

September 2011 Sightings at Wormwood Scrubs



Willow Warbler (Russell F Spencer)

It t'was a good month!

It has been a fantastic autumn thus far in a year that will surely go down in history as being one of our best yet. Although no amazing rarities were found we still had a great showing of species that hitherto were not normally found in such relative abundance.

As with every month before this one, there were a number of records broken plus we had the pleasure of welcoming yet another species to The Scrubs list in the shape of a **Nuthatch**. This is a woodland species that we were not expecting as our wooded areas are hardly big nor old enough to hold such species. In fact, it wasn't even found in a wooded area but within the poplars that line the summit of Lester's Embankment. Further proof - if we needed it - that anything can turn up anywhere at anytime.

Also of interest was our third ever **Shoveler**, the record number of migrating **Swallows** and **Sand Martins** plus a good spattering of **Common Redstarts**, **Whinchats**, **Yellow Wagtails** and late **Willow Warblers**. We also recorded September scarcities like **House Martins**, **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Reed Warblers**.

Finally, a **Weasel** made a surprise appearance on the 4th as it scampered across the patch that runs adjacent to Lester's Embankment. A **Hedgehog** was heard making its curious 'coughing' sounds within the bramble in Lester's Embankment on the 15th and **Common Lizards** were seen on various dates

primarily within Chats Paddock. Lastly, within the mini-beast kingdom a large female **Wasp Spider** was found in Chats Paddock on the 11th and at least 25 fast moving **Admiral Butterflies** headed west on the 29th.

What a magical place Wormwood Scrubs is!

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Cormorant

The only report this month was of four on the 27th.

Grey Heron

One headed over on the 2nd and another flapped over on the 11th.

Mute Swan

Four headed east on the 15th, a single bird on the 27th and five circled the area on the 28th.

Canada Goose

The month started with birds just being heard. Later, when we started to see them, we recorded maxima of 13 on the 12th.

Shoveler

Our third ever record and second bird for the year occurred on the 12th when one was sighted heading over.

Sparrowhawk

The usual spattering on daily records occurred. On the 2nd we were treated the sight of two birds attacking a Goldfinch flock.

Kestrel

Carrying on from last month's sightings, a female or two were fairly regularly noticed particularly over and around the grassland.

Hobby

Our second bird of the year - a probable migrant - headed southwest at 0640 on the 1st. Another headed west over Braybrook Street on the 28th displaying flicky wingbeats with slight undulations before going into a spectacular dive.

Peregrine

A large female flapped over Central Copse on the with elasticated wing beats on the 28th.

Snipe

Our first of the winter was flushed from the grassland on the 20th.

Black-headed Gull

Small numbers were noted throughout the month.

Common Gull

The two birds noted separately on the 1st were the first for the autumn.

Herring Gull

The peak count was of 25 birds on the 29th.

Lesser Black-back

A paltry eight on the 29th was the highest count of the month.

Stock Dove

A couple of birds were seen throughout the month with a peak of just three on the 3rd.

Wood Pigeon

The average count settled at around 40 birds for the month. The peak count was at least 140 on the 20th.

Collared Dove

A lone bird was seen on the 2nd and a pair on the 28th.

Rose-ringed Parakeet

At least 1,000 birds left the roost on the 1st rising to around 2,000 on the 28th.

Green Woodpecker

As per August, one or two were recorded during the month.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

One or two birds were seen throughout the month.

Skylark

Our first autumn bird flew over on the 15th followed by another on the 22nd.

Sand Martin

At least 26 headed south on the 10th and at least 16 were seen on the 12th. This brought our total to an almighty 102 birds – by far our biggest autumn passage ever.

Swallow

September saw at least 800 birds pass over including a huge 542 that came through and headed west on the 12th. This was our biggest September number since our records began. Even without adding the 15 that flew over during August, we can only begin to guess at the true numbers that pass through every autumn.

House Martin

We experienced a great autumn passage for this usually scarce migrant with in excess of 80 birds during the month with the biggest flock containing around 50 on the 17th.

Meadow Pipit

Numbers started to build up during September, as they traditionally do, with around 10 birds seen in the grassland on the 1st. The peak counts were 80 on the 15th and 120 on the 21st.

Tree Pipit

A migrant was discovered within Dartford Enclosure (the fenced scrub just north of the Hammersmith Hospital car park) on the 3rd. Another flew over calling strongly on the 19th.

Pied Wagtail

The reports for this familiar bird only started from the 24th with a maximum of four on the 28th and 29th. This is another grossly under recorded species.

Yellow Wagtail

At least nine birds were seen during September including at least five over on the 10th. Including the 12 birds recorded last month, we had a very healthy showing of this endearing migrant this autumn.

Grey Wagtail

A small number of birds headed over during the month including the peak count of four on the 24th.

Wren

At least two individuals were heard on the 1st. This was the only record of this common bird received for September.

Dunnock

Two were noted along the Embankment on the 1st – obviously a vast undercount.

