

October 2011 Sightings at Wormwood Scrubs



Ring Ouzel (Stephen Daly)

Every year there seems to be a recurring pattern whereby in September The Scrubs is heavily birded by every available Scrubber plus the occasional visiting birder and then come October, we're back to skeletal coverage. It's nobody's fault, it's just the way it is. However, we must be missing a host of birds.

Previous Octobers have had us elated after seeing such delights as **Great Crested Grebe, Pink-footed Goose, White-fronted Goose, Pheasant** (rare here), **Golden Plover, Tawny Owl, Short-eared Owl, Barn Owl, Woodlark, Black Redstart, Ring Ouzels, Grasshopper Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Cetti's Warbler**, not one but two **Richard's Pipits** and of course, last year's fabled **Great Grey Shrike**.

This year was quiet in comparison with the star bird being another **Ring Ouzel** and the supporting cast that included a **Coal Tit**, a passing **Common Buzzard** and the reappearances of two old Scrubs stalwarts - **Stonechat** and **Bullfinch**. We are on a respectable 93 species for the year but can we make 100 by December 31st 2011?

That is up to us.

Contributors: Rob Ayers, Mathew Bournat, Charlie Farrell, Louis Freeland-Haynes, Nick Gibson, David Jeffreys, David Lindo, Roy Nuttall, Anders Price, Neville Smith, Bob Stills, Paul Thomas et al.

Mute Swan

One flew east on the 20th and a 1st winter bird headed west on the 23rd.

Canada Goose

Two flew through on the 18th.

Mallard

One was seen on the 30th.

Common Buzzard

One headed low north at 1130 on the 16th with several crows in hot pursuit. It was our first ever October record at The Scrubs.

Sparrowhawk

As usual, this common raptor was a frequent visitor to The Scrubs.

Kestrel

One of our regular birds was seen hunting over the grassland on the 15th and it or another was heard calling in thick fog the following day. Sporadic sightings followed for the remainder of the month.

Peregrine

An adult male cruised at tree top level over Scrubs Lane Wood on the 8th.

Black-headed Gull

Low numbers were seen during the month with a peak count of 24 on the 28th.

Common Gull

Very overlooked this month as the only report was of three on the 30th.

Herring Gull

At least 15 were on and around the pitches on the 16th.

Lesser Black-back

The usual low numbers were present.

Stock Dove

Occasional observations were made with no major counts recorded. It was probably more of a classic case of being overlooked as opposed to a genuine downturn in numbers.

Wood Pigeon

At least 200 were present on the 16th and on the 20th, the same date that a flock of 100 flew overhead. On the 29th at least 950 headed southwest including a large group of around 700 birds. The following day at least 390 passed through.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

The usual roost was present.

Green Woodpecker

We had daily visits from this raucous ground loving 'pecker leading us to think that this species is largely a winter visitor to our area, perhaps originating from nearby Kensal Green Cemetery.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Daily records of up to two birds were received.

Skylark

After just two birds being reported from last month we had a steady trickle of migrants that started on the 1st. In total that movement involved some 34 birds.

Swallow

Interestingly, like last October, a few birds were observed heading over during the early days of the month with five on the 5th and one the following day.

House Martin

On the 8th, six headed west before lingering over Acton for around 10 minutes.

Meadow Pipit

No big numbers this month with the 45 or so counted on the 6th being the maximum. Far less than during October 2008 when up to 75 birds were found including a curious grey-phased individual.

Pied Wagtail

Observer vigilance was much higher this month and as a consequence more wagtails were noticed, invariably flying over. A couple were seen on most days but we couldn't be sure if all the birds flying over were of the nominate race 'yarrellii' and not the continental 'White' Wagtail 'alba' that also passes through Britain at this time of year.

Grey Wagtail

One or two were noted through the month.

Wren

A paltry three were noted on the 26th.

Dunnock

Only three were encountered on the 16th.

Robin

Five were counted on the 16th.

Stonechat

A female/immature turned up in the grassland on the 17th and remained until the 29th.

Song Thrush

Small numbers noted during the month

Redwing

A few birds were seen throughout the month usually either within Chats Paddock or Martin Bell's Wood. The biggest movement was 75 on the 29th.

Fieldfare

The first record for the month concerned five individuals sunning themselves in Martin Bell's Wood on the 15th. Small numbers occurred thereafter apart from the 20th when 55 flew over and on the 28th when 22 moved north.

Ring Ouzel

The female that was discovered in Central Copse on the 10th by an elated Scrubber, automatically became the bird of the month. It was the third autumn record for The Scrubs since the last in October 2009 that involved three individuals.

Blackbird

The maximum count was around 25 on the 15th. Some of those birds and other reported during the month were quite flighty implying that they could have been migrants.

Blackcap

Sightings continued into October with a maximum of three birds on the 1st. The last bird was heard on 'chacking' from within a bramble patch at the western end of Lester's Embankment on the 28th, making it our latest ever.

Willow Warbler

We thought that we were doing extremely well being treated to late birds as September croaked its last breaths. That was until a bird was noticed on the 1st. were picked up this month for the first time since October 2005.

Chiffchaff

With the good coverage from the available Scrubbers the numbers of this common warbler were well recorded with birds seen on most days until a singleton on the 20th.

Goldcrest

Up to three birds roamed the area in amongst the tit flocks.

Coal Tit

Our elusive bird showed up in a tit flock again on the 20th.

Great Tit

Only five were reported on the 16th.

Blue Tit

Around 10 were counted on the 16th.

Long-tailed Tit

The peak count was around 18 birds on the 17th.

Magpie

Fifteen were counted on the 16th.

Jay

A singleton was noticed on the 11th.

Jackdaw

One or two flew over during the month.

Carrion Crow

The peak count was around 80 birds on the 16th.

Starling

Around 20 were present during the month.

House Sparrow

A few were noted in their usual Braybrook Street haunts.

Chaffinch

Passage numbers were lower than last October with just 106 compared to last year's 500 plus.

Linnet

A small number was recorded with the biggest flock being of 10 birds on the 17th.

Lesser Redpoll

A much over looked little finch, this bird looks decidedly dull and boring as it flies overhead with little in the way of diagnostic features to hang your hat on. This in itself is a good signifier of Redpolls flying over. The other is its chipping flight call, when you can hear it over the noise of the urbanity that surrounds us of course.

At least 26 birds were picked out amongst the hordes of unidentified finches that flew over our patch.

Goldfinch

Around 30 were reported on the 13th.

Greenfinch

Classic low counts were the order of the day. Just 10 on a couple of dates were the most that we could muster.

Siskin

Last month's movement continued into October and involved 55 birds including at least 29 on the 17th.

Bullfinch

A male and two females made a long awaited appearance at The Scrubs when they were discovered in Chats Paddock on the 20th. Once a regular breeder this gorgeous, shy finch has become something of a rarity and indeed, these birds were the first to be settled here for several years. On the day of their discovery, an additional female was seen landing in the bushes at the western end of Lester's Embankment.

Reed Bunting

Up to two birds remained in the vicinity of the grassland and Central Copse during the course of the month.

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. Nuthatch
78. Jay
79. Magpie
80. Jackdaw
81. Carrion Crow
82. Starling
83. House Sparrow
84. Chaffinch
85. Brambling
86. Linnet
87. Lesser Redpoll
88. Goldfinch
89. Greenfinch
90. Siskin
91. Bullfinch
92. Yellowhammer
93. Reed Bunting

93 species for the year thus far

(93 species in October 2010 & 90 in October 2009)

