

September's Wryneck took a liking to the impressive anthills on Wanstead Flats. Let's hope for a re-run in 2011! Portrait by Jonathan Lethbridge.

# THE BIRDS OF WANSTEAD 2010

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## TIME LINE

### January

Firecrest.

### March

2 Red Kites

### April

Common Buzzard  
passage; Little  
Ringed Plover;  
Dunlin; Nightingale

### May

3 Turtle Doves;  
4 singing Reed  
Warblers

### June

Lesser Spotted  
Woodpecker  
breeding confirmed

### July

Lapwing movement;  
Wood Sandpiper;  
Mediterranean  
Gull; Sedge Warbler

### August

Wood Warbler

### September

Wryneck on Flats;  
Honey-buzzard; 2  
Pied Flycatchers

### October

Spectacular  
visible migration,  
including 3 Lapland  
Buntings over

### December

100 White-fronted  
Geese; 4 Woodlarks.

*What a year! When one of the UK's top listers, visiting the area to see the Wryneck in September, announced "You're getting too many good birds here," it was a grudging recognition that Wanstead was finally getting the attention it deserves.*

More than 130 species were recorded in our area in 2010, the highest total ever. About 55 species bred, more than 1,000 wildfowl wintered, and countless thousands used the area to feed during spring and autumn migration. On one day in August I was struck by the number of warblers just in the Old Sewage Works. I counted more than 70 and that was certainly an underestimate.

During the year the Wren Group waterbird counts were a resounding success, providing coverage of our local water bodies (*every* local lake in most cases) in each of the winter months.

Wanstead Flats proved to be one of the top non-wetland locations in London. It probably always has been, but the difference now is the level of observer coverage, and long may it continue! The autumn's programme of visible-migration watches was particularly spectacular. While the list below gives an idea of the people who've made all this possible, a particular shout-out should go to Nick

Croft, whose 150 field visits, 1,000 hours searching, and 1,000 miles of shoe leather worn out brought their own rewards. These came in the form of exciting finds like the Dunlin by Jubilee Pond, September's Wryneck, and a skein of about 100 White-fronted Geese in December.

Finding local rarities is great, but we shouldn't lose sight of our prized possessions: the nearest decent-sized population of Skylarks to the City, and—almost as important but often overlooked—an apparently healthy breeding population of Meadow Pipits.

It is hoped that this coverage of our wonderful local area will continue through 2011 and the years to come. With the ever-present threat of increased disturbance, and even development, the hard-sought data provided by our team of amateur naturalists should help convince everyone that Wanstead Park and Flats are areas worth conserving.

**Tim Harris**

*This report would not have been possible without the thousands of hours of effort put in by many observers. So, thanks to Amina, Sofia & Natalia Benajeh, Ray & Ros Benn, Jim & Sue Carroll, Sharon Coles, Janet Cornish, Nick Croft, Paul Davies, John Davis, Margaret Davis, Carl Davis, Effie Davis, Lilly Davis, Greta Edwards, Daniel Ericsson-Hull, Paul Ferris, Stuart Fisher, Pam Gamesby, Andrew Gammie, Sally Hammond, Ginny Harris, Kathy Hartnett, Alan & Gill James, Sam Jarrah-Moon, Don Kinnibrough, Jonathan Lethbridge, Pam Mayes, Mike Messenger, Barbara Miller, Jackie Morrison, North-East London RSPB, Richard Oakman, Sharon Payne, Redbridge Birdwatching Blog, Tony Reid, Sandra Reeves, Pete & Valerie Saunders, Madeline Seviour, Amanda & Don Shephard, Alan Sims, Steve Thorpe and Wanstead Wildlife. Special thanks to Jono Lethbridge for his fantastic photos, which illuminate the pages of this report. (Apologies to anyone I've forgotten!)*

## THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

### Mute Swan

*Resident, breeding in small numbers*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals (\*denotes Eagle Pond included in figures):

17/1: 10

6/2: 5

14/3: 2

19/9: 40\*

10/10: 39\*

14/11: 35\*

19/12: 22\*

*Breeding:* there were four broods locally, raising 18 cygnets.

### White-fronted Goose

*Rare visitor*

c.100 NE over Wanstead Flats at 14:55 on 22/12 were part of a cold-weather movement taking place over London at the time.

### Greylag Goose

*Scarce but apparently increasing*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 7

6/2: 0

14/3: 0

19/9: 0\*

10/10: 10\*

14/11: 0\*

19/12: 0\*

Alexandra Lake is the most favoured locality, with a peak count of 13 there in February.

### Barnacle Goose

*Rare visitor; feral individual*

Feral bird with Canadas on several dates, including at Jubilee, 31/10.

### Canada Goose

*Resident breeder*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced

the following totals (\*denotes Eagle Pond included in figures):

