



Birds of the Sparrowfeld Patch

2025

Bob Smith and Charlie Alpera



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Introduction

The annual report will continue a similar format to previous years giving an overview of birds and other wildlife on the patch in 2025 and two appreciations of patch watchers. In view of potential threats to the natural environment from developers some space is given over to this.

We begin with a note on the designation of a new name for the patch for reasons stated below.

New Designation

Charlie Alpera suggested that we designate the patch as Sparrowfeld as it gives the area a historical resonance and gathers together the various parts of the patch into one name.

Sparrowfeld, or Sparrow Field, which comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Spawrefeld* (1280), is an informal name that local birdwatchers give to our 'patch'. It was originally an expanse of common land between the medieval villages of Morden, Cheam, Malden and Cuddington. Today, 230 acres remain, between the neighbourhoods of Worcester Park, Lower Morden, Motspur Park and Old Malden. Located within an area of Metropolitan Green Chain, Sparrowfeld has a variety of habitats and sites, with many designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

(Charlie Alpera: <https://sparrowfeld.com>)

Acknowledgements:

I would particularly like to thank. **Charlie Alpera (CA)** for his detailed work on the History of Sparrowfeld, his tireless work regarding challenges to the proposed gasholder developments, some notes on other threats to Sparrowfeld and his observations of the birdlife throughout the year. **Bob Smith (BS)** was able to observe regularly in the first and second winter and spring periods. Other observers I would like to thank are **Bill and Janis Reid (B &JR)**, **Danny Ramsay (DR)**, **Mark Bravery (MB)**, **Robin Lloyd (RL)**, **Michael Leonard (ML)** , **Julie Drewett (JD)**, **Malcolm and Fiona Miles (MM)**, **Steven Shimwell (SS)** , **Rowan Thompson (RT)** , **Ricky Fieldsend (RF)**. Two visiting South African birders, **Lester and Cheryl Van Groeningen**, once again contributed observations during the last two weeks of December. **Robin Lloyd, Michael Leonard, Bill Reid and Lester Van Groeningen** provided photographs. **Michael Freter** was a great champion in pressing the horse fields (historically Hide Hill) to Sutton Council as a site of environmental importance. Apologise if I have missed anyone.

Sparrowfeld Patch boundary

Outlined in Blue

The study area remains the same as previous years, comprising The Hamptons Estate(HH), which includes Mayflower Park(MP), Horse Fields(HF), Joseph Hood Park(JH), Gas Holder Wood(GHW), Battersea New Cemetery/Morden Cemetery(MC), Pyl Estate/Derwent Floodwater (DFW), Sutton and Merton Cemetery(SMC), Rugby Field (RF) and the Paddock (P). Occasional forays were made into the rest of the Hamptons Estate, and some records pertain to this area. **Please note this includes the gasholders, Kingshill Allotments and a small parcel of wood to south of gasholders.**





Gasholders from Joseph Hood



Entrance into GHW from Joseph Hood: brambles and blackthorn



Derwent flood water looking towards Morden Cemetery



Athur Road Allotment



Morden Cemetery near western edge

Brief summary of the Bird year:

2025 was an average year **with 79 species** recorded. There were no new species. Highlights included a **Water Rail** in first winter period, 2 **Green Sandpiper** in December, a lone **Lapwing** during the same month, record numbers of **Stock Dove** in October, unusual numbers of **Greylag Geese** in May, the first fledgling **Heron**s from a nest in GHW, three observations of **Hobby**, two **Mistle Thrush** records, good **Willow Warbler** sightings and a **Garden Warbler** in the summer. Record numbers of breeding **Reed Warblers**, a **Sedge Warbler**, **Common Redstart**, and **Firecrest**. A **Brambling** in the autumn and finally an increase in **Raven** observations, perhaps referring to the same pair. There were no sightings of **Whinchat** or **Stonechat**. **Wheatear** numbers were very poor.

Full Summary of the Bird Year

January

53 species were observed.

Highlights were a **Raven** on gasholders, **Water Rail** on one date, **Fieldfare** on one date, **Chiffchaff** on two dates, two **Common Buzzard** observations. **Reed Bunting** on last day of month.

