

## **A Year of Bird Observation in Nonsuch**

Having casually observed birds during my regular visits to Nonsuch Park and Warren Farm for over 15 years, I decided to record what I saw in the course of a single year.

My quest started on 1 October 2015 and continued until 30 September 2016, during which time I visited the area on most days. I kept a record of my observations in a table, noting each species seen, together with the maximum number seen and the date and location of that sighting. The frequency with which each bird was seen (during its time here) is also noted, together with a comment, where appropriate. (Please see the table below).

In all, I recorded 51 species, including 7 red-listed ones, plus an escaped Blue-fronted Amazon parrot, that had been a regular visitor to the Park for around 5 years, but I last saw it there on 8 August. Another unusual bird was a leucistic Magpie with brown and white plumage, seen occasionally from October 2014 and last seen on 6 August, always around Cherry Orchard Farm or the Banqueting House.

Disappointingly, I didn't see any Skylarks, which used to be seen regularly on Warren Farm, no Bullfinches, which I had sometimes seen around Cherry Orchard Farm, and no Willow Warblers either. Numbers of other species were also down, notably Meadow Pipit, Nuthatch, Coal Tit, Greenfinch and even Chaffinch. House Sparrows, although seen regularly, were confined to the western edge of Warren Farm.

Song Thrushes were regularly seen or heard but Mistle Thrushes were only seen occasionally and only once did I see a party of 6 birds, which used to be a common sight in the Park. Redwings were frequently seen through the winter but Fieldfares were only seen twice, each time in the company of other thrushes feeding on the abundant sloe berries.

Although Swifts were seen regularly (from mid-May to end July), Swallows and House Martins were only seen once or twice in September as they headed back to their wintering grounds.

No raptors were seen from October-January, but then Kestrel and Sparrowhawk both returned in February. Thereafter, Kestrels were seen regularly, including juveniles, so I believe they bred in the Park again this year. Sparrowhawks were occasionally seen and I had single sightings of Buzzard and Hobby overhead. However, the most exciting raptor was a young Tawny Owl found sitting in a tree in the Cherry Orchard Nursery on 8 May. Adult tawnies were neither seen nor heard and I failed to find a Little Owl, although I had seen them around the Mansion House in the past.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the most abundant of the frequently seen species were Carrion Crows, Jackdaws, Wood Pigeons and, of course, the Ring-necked Parakeets. Outside the breeding season, parties of around 250 Crows roost in and around Oak Wood and a similar number of Jackdaws roost in The Wood next to Cheam Park. Many of the roosting birds leave the Park early each morning, returning shortly before dusk to roost. Parakeets might also roost in The Wood, although I only managed to record around 50 birds there. It sometimes seemed that Parakeet numbers were lower than in recent years, when I regularly used to see multiple parties of 25+ heading off to roost, but maybe that was just wishful thinking on my part !

Although I carefully recorded my sightings and made occasional visits to most of the varied habitats in the Park, I do not claim that my findings represent a complete list of the bird species to be found there. However, hopefully they can be combined with other observers' records to give a feel for the rich variety of birdlife to be found in the Park over the past 12 months.