17/1: 200+

6/2: 150+

14/3: 13

19/9: 244\*

10/10: 253\*

14/11: 247\*

19/12: 208\*

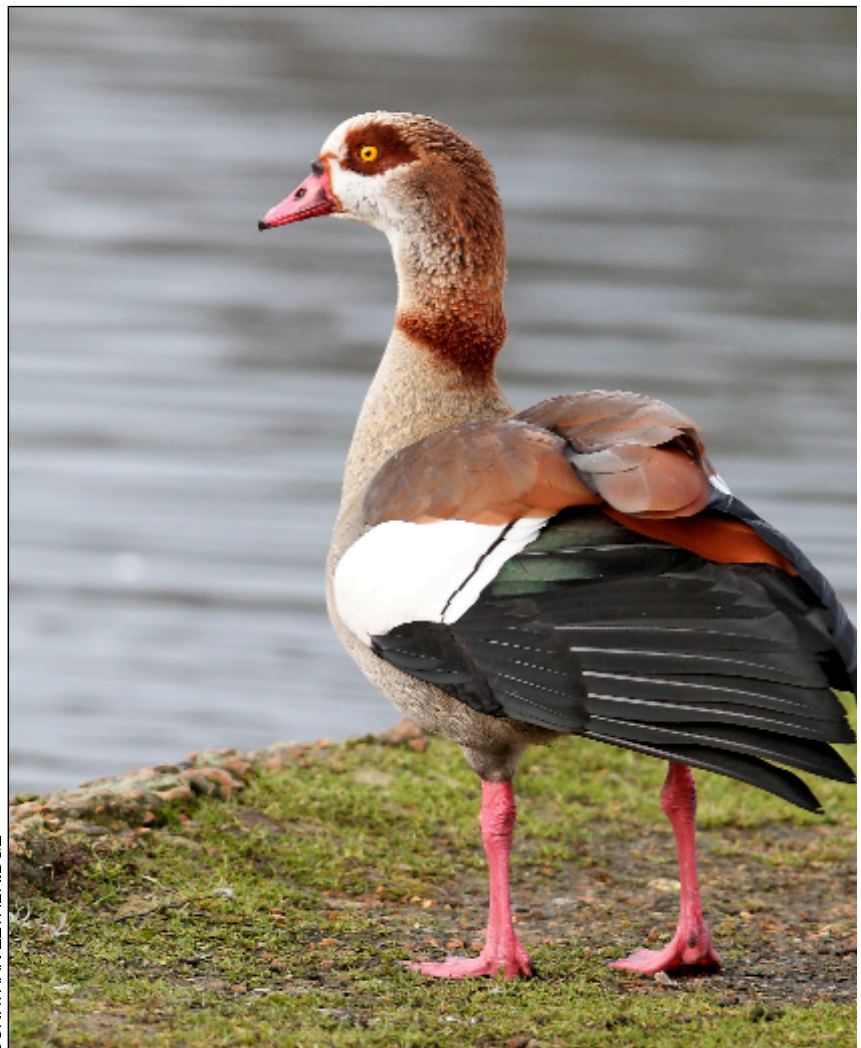
*Breeding:* 40 goslings counted in the area, 23/5.

### Egyptian Goose

*Scarce visitor; soon to be resident?*

3 by Heronry Pond, 17/1; 3 on Alexandra Lake, 9/2; 2 ads, the Basin, 14/11; 2 ads and 1 juv on various waters from late December into 2011.

*The self-sustaining population of Egyptian Geese is increasing in the London area, and there were certainly more records in Wanstead Park during 2010.*



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### Shelduck

*Scarce visitor in spring and summer*

4 NW over Wanstead Flats, 10/4; 1 NW over Wanstead Flats early morning, 23/4; 1 over Alexandra Lake, 22/6; 2 over Flats 11/7.

### Mandarin

1

*Rare visitor*

Drake, Ornamental Waters, 3/11.

### Wigeon

*Scarce winter visitor, mostly in harsh weather*

Female, Ornamental Waters, 25/9; male, Alexandra Lake, 3/10; 2 males from 4/12 (when 1 on Roding and 1 on Heronry) to year end; 3 grazing on Flats on at least one date in December.

### Gadwall

*Resident non-breeder, numbers increasing significantly in winter*

Wanstead Park is a very important winter site for this species. Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 24  
6/2: 13  
14/3: 23  
19/9: 28\*  
10/10: 37\*  
14/11: 86\*  
19/12: 22\*

Numbers declined sharply in the late-year freeze-up, but had increased again to 62 by 30/12. Peak count: 123 on 26/11, before the freeze.

### Common Teal

*Scarce winter visitor*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 2  
6/2: 0  
14/3: 9  
19/9: 0\*  
10/10: 3\*

14/11: 5\*

19/12: 0\*

Last birds of first winter period a pair on the Ornamental Waters, 10/4. First autumn bird a female on Shoulder of Mutton, 21/8. Peak count: 21 on River Roding, 4/12.

### Mallard

*Resident, breeding in small numbers*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 170  
6/2: 71  
14/3: 90  
19/9: 141\*  
10/10: 199\*  
14/11: 165\*  
19/12: 157\*

### Garganey

0

*Rare passage migrant*

No records, cf. 3 in 2009.

### Shoveler

*Fairly common winter visitor*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 15  
6/2: 16  
14/3: 15  
19/9: 3\*  
10/10: 4\*  
14/11: 11\*  
19/12: 25\*

Scarce in summer, there were 4 on Heronry Pond, 15/8.

### Pochard

*Fairly common winter visitor*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 18  
6/2: 4  
14/3: 5  
19/9: 15\*  
10/10: 27\*



14/11: 33\*

20/12: 38\*

Rare in summer, there was a drake on Eagle Pond on 16/5. Peak count: 54, Heronry on 29/11

### **Tufted Duck**

*Resident non-breeder, with numbers increasing significantly in winter*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 30

6/2: 27

14/3: 42

19/9: 44\*

10/10: 35\*

14/11: 93\*

19/12: 6\*

Numbers dropped very sharply during the end of year freeze, but had risen again to 40 by 27/12.

### **Goosander**

*Rare visitor*

Female on unfrozen patch of Ornamentals, 13/1.

### **Pheasant**

*Rare visitor*

A male first seen in the SSSI on 7/2 was seen or heard on various dates until last seen 26/4.