A **Little Egret** was seen on three dates on HF, DFW and Pyl Brook. A **Cormorant** flew south on 29th. 2 **Egyptian Geese** regular on MP. Maximum of 14 **Moorhen** and 3 **Coot** on MP. **Water Rail** on MP on 19th (CA). One or two **Peregrine** regular on pylons and gasholder. **Common Buzzard** in MC on 29th (CA) then 5 seen soaring from JH next day (BS). 30 **Herring Gull** in SMC on several days. Maximum 220 **Black headed Gull** during period. **Common Gull** regular with maximum 12 on Rugby on last day of month. **Little Owl** in MC on two dates. **Kingfisher** in MP and one seen on one date on Beverley Brook. **Chiffchaff** in MP on 1st and one border JH/HF on 26th. **Goldcrest** in GHW on two dates. **Cole Tit** in MC on one date. **Fieldfare** on HF on 20th. Poor **Redwing** numbers but 31 in GHW on 29th and 15 there on 31st. Maximum of 23 **Chaffinch** on HF on 10th. Just two observations of **Greenfinch** by GHW on 25th and 31st. 23 **Goldfinch** in MC on 23rd. **Pied Wagtail** maximum of 15 on HF. **Grey Wagtail** on Beverley Brook. **Jackdaw** on HF maximum of 63 and 230 at roosting on 2nd. Good numbers of **Magpie** there with maximum 13. **Carrion Crow** reached 130 on HF on 10th (may be a patch record. **Raven** seen and heard (recording available) by CA on gasholders on 25th was 4th patch record. **Reed Bunting** on 31st in MP(CA).

February

49 species were observed

Highlights were **Firecrest**, **Chiffchaff** on several dates, **Blackcap** singing, **Nuthatch**, **Cetti's Warbler**, **Peregrine** and female **Pheasant**.

In Gasholder Wood **Chiffchaff** seen on several dates. **Firecrest** there on 1st, **Goldcrest** on one date. Up to 3 **Grey Wagtail** on Beverley Brook. **Peregrine**, one or two around the gasholders and pylons. **Little Egret** on one date on pools. On pools maximum of **18 Moorhen** and 3 **Coot**. 2 **Canada Geese** and 2 **Egyptian Geese** regular. One **Cormorant** on 5th and **Water Rail** on 2nd. **Cetti's Warbler** singing. Joseph Hood fields up to 2 **Common Gull**. Horse fields with maximum of 15 **Pied Wagtail** and up to 20 **Chaffinch**. **Starling** numbers variable but 50 On 21st. Maximum of **100 Carrion Crow**. Very few **Redwing** but 15 in SMC on 25th. A female **Pheasant** in MC on 28th. **Kingfisher** irregularly on pools. Good to see 4 **Greenfinch** in territory already. Male **blackcap** singing close to Hamptons on 22nd.

March

49 species were observed

Highlights were **Little Egret** on two dates , **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** in good numbers **Cetti's Warbler**, **Common Buzzard** on two dates and good numbers of **Red Kites**. It's also worth mentioning that with good sunshine at times there have been butterfly sightings: **Brimstone**, **Peacock**, **Red Admiral**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Small White** and **Comma**.

Little Egret on two dates on DF. Three pairs of **Coot** on pools and five/six pairs of **Moorhen**, both species nest building. Up to three pairs of **Canada Geese** on pools and one **Egyptian Goose**. **Peregrine** scarce on one date. **Sparrow Hawk** regularly displaying around GHW and MC. Male and female **Kestrel** regularly. **Common Buzzard** one on 19th and two on 31st. Good series of **Red Kite** observations with 5th(3), 18th and 20th one, 22nd (4), 25th and 26th one. Rapid disappearance of **Black-headed Gull** with only 7 on pools on 20th. Last **Common Gull** on 19th. **Stock Dove** low numbers on HF but 10 on 29th. **Grey Wagtail** on Beverley Brook. **Chiffchaff** regular all month with 4 on 5th then 10 on last day of month. **Blackcap** also from 15th then 7 by months end. One **Cetti's Warbler** on pools. **Goldcrest** on one date in GHW and two dates in MC. **Redwing** were generally scarce with six on 9th and last seem MP on 20th **Cole Tit** 2 in MC on one date. **Chaffinch** scarce with only up 5 on HF. 4 **Greenfinch** territories by end of March.