Robin

The usual numbers seemed to be present throughout the month with a peak count of seven birds on the 28th.

Common Redstart

A winter plumaged male was seen very briefly in the northwest corner within a mixed tit and warbler flock on the 29th. It turned out to be the joint latest autumn bird on record – the other occurred on the same date in 2005.

Northern Wheatear

With three in August and at least 11 during September, this autumn turned out to be fairly numerically respectable when it came to this handsome double migrant. The last bird was reported on the 22nd.

Whinchat

As with its cousin the Northern Wheatear, we had a reasonable showing of this scarce but regular uplands dweller. Following the two birds last seen on 31st August, September ensued with a fluctuating population that ranged between one and four birds apart from the 12th when five graced the grassland. The last bird of the month appeared on the 28th.

Song Thrush

Only a few birds were noted through the month.

Redwing

Our first birds of the winter included a lone bird that headed west over Braybrook Street on the 28th followed later by a further three seen in Southern Copse.

Mistle Thrush

A very occasional visitor to our patch these days, a single bird was recorded on the 2nd and at least two on the 22nd.

Blackbird

At least 15 were counted on the 28th.

Blackcap

The month started with reasonable numbers still present. The most seen were the 12 on the 1st and by the month's end only one bird could be found.

Lesser Whitethroat

This 'Sylvia' warbler traditionally melts away during September and indeed, only low numbers could be found until the last bird was seen sunning itself on Lester's Embankment on the 11th – the exact same departure date as in 2010.

Common Whitethroat

Early September picked up from where August finished with at least 12 birds present on the 2nd. Thereafter, only single figure counts were made and often only one bird could be found. The last record for the month was of a singleton on the 29th.

Sedge Warbler

Two birds were discovered on the 2nd and were the only records for the month.

Reed Warbler

A bird was briefly seen along Lester's Embankment on the 1st – possibly the residue from last month's late macro invasion. It became our first September

record of this reed denizen at The Scrubs since 2008 and indeed, only our second record for this month in 12 years!

It or another was found on the embankment the following day.

Willow Warbler

As with September last year, far more birds were encountered during this month than what we are usually used to. One or two birds were still around during most of the period with the last being recognised on the 28th.

Chiffchaff

There were more birds were around month than during September 2010 with up to 12 birds seen on the 2nd and at least 25, all in the northwest corner and the western end of Lester's Embankment on the 29th.

Goldcrest

Two were seen opposite Sue's Café in the western edge of our patch on the 17th and another at the opposite end of the park in Scrubs Lane Wood on the 27th. Another bird was seen on the 29th.

Spotted Flycatcher

One was found feeding in Central Copse on the 27th and automatically became our latest ever. The previous latest was way back on 22nd September 1993.

Great Tit

Poor counts were received with the largest being of at least 15 birds on the 29th.

Blue Tit

At least 30 were around on the 29th.

Long-tailed Tit

There were easily 30 birds at large on the 1st.

Nuthatch

The biggest surprise of the month was the discovery of a calling bird on the 1st that was concealed, unseen, within a tit flock working its way east along Lester's Embankment. It was not a big shock when you consider the other woodland specialist that recently earned its place on The Scrubs list – the Coal Tit – appeared here for the first time last month.

Both these species' occurrences directly correlated with the fact that there is a tiny breeding population of Coal Tits in nearby Kensal Green Cemetery where a pair of Nuthatches were also recently discovered. We also know that many of the species residing there eventually find themselves on The Scrubs as they follow the woodland corridor.

Jay

The odd bird was seen during September with three noted on the 23rd and four the following day.

Magpie

The usual numbers were encountered during the month with 33 noted on the 28th.

Jackdaw

A few were seen with the three noticed on the 15th and 28th being the most.

Carrion Crow

Numbers dropped as low as 40 on the 1st to 160 on the 21st.

Starling

The average count was of 30 birds with a peak of at least 270 birds on the 12th.

House Sparrow

An estimated 100 birds were watched gradually leaving their Braybrook Street roost on the morning of the 1st.

Chaffinch

Small numbers were seen during the month with a peak of 15 on the 28th.

Linnet

At least 10 birds were counted on the 28th.

Goldfinch

At least 30 were counted on the 1st but the peak count was over 100 on the 2nd.

Greenfinch

This once common finch is really becoming a scarcity here at The Scrubs as the peak count was no more than seven birds on the 19th and 28th. The last time we had reasonable numbers during September was back in 2005 when the maximum count was at least 40 birds.

Siskin

Our first winter records occurred on the 11th when eight birds headed south plus another was heard calling from within Martin Bell's Wood on the same day. A lone bird headed over on the 19th, two on the 24th and 12 southwest over the grassland on the 28th.

Reed Bunting

A female or immature was seen on several occasions and two birds were seen on the 15th.

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. Yellowhammer**
- 92. Reed Bunting**

92 species for the year thus far

(86 species in September 2010 & 84 in September 2009)