### **Little Grebe**

*Resident, breeding in small numbers*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 8

6/2: 0

14/3: 7

19/9: 9\*

10/10: 4\*

14/11: 8\*

19/12: 10\*

Peak count: 17 in Wanstead Park, 21/8.

Breeding: apparently a good breeding season. Already 3 trilling birds on 14/3;

trilling in the breeding season from Shoulder of Mutton, Heronry, the Basin, and Alexandra Lake; and 10 juvs counted in our area on 21/8.

### **Great Crested Grebe**

*Regular visitor in small numbers*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 0

6/2: 0

14/3: 2

19/9: 1\*

10/10: 3\*

14/11: 4\*

19/12: 0\*

Peak count: 5, Heronry and Perch, 27/5.

Breeding: full courtship display on Heronry, 30/4 at least, but nothing happened!

### **Gannet**

**1**

*Very rare visitor*

A juvenile passed W over the Ornamentals after gale-force winds in North Sea, 25/9. Several others were noted over London on the same day. The first record since April 1981 when an adult was picked up at Shoulder of Mutton and taken into care.

### **Cormorant**

*Regular visitor*

A regular visitor in small numbers to Wanstead Park; and a daily fly-over, probably commuting between the Thames and Walthamstow Reservoirs.

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 0

6/2: 0

14/3: 3

19/9: 9\*

10/10: 14\*

14/11: 15\*

19/12: 3\*

Counts of birds commuting over Flats

**Little Egrets were sighted more frequently than ever before in 2011, although the highest count—of five birds on the River Roding—couldn't quite match the 2010 peak.**

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produced some high totals, including 88 between 07:00-11:00 on 2/7.

### **Little Egret**

*Scarce but increasingly frequent visitor*  
Small numbers on several dates, especially on the River Roding and Ornamentals. For example, 1 on Lincoln Island, 18/3; 2 on Roding, 26/4; 1 over Blake Hall Road, 15/5; 5 on Roding, 18/7. 1 late bird on Ornamentals, 6/11.

### **Grey Heron**

*Regular visitor; formerly bred*  
Regularly fed on ponds in Wanstead Park—and sometimes in garden ponds on the Lake House estate—but only in small numbers. Also, a common fly-over during the breeding season.  
Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 4  
6/2: 2  
14/3: 6  
19/9: 4\*  
10/10: 4\*  
14/11: 3\*  
19/12: 3\*

### **Honey-buzzard**

**1**

*Rare passage migrant*

1 S over Wanstead Flats at 15:00, 16/9.

### **Black Kite**

**1**

*Rare passage migrant*

1 reported over Wanstead Park, 17/10.

### **Red Kite**

**3**

*Increasing passage migrant, especially in spring*

1 flew W over Warren Road entrance to the Park on 19/3; 1 over Windsor Road, 26/3; 1 flew NE over Park, 11/5. Is local breeding that far off?

### **Goshawk**

**3**

*Rare visitor*

Male over Flats, 21/9; 2 displaying over Old Sewage Works (OSW), 13/8; probable male, Reservoir Wood, 27/12.

### **Sparrowhawk**

*Scarce resident, breeds locally*

Ones and twos are regularly seen, especially over Wanstead Flats.

Breeding: young fledged in Wanstead Park.

## FINDING THE WRYNECK, 16 SEPTEMBER

For most local birders the find of the year was the Wryneck on Wanstead Flats in mid-September. Not only was it a fantastic local record, but it stayed for nine days and was shared by hundreds of birders, local people and even people out walking their dogs. But things could have been so very different, as finder Nick Croft describes the events that led to his discovery.

I remember very little of the early morning of 16th September. It was overcast though not cold, and Steve Thorpe and I had had a rewarding day for early autumn. From my notes: “4 Wheatears, presumably in the broom fields, 2 Whinchats, Tree Pipit, Numbers of passage warblers and a couple of Spotted Flycatchers recorded on the loop from Capel Point to the Alex via the eastern edge of Long Wood.”

There, on the return leg, a female Redstart caught my eye, flying between the bushes. With another appearance not forthcoming I wandered back down the path and saw a couple of Chaffinches in a hawthorn. For want of anything better to look at I raised my bins to give them the once over. A curious looking Chaffinch appeared in my field of view. In my larger bins, this curious finch now had a stripe through its eye—assuredly not what I had expected.

Cue expletives, and a quickening heart rate. I signalled to Steve, regretting it immediately as he wheeled his squeaky bike towards me. “Lose the \*\*\*\*\*

bike” I hissed. “Wryneck!” Once he was on the bird I quickly phoned Jono (the nearest likely birder). I can’t remember what his reaction was, but by now my legs were jelly. I tried to get Steve to let me use his shoulder to digi-bin a record shot—but he was not obliging. For ten minutes the bird perched, gazing around, but before Jono arrived it flew past us up and around the south end of Long Wood. My heart sank, this was surely something that needed to be shared, and despite our efforts and those of others the bird was not refund.

The next day I was looking at a Chaffinch in the scrub by Alexandra Lake. Thirty seconds later, the phone conversation went like this: “Jono. It’s Nick. It’s happened again ...”

*Originally found on 16 September, this Wryneck—the first record for many years—eventually took a liking to the area of scrub and anthills near Alexandra Lake, Wanstead Flats, where it remained until 24 September.*



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**Most people assumed this spring passage Dunlin wouldn't stay long—especially because it was on the muddy margins of Jubilee Pond, just feet from a popular dog-walking route. But most people were wrong: amazingly obliging, the bird remained all day on 21 April.**

### Common Buzzard

*Occasional visitor, and passage migrant in spring and autumn*

Judging by the increase in records, breeding may be getting closer. 1 flew S over the Ornamentals, mobbed by crows, on 17/1. Spring passage involved 10 birds between 11/4–22/5, including 4 over Windsor Road on the last date. Then 2 over Windsor Road, 1/8; singles over Flats on 3/9, 5/9, and 21/10; 2 E over the area (Flats and Ornamentals) in poor weather on the morning of 9/11; 1 in the Park, 29/11.