April

52 species were observed

Highlights include the arrival of summer visitors: **Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Common and Lesser Whitethroat, Wheatear, Sand Martin, Swallow, early Swifts.** Also of note, **2 Ravens** flying over on two dates, **Red Kite, Buzzard,** late **Redwing, Greylag Goose, Mallard** and **Egyptian Goose young,** singing **Goldcrest** and nesting **Heron.**

A pair of **Hérons** built a nest on the outside of GHW and to date two young were present. Another nest across the Beverley Brook was being inspected by two more Herons. **Cormorants** were seen on two dates flying over. **Egyptian Geese** with 8 goslings were safely transported from MC to the pools on 8th. To date there are 5 remaining. CA stated that they have been nesting in MC for the last four springs. 2 **Greylag goose** on HF. For the first time in many years **Mallard** ducklings were on the pools and on Beverley Brook in GHW. There are five pairs of **Moorhen** and three or four pairs of **Coot** on the pools. A pair of **Kestrel** seen frequently. **Peregrine** very infrequent but 2 around the gasholders late month. **Buzzard** on four dates with one in grounds of gasholders on 8th. Four dates for **Red Kite** flying over. **Sparrow hawk** regularly especially over MC and GHW. **Stock Dove** were present on HF all month but an unprecedented 36 on 29th. Although they breed in MC and elsewhere on patch perhaps there are birds from elsewhere that come to feed thus indicating the importance of the habitat. 2 **Ravens** flew over HF towards the east on 23rd and 25th. A **Grey Wagtail** was on Beverley Brook on several dates. Up to 5 **Pied Wagtail** on HF and breeding locally. **Redwing** seen late with one 8th in MC and two flying over on 10th. Although not in the patch CA saw a **Mistle Thrush** with food for young on Skinner's Field (Worcester Park Athletics Club) on 5th. A very poor spring for **Wheatear** with one on 1st then 3 on 14th. A good spring for **Swallow** with five days. Usually singles but 7 on 7th. **Sand Martin** on 25th Five **Swifts** on 28th were early but not surprising given the good weather. Excellent **Willow Warbler** spring all seen/heard by CA with seven dates between 7th and 17th with multiple records of 3 and 4 on two dates. **Chiffchaff** everywhere during month in territory (9 on 14th). **Blackcap** also many territories(11 on 14th). **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Whitethroat** on last day of the month. **Sedge Warbler** on pools on 7th, 10th, 11th. First **Reed Warbler** on 13th and perhaps 8 territories by end of the month. One perhaps two **Cetti's Warbler** territories on pools. **Goldcrest** in SMC on 19th and one singing near the allotment near Arthur Road on 30th.

May

50 species were observed

A **Cormorant** flew over on 3rd. One large young in **Heron's** nest on edge of GHW. **Little Egret** on Pyl Brook 11th. Pair **Coot** with one young on long water and three young on pools end of month. **Moorhen** with chick 8th. **Peregrine** only occasionally on gasholders. **Mallard** with ducklings Beverley Brook. Two **Canada Geese** on pools and small number of birds flying over. **Egyptian Geese** still with seven goslings. A good series of **Greylag Geese** on HF from 15th. Up to three **Kestrel**. **Sparrowhawk** one or two regular. Two overflying **Red Kite** and two **Common Buzzard**. Regular **Herring Gulls** flying over but 20 on 31st were catching insects early in morning (smoke cloud from Canada?). One or two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** flying over. 41 **Stock Dove** on HF on 2nd. **Swifts** regular all month. Some of these will be residents but others moving through with weather as on 23rd when 20 west. On 31st 20 high in wheeling group-see Herring Gulls on same day. 1 **Swallow** north on 8th and two north on 29th. **Lesser Whitethroat** singing on 11th. A **Common Whitethroat** in territory on pools and another on MC dump on 8th. Perhaps 10 **Chiffchaff** territory and 15 **Blackcap** territory. Probably 8 **Reed Warbler** territory. One, perhaps two **Cetti's Warbler** territory around pools. **Pied Wagtail** on HF late month. Probably two **Grey Wagtail** territory: Beverley and Pyl Brooks. 98 **Carrion Crow** on HF on 19th. **Jackdaws** nest in GHW. Three **Cole Tit** in MC on 26th. Possibly six **Greenfinch** territory. Alas no **Chaffinch**. **Goldfinch** plentiful.

