

## July 2011 Sightings at Wormwood Scrubs



**Meadow Pipit (Mandy West)**

### **A Lost Cause?**

It is with sadness that we report the apparent demise of our local breeding population of the humble **Meadow Pipit**. Despite our best efforts there still seems to be several members of the public who choose to blatantly disregard the signage in place within the grassland that politely requests that the Meadow Pipit breeding area be respected. And although some people have said that they would use a different route in the future, others were less agreeable. It is hard to know what to do as it feels like we are fighting a battle we may ultimately lose.

We were also understrength again this month with a few regular observers either on holiday, away with work or in love – with all the complications that entails. We also lost Anders Price this month when he finally crossed to Pond to resettle in his native USA. But despite all adversity we are on 88 species for the year – a record count. This month saw multiple **Peregrine** sightings, a **Mediterranean Gull**, our first ever July **Yellow Wagtail** and **Goldcrest**. The latter species was also our first for the year. And a possible male **Dartford Warbler** was glimpsed for a nanosecond mid-month as it flew from a bush in the grassland south of Chats Paddock into the paddock itself.

Finally, earlier in the month two **Common Lizard** took advantage of some rare heat from the sun and were found basking on the usual log pile in Chats Paddock. We also had some very interesting belated news concerning the report from a dog walker of a **Badger**

seen scurrying into Scrubs Lane Wood at the end last summer. This sighting is of no real surprise to us as one Scrubber thought he glimpsed one in Martin Bell's Wood during the summer of 2008.

We'll be finding Otters next!

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### **Cormorant**

The only report concerned a lone bird heading over o the 26<sup>th</sup>. This seabird was clearly overlooked this month.

### **Canada Goose**

A few were heard and seen during the month.

### **Sparrowhawk**

Nearly all the records of this common woodland raptor this month seemed to involve females and one such bird was watched creating havoc by pouncing into various bushes outside Chats Paddock trying to flush out prey on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Kestrel**

The occasional female or immature was seen throughout the month. However, three birds were present over the grassland on the 25<sup>th</sup> and a female with a juvenile on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The only male was seen on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Hobby**

A playful pair was watched performing aerobatics in the same distant airspace as a Peregrine on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Peregrine**

Now something of a regular here at Wormwood Scrubs, an individual was seen distantly soaring well south of the prison on the 14<sup>th</sup>. One individual was watched at 10pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> successfully hunting a parakeet from the flocks coming in to roost. It simply flew over and with no sudden turns or any burst of speed and casually picked off a bird returning to the tower by Hammersmith Hospital to devour it. The nonchalant nature of this kill made it seem as if parakeet was on the menu every evening!

Up to three individuals were recorded on the 26<sup>th</sup> and finally, a juvenile headed low from the east over the football pitches scattering the crows on the 28<sup>th</sup>. All the birds mentioned this month could have related to the nesting pair further south at Charing Cross Hospital and their offspring.

### **Black-headed Gull**

As per June larger numbers of this common Larid began to filter through with a peak of around 120 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Mediterranean Gull**

An adult in full breeding plumage was fortuitously seen amongst a high-flying flock of Black-headed Gulls on the afternoon of the 11<sup>th</sup>. Nowadays, Med Gulls are liable to appear at The Scrubs during almost any month of the year, a major indication of their recent general increase across London and the southeast.

### **Herring Gull**

At least 30 were counted on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Lesser Black-back**

As ever, smaller numbers were noted of this large gull than its more common relative the Herring Gull. Around 12 were noted on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Stock Dove**

The usual few birds were invariably encountered with either in the grassland or on the football pitches. The peak count was seven on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Wood Pigeon**

As usual around 50 – 60 birds were reported during the month including juveniles.

### **Swift**

Numbers were seen during the early part of the month with the peak count being nearly 90 birds on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Towards the end of the month they had become decidedly scarcer apart from the 31<sup>st</sup> when over 40 were counted.

### **Rose-ringed Parakeet**

At least 600 were witnessed leaving their roost on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Green Woodpecker**

A single bird was heard calling from Southern Copse on the 17<sup>th</sup> and an immature flew into Scrubs Lane Wood on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Another was seen along Braybrook Wood on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Great Spotted Woodpecker**

The only reports this month were a male on the 30<sup>th</sup> and two birds the following day.