Peter Camber

October 2016

## Nonsuch Birds recorded 1 Oct '15 – 30 Sept '16

Red name = Red Listed species

Settled or low-flying	Max seen	Date	Location	Comments	Frequency
Blackbird	5	19 Nov	Bottom Mead	All males	Frequent
Blackcap	2	12 Apr	Warren Farm	First seen on 2 April	Frequent
Black-headed gull	53	12 Feb	Great Meadow	Mostly seen in small parties	Frequent
Blue Tit	4	28 Jan	SCC Site	Mostly seen singly or in pairs	Frequent
Buzzard	1	13 Apr	Five Acres Piece	Soaring above	Once
Canada Goose	1	11 Apr	Red Gate Field	Seen taking off & heading West	Once
Carrion Crow	75	16 Jan	Red Gate Field	Gathered to be fed	Frequent
Chaffinch	2	8 May	Warren Farm	Mostly seen singly	Occasional
Chiffchaff	1	25 Mar	C O Nursery	First seen on 25 Mar	Regular
Coal Tit	1	20 Mar	C O Nursery	In conifers with Goldcrests	Once
Collared Dove	1	23 Jan	Great Meadow	On Horse Chestnut	Occasional
Common Gull	1	9 Mar	Great Meadow	Feeding with Black-headed Gulls	Once
Common Whitethroat	5	13 May	Warren Farm	First seen on 28 April	Frequent
Duncock	3	9 Apr	Ewell Gate	Mostly seen in hedges	Regular
Feral Pigeon	3	17 Oct	Red Gate Field	Usually seen feeding on the ground	Occasional
Fieldfare	5	4 Dec	Bottom Mead	Feeding on Sloes with other Thrushes	Twice
Goldcrest	3	2 Nov	C O Nursery	Seen widely across the Park	Regular
Goldfinch	23	29 Nov	Great Meadow	Settled in European Larch	Regular
Great Spotted Woodpecker	2	14 Apr	Round Pond Field	Heard more often than seen	Occasional
Great Tit	4	2 Apr	Warren Farm	Mostly seen singly or in pairs	Regular
Green Woodpecker	2	22 Mar	Hill Field	Mostly heard or seen feeding on the ground	Regular
Greenfinch	3	22 Mar	Warren Farm	On Hawthorn near Seymour Avenue	Occasional
Grey Heron	2	22 Mar	Balancing Pond	Mostly seen around the pond	Occasional
Herring Gull	36	25 Dec	Red Gate Field	Mostly seen in pairs	Occasional
Hobby	2	17 Aug	Great Meadow	2 seen catching insects on high	Once
House Martin	45	27 Sep	The Avenue	Swooping & feeding around H Chestnuts	Twice
House Sparrow	10	14 Jul	Warren Farm	Only seen on W side of Warren Farm	Regular
Jackdaw	37	25 Sep	The Wood	Pre-roost gathering	Frequent
Jay	3	4 Oct	Round Pond Field	12 seen collecting acorns in 30 mins	Regular
Kestrel	4	17 Jul	Cherry Orchard	Family party of 4 flew W over	Regular
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	23 Jan	Red Gate Field	Feeding on ground with Black-headed gulls	Once
Long-tailed Tit	15	1 Jan	Ewell Gate	Seen in groups of 5-15 birds	Regular
Magpie	11	24 Dec	Great Meadow	Seen widely across the Park	Frequent
Meadow Pipit	3	5 Oct	Great Meadow	Surprised not seen more often	Twice
Mallard	3	6 Jun	Old Stable Ground	3 drakes flying low over	Occasional
Mistle Thrush	6	29 Sep	Round Pond Field	Feeding in short grass next to the drive	Occasional
Moorhen	1	18 Jul	Balancing Pond	Skulking in rushes	Once
Nuthatch	1	6 Nov	Old Stable Ground	Seen in copse near Rowans	Occasional
Pied Wagtail	9	19 Feb	Great Meadow	Feeding on the ground	Occasional
Redwing	53	22 Mar	Round Pond Field	Feeding on the ground	Occasional
Ring-necked Parakeet	15	12 Oct	Great Meadow	Noisy party flying over	Frequent
Robin	3	23 Jan	Warren Farm	In shrubs along N edge	Frequent
Song Thrush	3	22 Nov	Bottom Mead	On Sloes with Fieldfares & Redwings	Regular
Sparrowhawk	1	28 Aug	C O Nursery	Flew towards Banqueting House	Occasional
Starling	21	30 Dec	Great Meadow	Settled in Lime tree	Regular
Stock Dove	5	13 Sep	Warren Farm	Feeding in newly-cut stubble	Regular
Swallow	2	7 Sep	Warren Farm	2 birds flying S, fairly low over Farm	Once
Swift	15	20 Jun	Great Meadow	First sighting 16 May; last seen 31 July	Regular
Tawny Owl	1	8 May	C O Nursery	Owlet perched in Poplar – 11am, warm sun	Once
Wood Pigeon	29	17 Mar	Great Meadow	Feeding on the ground	Frequent
Wren	2	19 Apr	C O Nursery	Mostly seen in/around Bramble	Regular