### Osprey

*Rare visitor*

1 over Ilford Golf Course, 11/8.

### Kestrel

*Scarce resident*

Regularly seen, especially over Wanstead Flats. Local breeding is presumed but not confirmed.

### Merlin

*Rare visitor*

One in broom fields (Wanstead Flats), early morning of 11/9; another in same area, 1/11.

### Hobby

*Summer visitor; bred locally*

The first was over the Flats on 20/4, and the last was 1 over Warren Estate on 2/10.

Breeding: young birds seen in late summer.

### Peregrine Falcon

*Scarce visitor*

Single birds were seen on at least 10 dates, including over Windsor Road, 7/2 and 13/4; over the Flats, 18/8; and stooping on pigeons over Jubilee Pond, 21/9. It has been proposed that these birds are from Stratford or Walthamstow. With the increasing London breeding population, more are to be expected.

### Water Rail

*Scarce winter visitor*

Early year: a bird first seen in the Dell on 9/1 was present to 26/3 at least, frequently showing very well.

Late year: 1 by Ornamentals on 14/11 and 12/12; 1 took up residence at the west end of Perch from 11/12; and there was 1 by the Roding on 20/12, with possibly 2 there.

### Moorhen

*Common resident*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 21  
6/2: 20  
14/3: 21  
19/9: 43\*  
10/10: 50\*  
17/11: 56\*  
19/12: 40\*



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**Coot***Very common resident*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 173+

6/2: 90

14/3: 150

19/9: 228\*

10/10: 215\*

17/11: 239\*

19/12: 159\*

Peak count: 251, most on Heronry, while most of the Park's ponds were still frozen, 30/12. Is this a Park record?

**Little Ringed Plover***Rare visitor*

One very briefly at Alexandra Lake on morning of 25/4.

**Golden Plover***Rare visitor*

1 circled over Alexandra Lake, 09:00 on 4/9; 2 NW over Flats, 26/9.

**Lapwing***Scarce visitor in cold weather, and mid - summer passage*

Early year: 3 over Jubilee Pond on morning of 7/2; 3 over Fairground Flats, 18/5. Midsummer: 5 birds on three dates passed over Flats in the period 10–12/7. Late year: 1 over iced-up Basin, 1/12; 11 S over Flats during cold-weather movements, 7/12; 4 N, 8/12; 41 S, 20/12.

**Dunlin***Rare visitor*

One remained at Jubilee Pond all day on 21/4. Probably the first record since a long-stayer by Alexandra Lake in 1979.

**Common Snipe***Scarce winter visitor*

Probably more regular, especially on the Flats (SSSI and broom fields) than previously thought. Seen in nine months of the



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year. Records include 3 by Jubilee Pond, 17/1; 1 flushed from boggy area there on 7/2. Also, singles over Windsor Road on 7/1 and 10/12; 1 by Reservoir Wood stream, 21/12. Monthly day peaks as follows:

Jan: 3  
Feb: 3  
Mar: 1  
Apr: 4  
Aug: 1  
Sept: 3  
Oct: 3  
Nov: 2  
Dec: 5

*One of the spring's two Common Sandpipers. Both birds frequented the margins of Heronry Pond on the morning of 14 May.*

**Woodcock***Very scarce winter visitor, possibly only in harsh conditions*

5 birds were seen from 28/11, with sightings in Bush Wood, SSSI, and The Dell.

**Black-tailed Godwit***Possibly rare visitor*

Report of 6 over Heronry, 21/8.

**Whimbrel**

*Rare visitor* 1 S over Flats, 7/7; 1 over Flats, 17/7.



**Common Sandpiper**

*Scarce passage migrant*

Spring passage very poor: 2, Heronry, 14/5. Autumn passage much better with 11 birds in period 30/6–5/9, including 5 at Alexandra Lake, 27/8.

19/9: 1\*

10/10: 0\*

17/11: 206\*

19/12: 315\*

The biggest numbers are found on the playing fields of Wanstead Flats. The largest count was of 1,000+ there, when the Flats were waterlogged and partially flooded, 28/2.

**Green Sandpiper**

2

*Very scarce passage migrant*

Just two: 1 heard over SSSI, 5/9; 1, Alexandra Lake, 23/10.

**Wood Sandpiper**

2/3

*Rare visitor*

Singles, Alexandra Lake, 22/6 and 2/7. A possible there, 15/6.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**

*Regular visitor in small numbers*

30 on Flats, 28/2; 50 on Flats, 1/10.

**Black-headed Gull**

*Resident, with numbers increasing in winter*

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 390

6/2: 244

14/3: 232

19/9: 153\*

10/10: 280\*

17/11: 281\*

19/12: 314\*

The largest count was of 2,000+ on the Flats when they were waterlogged and partially flooded, 28/2—an incredible sight.

**Herring Gull**

*Winter visitor in small numbers*

Peak count of 82 on waterlogged Flats, 28/2.

**Yellow-legged Gull**

*Scarce visitor in autumn*

Single adults on the Flats between 13–18/8, and on 30/10.

**Great Black-backed Gull**

*Scarce visitor; commoner in autumn?*

3 over Flats on 30/10; 5 on Flats, 2/11; otherwise mostly singles.