June

53 species were observed

Three new birds for the year were seen during the month: Garden Warbler, Tufted Duck and Hobby.

A **Cormorant** on pools 4th. **Little Egret** on DF on 12th. Two **Canada Geese** on pools and small number of birds flying over. **Egyptian Geese** still with seven goslings. **Greylag Geese** continue to be observed on HF on four dates early June, maximum of seven with ringed U425 seen. A male **Tufted Duck** on pools on 15th(ML). **Peregrine** only occasionally on gasholders. Up to four **Kestrel** on gas holders suggest breeding. **Sparrowhawk** one or two regular. One or two overflying **Red Kite** on three dates. One **Common Buzzard** on two dates and the pale example

in GHW on 24th. A **Hobby** overflew MP on 14th (BS, CA). Regular **Herring Gulls** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** flying over. One **Black-headed Gull** flying over on two dates. 53 **Stock Dove** on HF on 1st was a good count. **Little Owl** MC on 17th and **Tawny Owl** in Kingshill Conservation Area on 30th. **Swifts** regular all month. Some of these will be residents but others moving through with weather. **Grey Wagtail** in GHW and PFA on two dates. Maximum **Pied Wagtail** numbers on HF was 7 on 19th. **Kingfisher** on pools on one date (ML). **Nuthatch** along lane NS on 14th. Some large **Starling** numbers on HF with 150 on 14th ML reports 600 in MP at pre-roost. **Goldcrest** singing in MC on 19th. A **Common Whitethroat** in territory on pools. **Garden Warbler** along edge of GHW on 11th (CA). **Cole Tit** in MSJC. 85 **Carrion Crow** on HF on 17th. 19 **Long-tailed Tit** in MC on 17th may be a patch record.

July

43 species were observed

Moorhen with broods of seven and five on 15th on pools. **Peregrines** were much more visible during the month, with up to three on gasholders and pylons. **Kestrels** were present during the month. **Sparrowhawk** one or two regular. Overflying **Red Kite** on 11th and 27th. One **Common Buzzard** soaring over Waitrose car park on 3rd moved north towards patch. Regular **Herring Gulls** and **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** flying over. Two **Black-headed Gull** flying over on two dates and an adult on MP 15th. **Kingfisher** on pools on two dates. **Swifts** regular all month. Some of these will be residents but others moving through with weather. Last seen on 30th. 2 **Swallow** flew north on 3rd. Maximum **Pied Wagtail** numbers on HF was 12 on 29th. **Common Whitethroat** with young MP on 2nd. **Cole Tit** along Beverley Brook 28th. **Chaffinch** in Mayflower Park on 6th. Good numbers of **Goldfinch** especially on GHW border with 20 on 24th.

August-October

60 species were observed

A **Little Egret** was observed on DF on 22nd October. Two **Egyptian Geese** frequented the HF in October. **Peregrine** present on Gasholders and pylons during the period. **Sparrow Hawk** and **Kestrel** seen regularly. **Hobbies** over pools on two dates in August. **Red Kites** on 11th August and 15th September. **Common Buzzard** on five during the period. **Black-headed Gull** especially on pools in small numbers. 10 **Lesser Black-backed Gull** west on 1st August. **Moorhen** with 2 chicks on 3rd September. **Tawny Owl** feather found in GHW on 1st August. **Kingfisher** occasionally seen on pools during the period. Last **Swift** on 7th August. Huge numbers of **Stock Dove on HF with 240 towards end of October was a record count**. **Collared Dove** a count of 11 by stables. **Willow Warblers** in GHW on 8th August and MP on 16th. **Last Reed Warbler** seen on 25th August. **Lesser Whitethroat** in GHW on 14th August. **Cetti's Warbler** heard singing in MP on 23rd October. **Nuthatch** in GHW on 13th Sept. **Grey Wagtail** in MP on 22nd September. Good numbers of **Pied Wagtail** in September and November on HF with 40 on 29th September, 32 on 20th October. A **Meadow Pipit** there on 22nd September. 100 **Jackdaw** at roost on 15th August. Two **Raven** on gasholders on 12th and 14th August. **Chaffinch** numbers built up on HF towards end of October with maximum of 15. Also, female **Brambling** on 27th October. **Goldfinch** up to 20 in period.

