. Lapwing**

6. **Black-headed Gull**
7. **Mediterranean Gull**
8. **Common Gull**
9. **Herring Gull**
10. **Lesser Black-back**
11. **Great Black-back**
12. **Feral Pigeon**
13. **Woodpigeon**
14. **Stock Dove**
15. **Rose-ringed Parakeet**
16. **Great Spotted Woodpecker**
17. **Skylark**
18. **Meadow Pipit**
19. **Pied Wagtail**
20. **Wren**
21. **Dunnock**
22. **Robin**
23. **Song Thrush**
24. **Redwing**
25. **Mistle Thrush**
26. **Blackbird**
27. **Great Tit**
28. **Blue Tit**
29. **Long-tailed Tit**
30. **Jay**
31. **Magpie**
32. **Jackdaw**
33. **Carrion Crow**

34. Starling

35. House Sparrow

36. Chaffinch

37. Linnet

38. Goldfinch

39. Greenfinch

40. Yellowhammer

41. Reed Bunting

41 species for the year thus far

(43 species in January 2010 & 36 in January 2009)