**Mediterranean Gull**

1

*Rare visitor*

Adult, Wanstead Flats, 6/7.

**Common Tern**

*Scarce summer visitor*

A little better than 2009. The first record, of a single bird, was over Heronry, 11/5. Then 5 birds seen over the Flats on three dates in period 10–17/7. Singles over the Basin, 18/7 and 24/7. 5 over Alexandra Lake, 27/8.

**Common Gull**

*Winter visitor*

Wanstead Flats is a very important location for this species in winter.

Coordinated waterbird counts produced the following totals:

17/1: 67

6/2: 604

14/3: 9

**Feral Rock Dove**

*Common resident*

**Stock Dove**

*Resident breeder*

Largest counts: 100+ on Lincoln Island, 2/12 and 3/12. These counts—much higher than any others—probably reflected a cold-weather relocation.



*An adult Mediterranean Gull (right-hand bird, with two adult Black-headed Gulls) was a welcome visitor to Wanstead Flats on 6 July.*

### **Woodpigeon**

*Abundant resident and autumn passage migrant*

Autumn passage was not as visible as in 2009, with 85 NE over Flats, 31/10; 110 SW over Flats, 8/11.

### **Collared Dove**

*Resident breeder*

### **Turtle Dove**

*Rare passage migrant*

2 N over Alexandra Lake, 8/5; 1 purring in Long Wood, 19/5.

### **Ring-necked Parakeet**

*Increasing resident. Bred in Wanstead Park*

Up to 30 or more commuting N from south of our area, over the Flats, early morning. Some of these birds continue over the Park to forage north of our area. Breeding: in Wanstead Park.

### **Cuckoo**

*Rare passage migrant*

1 over Wanstead underground station, 9/5.

### **Little Owl**

*Resident breeder?*

1 or 2 were seen on Wanstead Flats on various dates from 22/3. Breeding not confirmed.

### **Short-eared Owl**

2

*Rare visitor*

1 flushed south of Long Wood at 07:00 on 13/9; another near Bush Wood, 2/10.

### **Tawny Owl**

*Scarce resident, breeds*

1–2 birds heard or seen on several dates, especially in Bush Wood. 1 heard on Flats, 9/8.

Breeding: pair and 2 chicks seen, Bush Wood, 15/7.

### **Common Swift**

*Common summer visitor*

The first of spring was seen on 24/4.

The last were 7 over Heronry, 15/8. More than 100 were counted in feeding concentrations over the Flats on several dates, with 110 on 24/7. Records of birds breeding in the local area would be much appreciated.



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**Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers bred on Wanstead Flats in 2010.** The red on this bird's forehead and crown show that it is a male.

### Kingfisher

*Regular visitor and former breeder*  
Singles were seen regularly in Wanstead Park and along the River Roding. Also seen on several dates at Alexandra Lake. 2 on the same branch, Ornaments, 17/10.

### Wryneck

*Rare visitor*

1 was found at the east end of Long Wood on 16/9. The following day it was relocated in the burned area near Alexandra Lake, where it remained until 24/9. This bird sparked the biggest-ever twitch on Wanstead Flats, with 200 or more birders coming to admire it. See Nick Croft's personal account.

### Green Woodpecker

*Resident breeder*

Biggest count: 12, 28/3. On Flats, 10 birds included 3 young, 7/7. Pairs seen in SSSI, near Long Wood, near Alexandra Lake, on The Plain, and in the OSW. They doubtless benefit from the excellent concentration of ants' nests locally.

### Great Spotted Woodpecker

*Resident breeder*

### Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

*Scarce resident; breeds*

One, The Dell, 12/1; seen regularly in copses on Flats from March to August. Breeding: copulation (22/4), food being taken to nest-hole (early May), and juvenile with adult (9/6) witnessed in copse on Flats. Sightings in Wanstead Park around the same time suggest 2 pairs could have bred.

### Skylark

*Resident breeder on Wanstead Flats, and passage migrant*

Monthly maxima as follows:

Jan: 31 (1 singing)  
Feb: 19 (6 singing)  
Mar: 25 (10 singing)  
Apr: 25 (16 singing)  
May: 20 (15 singing)  
June: 19 (12 singing)  
July: 10  
Aug: 10+  
Sept: 18+  
Oct: 40+  
Nov: 28  
Dec: 11

Autumn peak counts were boosted by migrating birds, and the separation of local breeders from passage migrants is impossible. 40+ over Flats, 12/10. Cold-weather movement with 16 W over Flats, 16/12.

Breeding: at least 16 territories identified, though this could be an underestimate. Concentrated in three main areas: the SSSI, the area east of Centre Road and south of Long Wood, and the rough grassland south-west of Alexandra Lake. Singing birds are sometimes seen south of Bush Wood and south of City of London Cemetery. This is the closest breeding population to the centre of London.

**Woodlark***Rare visitor*

4 N over SSSI, 16/12.

**Sand Martin***Scarce summer visitor*

First bird seen, 2/4; last on 30/8.

**Swallow***Passage migrant*

First on 30/3 and last on 2/11. On 10/9 there was a big movement of 1,000+ N over the Flats between 09:00-11:30. Later, one large, straggling flock of 132 SSE over Flats, 1/10. One very late bird flying S over Wanstead village, 2/11.

**House Martin***Uncommon summer visitor*

First on 10/4 and last on 2/10. 500+ NW over Flats, 1/9; 100+ N over Flats, 10/9; 150 S over Windsor Road, 17/9; 116 N over Lake House estate in large straggling flock, 2/10

- 4 Breeding: birds collecting mud on margins of Alexandra Lake during summer.