November

53 Species were observed

Little Egret :Two dates on DF

Cormorant: Two dates on pools

Egyptian Goose: two more or less permanent on HF with forays to the pools

Moorhen: Up to 14 on pools

Coot: one on pools

Peregrine: Not very obvious on gasholders or pylons. One or two dates

Sparrow Hawk: occasionally soaring over area, also GasHolder Wood.

Red Kite: two observations of fly-over birds.

Black-headed Gull: up to 40 on pools

Common Gull: 2 on Rugby mid month

Stock Dove: still good numbers on HF with between 150 and 200 birds

Collared Dove: Up to 16 around feeders by stable.

Kingfisher: on two dates on pools

Grey Wagtail: On Pyl and Beverley Brooks on two dates, also HF on one date

Pied Wagtail: Daily on HF with up to 20 birds

Meadow Pipit: 7th November one on HF

Blackcap: 2 different birds: GHW and MP on 13th

Chiffchaff: two dates on MP

Cetti's Warbler: Heard singing on two dates on MP

Goldcrest: on two dates in GHW and MP

Firecrest: one on two dates in GHW

Redwing: Very poor month with just two observations on HF

Mistle Thrush: 8th one heard back of JH, 18th 2 in MC flew off.

Cole Tit: one on DF

Goldfinch: Up to 20 on HF and lesser numbers in MP

Chaffinch: Up to 40 regularly on HF

Brambling: one with Chaffinches on HF 7th/8th

Jackdaw: Regular on HF and stables with up to 60 birds

Raven: 13th one flew away south

Starling: up to 500 but generally only 150 birds

December

52 Species were observed

Little Egret :One on two dates on DF

Cormorant: Two dates on pools

Egyptian Goose: two more or less permanent on HF with forays to the pools

Moorhen: Up to 14 on pools

Coot: max of 3 on pools late month

Peregrine: Not very obvious on gasholders or pylons. One or two dates

Sparrow Hawk: occasionally soaring over area, also GasHolder Wood.

Red Kite: One on 15th and 25th

Common Buzzard: one on 15th.

Black-headed Gull: up to 40 on pools

Herring Gull: 6 on HF on 31st

Lesser Black-backed Gull: one on HF on 31st

Green Sandpiper: two flew across pools on 3rd

Lapwing: One flew away from pools on 25th-first for many years

Stock Dove: Decline in numbers on horse fields from 100 on 2nd to 20 at months end.

Grey Wagtail: On Beverley Brooks on two dates

Pied Wagtail: Daily on HF with up to 10 birds

Blackcap: one in lane N/S and MP

Chiffchaff: Up to two on three dates MP

Cetti's Warbler: Heard singing on one date MP

Goldcrest: on three dates dates in GHW , MC, lane E/W

Firecrest: one on two dates in GHW

Redwing: Very poor month with just four in MC 31s

Cole Tit: two dates GHW

Goldfinch: Up to 20 on HF and lesser numbers in MP

Chaffinch: Up to 18 regularly on HF

Jackdaw: Regular on HF and stables with up to 70 birds but 100 on 10th

Raven: one on pylon MP flew south on 12th

Starling: up to 100 but generally only 40 on HF

Species Accounts

Listed according to **BOU/IRBC/IOC**

informal star ratings for some bird species

Canada Goose:

There were two on HF during the first part of the winter that also appeared on lakes. During the breeding season there were one or two pairs, but they did not nest. Occasionally seen on the patch with one or two on HF and MP during winter and autumn.

Greylag Goose*:

A good series of observations: 15th April four on HF, then a good series of records in May on HF. They were regular first thing in the morning then gone by mid-morning: **15th 2, 17th 8, 18th 10, 19th 15, 26th 15, 28th 24, 31st 6**. Some indication where they might be coming from is provided by observations that some were colour ringed: U425, U503, U334. News of these came from **Bill Haines from West London Birding**. He's a free-lance Ornithologist doing research with Royal Parks.