### **Meadow Pipit**

Up to three males were still displaying up to mid month; a piece of behaviour not normally noted during July. Indeed, the last such record was during July 2008. This species virtually stops singing when rearing young therefore the implication was that they were not tending to young. Not a good sign.

It is our general feeling that certainly one perhaps only two pairs bred this summer out of the four suspected territories. Only one brood of four youngsters actually seen with any positivity and they were seen being fed on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup>. This is potentially a poor state of affairs with perhaps the main reason for the sharp decline in success attributable to human and canine disturbance principally caused by people continually ignoring the polite sign and walking through the main pipit breeding areas down the 'Forbidden Path'.

A new more intrusive, as well as instructive sign needs to be installed prior to the next breeding season if we are to preserve our tiny vulnerable nesting population and protect them from unnecessary disturbance.

### **Yellow Wagtail**

Our first returning autumn migrant flew over the grassland calling on the 28<sup>th</sup>. It was our first ever July record.

### **Pied Wagtail**

A male was seen feeding on the pitches on the 17<sup>th</sup> and was our first reported since May.

### **Wren**

Very few were recorded and absolutely none were counted during July.

### **Dunnock**

Only three were reported on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Robin**

At least 10 were seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> including several youngsters from second broods.

### **Song Thrush**

No counts were received this month.

### **Blackbird**

At least 10 were seen on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Garden Warbler**

A singleton was found frequenting the dead bush on Lester's Embankment on the 17<sup>th</sup> and again on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Blackcap**

At least five were found on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18 including juveniles on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Lesser Whitethroat**

Around four were foraging with other warblers along Lester's Embankment on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Common Whitethroat**

This common scrub warbler remained a regular sight during the month. Interestingly, a displaying male was discovered along the west end of embankment on the 17<sup>th</sup> bearing a ring on its right leg. The peak count was around 15 on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Reed Warbler**

Two were discovered along Lester's Embankment on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Willow Warbler**

Our first returning autumn bird appeared on the 28<sup>th</sup> and a juvenile was discovered along Lester's Embankment on the 31<sup>st</sup>. This leaf warbler is an extreme rarity here during this month, however last July we discovered a juvenile in Scrubs Lane Wood that we suspected to have been born there. Also in 2006, a resident singing bird was still present within its territory, again in Scrubs Lane Wood.

**Chiffchaff**

A male sang from the bushes opposite the café on Old Oak Common Lane along the western side of The Scrubs for a couple of days from the 10<sup>th</sup>. Otherwise, several were seen with youngsters throughout the month. We estimate that at least five pairs bred. The biggest number was 13 on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Goldcrest**

A bird tagging with a tit flock on the 25<sup>th</sup> was our first ever July record of what is essentially a winter visitor here.

**Great Tit**

Around 10 including juveniles were discovered on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Blue Tit**

At least 16 were counted on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Long-tailed Tit**

At least 20 including juveniles were seen on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Magpie**

The usual 20 or so were seen.

**Carrion Crow**

The average count for the month was 120 birds although, 200 were counted on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Starling**

At least 50 were in the grassland on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Chaffinch**

Only two birds were noticed during July on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Linnet**

This cute finch was still prevalent during the month with several family parties noted. At least six pairs bred though it could have been as many as 10 pairs.

**Goldfinch**

At least 60 were counted on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

**Greenfinch**

A count of around 20 birds was made on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Reed Bunting**

This species has been a major anomaly amongst our avian population this year because we have been unable to work out where our only pair bred this year. In 2010 they nested in the grassland. This year the male initially sang from the same area as last year but due to the increased human disturbance that also affected the Meadow Pipits, the singing male appeared to abandon its usual song post and instantly became more sporadic in its appearances.

We had almost given up hope until late last month when a juvenile was sighted. The male was then watched feeding a juvenile (the June juvenile?) in the grassland on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this month and on nearby Lester's Embankment on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**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. Pied Wagtail
46. Yellow Wagtail
47. Grey Wagtail
48. Wren
49. Dunnock
50. Robin
51. Nightingale
52. Common Redstart
53. Northern Wheatear
54. Whinchat
55. Stonechat
56. Song Thrush
57. Redwing



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

**86. Greenfinch**

**87. Yellowhammer**

**88. Reed Bunting**

**88 species for the year thus far**

**(76 species in July 2010 & 76 in July 2009)**