**martin sp.**

60 mixed House and Sand Martins, Shoulder of Mutton, evening of 30/8.

**Tree Pipit***Scarce passage migrant in spring and, especially, autumn*

Spring: at least 4 birds in period 20–26/4.

Autumn: first, 19/8, followed by 2 in SSSI, 22/8. Last bird was on 12/9.

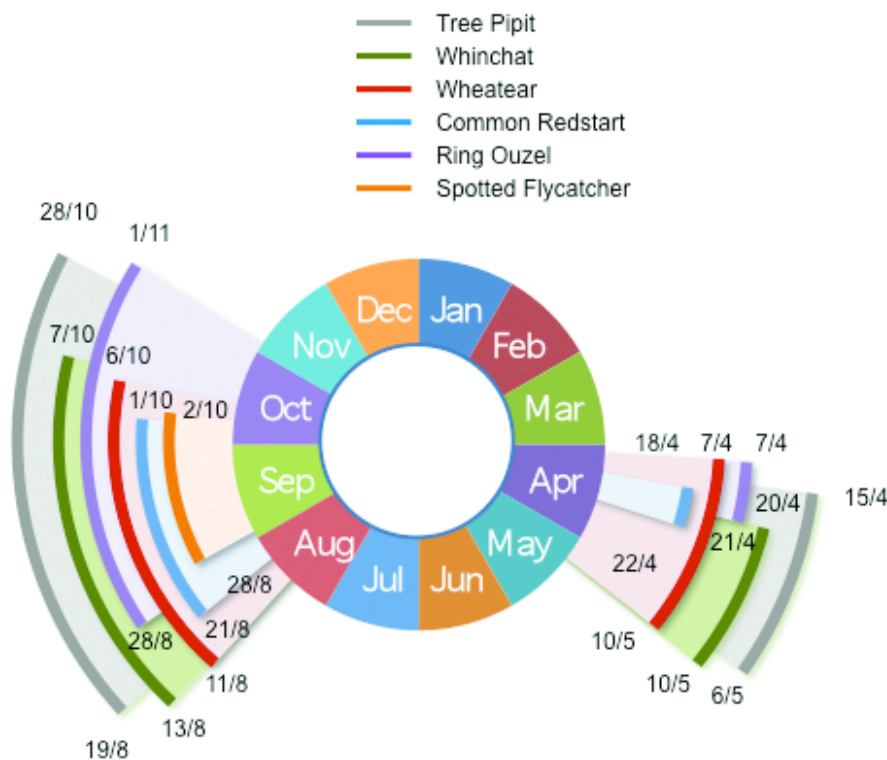
**Meadow Pipit***Resident breeder on the Flats, and a passage migrant. Good numbers passed through in autumn.*

Daily peaks, month by month, with maximum counts of singing individuals in spring:

Jan: 8

Feb: 13

Mar: 14 (7 singing)



**First and last dates of spring and autumn passage for selected migrants. Note how spring migration is much more concentrated.**

NICK CROFT



## RING OUZEL FALL, 29 SEPTEMBER

It was a grim day of easterlies and rain: fantastic! Jono Lethbridge had scored the first autumn Ring Ouzels the previous day, so I was pretty confident of finding some somewhere. The lone hawthorn in the broom fields held the first of the day's birds which sounded alarm and flew off.

At Long Wood, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, and Mistle Thrushes in abundance were fighting for the best positions in the berry bushes. Among them there were a few discernable Ring Ouzels: five definite but there could have been many more in the fall of thrushes. Even some Redwings put in an appearance.

Wet, cold, but elated I had to call it a day. As suddenly as they had arrived the ouzels had all but gone; a few hours later JL had trouble finding any.

**Nick Croft**



JONATHAN LETHBRIDGE

Apr: 16 (5 singing)

May: 9 (5 singing)

June: –

July: –

Aug: 7

Sept: 50

Oct: 17

Nov: 34+

Dec: 1

September counts included 40 on 10th and 50 on 18th, mostly passing through. Breeding: territories in the SSSI and east of Centre Road. Given the importance of our area for this species, maybe a candidate for a proper survey?

### Rock Pipit

*Rare visitor*

1 briefly, Alexandra Lake, 20/10.

### Yellow Wagtail

*Passage migrant in spring and autumn*

Spring: 2 over Flats, 25/4, followed by a

light passage.

Autumn: the highest day counts were 5 over the Flats, 22/8; 12 over the area, 4/9, including 10 over the Old Sewage Works; and 8 over the Flats, 13/9.

### Grey Wagtail

*Resident, with increased numbers in winter*

Regularly reported from margins of ponds in Wanstead Park and on Wanstead Flats.

### Pied Wagtail

*Uncommon resident*

### 1 Waxwing

*Scarce visitor in invasion years*

The first was 1 in Long Wood, 24/10; then 6–8 over Windsor Road, 26/10; 15, “Wanstead Park,” 7/11; 13 W over Flats, 7/12; and 1 NNW over Ashbourne Ave., Wanstead, 9/12.



### **Wren**

*Abundant resident*

30 singing birds counted, 28/3.

### **Dunnoek**

*Common resident and passage migrant*

13 singing birds counted, 28/3.

### **Robin**

*Abundant resident and passage migrant*

24 singing birds counted, 28/3.

### **Nightingale**

*Rare passage migrant*

1 sang briefly on The Plain on the morning of 25/4.

### **Common Redstart**

*Passage migrant in autumn*

Spring: 2 singles, the first a male in Long Wood on 7/4, and on 21/4.

Autumn: between 22/8 and 5/10. On 22-23/8 there were 2 or 3 in the scrubby area near Alexandra Lake, with a single there on 28/8; singles were also seen on the Flats on 15/9 and 5/10.

### **Whinchat**

*Passage migrant in spring and autumn*

Spring: 1 bright male, SSSI, 20/4, and

another by Fairground, 25/4.

Autumn: passage between 14/8 and 24/9, with birds present on the Flats on at least 10 dates (probably more). The peak count was 7 on 12/9. The Flats seems to be able to hold this species in autumn.

### **Stonechat**

*Winter visitor and passage migrant in very small numbers*

Early year: maximum of 2 on Flats, 17/1 and 30/3. Autumn: max. of 2, 1/10.

### **Northern Wheatear**

*Passage migrant in spring and autumn*

Spring passage between 20/3 (2) and 8/5 with a peak count of 8 on 25/4. Birds were probably present on the Flats throughout April. Autumn passage was from 11/8 to 1/10 with a peak count of 3 on 14/8. So, there were birds present on the Flats in six months of the year.

### **Ring Ouzel**

*Scarce passage migrant*

Spring: male in SSSI and Long Wood, 18/4.

Autumn: 18 bird-days in period 28/9 to 12/10, with birds present most days.

Probably 5 on Flats in big fall of thrushes



**Every March, local birders look forward to the first Northern Wheatear of the spring. In 2010 they were not to be disappointed, with a maximum count of eight on the Flats on 25 April.**

JONATHAN LETHBRIDGE



JONATHAN LETHBRIDGE

**Wanstead Flats confirmed its position of one of London's best sites in autumn for Spotted Flycatcher. In 2010 the Old Sewage Works also proved to be a good area, but Wanstead Park is surprisingly poor.**

on the morning of 29/9 (see eye-witness account). 2 first-winter males showed very well in Long Wood, 30/9. All the birds seen were on the Flats.

### **Blackbird**

*Common resident and passage migrant*

### **Fieldfare**

*Winter visitor and autumn passage migrant*

Early year: last birds of the winter were 6, Flats, 23/3. There was a singing bird there on 17/3.

Autumn: visible migration watching produced large numbers in October and early November, including 42+ W, 16/10; 250+ W, 21/10; 250+ W, 25/10; 200 SW, Windsor Road, 26/10. A total of 1093 birds was logged from the Wanstead Flats vis-mig watchpoint during October alone.

Late year: there were indications of cold-weather movements in December, including 14 SE, 27/12.

### **Song Thrush**

*Resident breeder*

12 singing birds counted, 14/3.

### **Redwing**

*Winter visitor and passage migrant, especially in autumn*

In early year, reasonable numbers in Park and on Flats. For example, 66 on just two Flats football pitches, 7/2; 3, Flats, 25/3.

1 bird singing in SSSI, March.

In autumn, "some" with other thrushes, Flats, in fall of 29/9. Then 2 NW over Flats on 13/10 were a prelude to some heavy movements, including 300+ over Flats, 9/10 and c.120 SW over Windsor Road, 26/10. Vis-mig watches produced 918 over the Flats in October alone.

### **Mistle Thrush**

*Resident breeder*

4 singing birds counted, 28/3. 26 feeding on Flats, 29/8, and 19 there, 4/9.

### **Sedge Warbler**

*Rare visitor*

1, by the River Roding, 18/7.

**1**

### **Reed Warbler**

*Scarce summer visitor, possibly breeding*

First, a singing bird on Alexandra Lake island, 6/5. Then another singer in OSW, 17/5; 2 singing there on 27/5; and another singing male at Shoulder of Mutton from 29/5 to 15/6. Singles were also in by the River Roding on 18/7 and—the last of the year—24/7.

### **Blackcap**

*Common summer breeder and scarce winter visitor*

Wintering female in Windsor Road, 5/2.

10 singing males counted, 28/3 (Flats and

Park combined) and this number had risen to 19 by 25/4. 20+ in OSW, 22/8.

### **Garden Warbler**

*Scarce summer visitor, possibly breeding*

First bird was a singing male near Alexandra Lake, 25/4. 1–2 birds in the OSW, 8/8 to 30/8.

### **Lesser Whitethroat**

*Passage migrant and possible local breeder*

There were 5 singing birds on the Flats, 18/4, with 4 singing on 25/4. In autumn there were small numbers in the OSW in late August and early September.

Breeding: 1 singing male in the SSSI at the end of May and 1–2 singing males in the OSW at the same time suggested breeding. .

### **Common Whitethroat**

*Common summer visitor*

The first bird was a singing male in the OSW, 10/4. The last was by Alexandra Lake, 17/9. The peak count was 33 in the SSSI, 20/7, including a large proportion of juveniles. Also, 30+ mostly in the OSW, 22/8.

Breeding: 25 singing males on Flats and in Park, 23/5.

### **Yellow-browed Warbler**

[1]

*Rare visitor*

A possible was in Long Wood, 11/10.

### **Wood Warbler**

1

*Rare visitor*

1 with large flock of other warblers, OSW, 20/8.

### **Chiffchaff**

*Common summer visitor; some overwinter*

Early in the year, wintering bird around Alexandra Lake, 19/1, and near Perch Pond. Spring arrival was sudden in the

last week of March. 18 singing males counted, 28/3. Good numbers remained until early October, with singles only thereafter.

### **Willow Warbler**

*Scarce summer visitor, possibly breeding*

First was a singing male in the Park, 27/3; there were then 2 singing males in the Park on 2/4 and 1 held territory on The Plain from 25/4 to 27/5. Autumn birds recorded from 8/8 to 2/10 in OSW and SSSI, but maximum count on any day was only 2. The continued decline of this species seems to be apparent in these low figures. .

### **Goldcrest**

*Localised resident*

Very rare in early part of year, but numbers increased dramatically in autumn. c.20 counted in Park, 16/11.



*Not many years have passed since Treecreepers bred in Wanstead Park and Bush Wood, so could an increase in sightings in 2010 herald a return soon? We can but hope.*

JONATHAN LETHERIDGE

**Firecrest**

*Rare visitor*

Male, Reservoir Wood, 19/1. 1 near Grotto, 8/11, 21/11, and 27/11.

**Spotted Flycatcher**

*Autumn passage migrant*

First bird, on Flats, 21/8. Most of passage was concentrated into the last week of August, with 8 on Flats, 29/8; 10 there, 30/8. Last birds were 2 in OSW, 2/10.

Peak of 8 on the Flats, 29/8.

Daily peak counts on selected dates as follows:

22/8: 4  
28/8: 5  
29/8: 8  
30/8: 10

**Pied Flycatcher**

*Rare visitor*

Female/first-winter by riding school, 30/8; 1 near Long Wood, 16/9.

**Long-tailed Tit**

*Abundant resident*

A large element of a feeding party of 82 tits seen at Whiskers Island, 4/9, was of this species. Counts of 60+ regular in autumn and winter.

Breeding: 3 nests located in Park, 14/3; nest with young in Park, 25/4.

**Blue Tit**

*Abundant resident*

**Great Tit**

*Abundant resident*

**Coal Tit**

*Scarce resident*

Regular on Lake House estate through year. Also singles in Reservoir Wood, 19/1, and near Alexandra Lake in September. 4, near the Ornamentals, late August. Seemingly more common in the second winter period.

**2 Nuthatch**

*Very scarce visitor and former breeder*

1, Long Wood, 30/6; 1 heard in Wanstead Park, 25/9; 3, Long Wood, 5/10; 1 calling near Heronry Pond, 17/10.

**Treecreeper**

**1–2**

*Rare visitor; former breeding species*

1–2 between the Dell and the Grotto from 16/11 into 2011.

**Jay**

*Common resident*

**Magpie**

*Common resident*

50+ in roost by Warren Road, dusk 30/12.

**2 Jackdaw**

*Common and increasing resident*

**Carrion Crow**

*Common resident*

There is a large night-time roost of this species and the other corvids in Wanstead Golf Course outside the breeding season.

**Starling**

*Common resident and passage migrant, numbers increasing in winter*

Biggest day count 1,200 on 2/11, when 500 W over Flats and 700 on the football pitches.

Breeding: uses holes in trees in Park and on Flats, and plenty of juveniles noted in the Park by mid-May. Also breeds on Aldersbrook and Lake House estates.

**House Sparrow**

*Resident, much reduced in numbers*

There were signs of an increase in numbers, with regular multiple sightings in the SSSI and on the north side of Heronry Pond. Breeding on Aldersbrook and Lake House estates.



**Chaffinch**

*Resident, breeding in small numbers; numbers build in autumn*

12 singing males counted, 14/3. Noted on autumn vis-mig watches, including 45+ S over Flats, 7/10.

**Brambling**

*Passage migrant in autumn*

First record of autumn, 2 over Flats, 9/10. In period 9/10 to 5/11 at least 40 counted on vis-mig watches over Flats, including 12 N, 17/10. Also, 1 over Windsor Road, 26/10 and 2 over Windsor Road, 1/11. 2 S at Alexandra Lake, 19/12.

**Greenfinch**

*Common resident and passage migrant*

Small passage noted over Flats in late October, including 10 NW, 29/10.

Breeding: 6 singing males counted, 28/3. Juveniles seen.

**Goldfinch**

*Resident*

In early year, 16 in alders by Angel Pond, 6/2. In late year 40+ in the same place, 4/12.

Breeding: small numbers of singing birds in spring. Juveniles seen in autumn, but not known whether locally fledged.

**Siskin**

*Winter visitor*

Early year: 15 near the Dell, 13/2, was the latest record.

Autumn: 1, The Dell, 13/10, was the first. Small passage noted, with vis-mig counts on the Flats producing 8 S on 30/10. Single biggest flock was 35 by Perch, 14/11.

**Linnet**

*Quite scarce visitor*

Most birds were seen in spring, and the species was present in the OSW from 13/2 to 10/4, prompting hopes of breed-

ing. Peak counts there were 28 on 6/3, and 25 on 2/4.

**Lesser Redpoll**

*Winter visitor and passage migrant*

Commoner in second winter period, with 21 in Windsor Road garden, 15/12.

**Common Crossbill**

2

*Rare visitor*

2 flying away from City of London Cemetery, 1/1.

**Bullfinch**

*Probably scarce resident*

1–3 noted in OSW/allotments area on several dates through the year, suggesting local breeding.

**Lapland Bunting**

3

*Rare passage migrant*

As part of a big influx nationally in October, vis-mig watches on the Flats produced overflying singles on 9/10, 18/10, and 22/10.

**Yellowhammer**

*Scarce visitor*

2, Flats, 27/3, was the only early-year record. In autumn, 7–9 birds over, or on, Flats between 16/10 and 10/11, including a showy first-winter male in hawthorn by broom fields, 29/10.

**Reed Bunting**

*Scarce resident breeder and passage migrant*

Present on Flats and in SSSI throughout year. Maximum counts of presumed resident birds: 6, SSSI, 23/3 and 4 there, 18/12. 7 over Flats, 29/10, were presumed migrants.