U334 was ringed Kensington gardens 21/06/2022

Then seen Kew Gardens 16/08/2022

ST James Park 12/09/2022

Dorney Common Berks 18/08/2023

Kensington Gardens 23/07/2024

Worcester Park 29/05/2025

U503 was ringed Hyde Park 28/06 /2024

Richmond Park 11/07/2024

Worcester Park 29/05/2025

There is a possibility that these birds were affected by dry weather during the period and coming to the HF to graze. In any case they were tame and readily took bread offered to them.



Photo: Bob Smith

Mute Swan:

Very occasionally seen flying over. None on the pools.

Egyptian Goose:

Two on the pools during the first winter period. Then on April 8th seven goslings were on the pools having been guided there by staff from MC. One of these soon disappeared and the remaining six with the parents were resident throughout the spring and summer. Thereafter the presumed two adults were on HF during the autumn and winter.



Photo Michael Leonard

Mallard:

Up to ten on pools most of year. There was a female with seven ducklings on 11th April but these soon disappeared. This is the first record of ducklings for many years. During the breeding season pairs seen on Pyl and Beverley Brooks. CA saw a duckling on Beverley Brook.



Photo Michael Leonard

Tufted Duck: *

A male on the pools 15th June



Photo Michael Leonard

Pheasant*:

28th February a female in MC

Swift:

First seen 3rd May and last seen 7th August. Regularly drinking from pools max 31st May 20. Up to 20 seen moving through the patch during inclement weather with maximum of 20.

Feral Pigeon:

Regularly up to ten birds on pool boardwalk and up to fifteen on HF

Stock Dove:

Present all year on HF. Up to ten on HF during first winter period. Maximum of 20 on 4th April. Present in spring and summer in small numbers but 28th April 22 and 29th 36. In autumn and winter, **unprecedented numbers present:** 24th October 100, 27th 210, 5th November 250, 8th

210, 11th 200 but reducing to 20 by years end. MC stronghold for breeding but pairs in GHW (2), PFA (1), DF (1)

Woodpigeon:

Present all the year round and especially obvious in autumn and winter. Primarily on HF but unlike the previous species no unprecedented numbers.

Collared Dove:

A bit more obvious this year especially around the feeders by the stable with maximum of 11 and 16 during the autumn period. Five breeding territories.

Moorhen:

Maximum 18 in MP during the first winter period. Five pairs raised 12 young in MP. Up to 14 during second winter period. Pairs also present on Beverley Brook where young were seen. Two pairs on Pyl Brook. There were two on east HF near stable gate during the winter period.

Coot:

Maximum 4 during first winter period on pools. Three pairs bred but only 3 young seen. Maximum of 3 during second winter period.

Water Rail**

One on two dates on pools during first winter period. Not heard or seen during second winter period despite playing back calls.

Lapwing:***

One flew away from the pools on 25th December. The first observation for many years. This was during a period of cold weather.

Green Sandpiper:**

Two flew from the pools on 3rd December (CA, BS)

Herring Gull:

Always present if only flying over. In winter periods small numbers on HF, SMC.

Lesser Black -backed Gull:

As above species often present if only flying over. One or two adults on HF and Rugby in winter period.

Black-headed Gull:

Present daily during first winter period up until mid-March. Maxima 220 all areas on 27th January. Birds returning as flyovers from mid-June. Again, present on HF, JH, Rugby from October. Up to 50 on pools.

Common Gull:

Irregular. Maximum of 12 on rugby 31st January. Present in ones and twos on Rugby and JH in second winter period.

Cormorant:

One on pools during first and second winter period and sometimes flying over.

Little Egret:

Ten observations of a single bird during first and second winter period either on Pyl Brook or DF. Michelle Allen had seen four on DF in October.

Grey Heron:***

One or two always present on pools and sometimes DF and Beverley Brook. On 13th April an adult was seen sitting on a nest on the outside of GHW by HF. There were two young in the nest 28th April and one had fledged by 22nd May although the second juvenile was not seen. This is the first patch record of successful nesting. A second pair were investigating the previous year's nest across Beverley Brook but nothing seemed to have come of this.



Photo Charlie Alpera

Sparrow Hawk:

Male and female observed intermittently during the year usually GHW,HH,HF,MC.

Red Kite:

Twenty-two sightings during the year. 3 birds on 5th March and 4 22nd March otherwise single birds flying over. Monthly bird dates

Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
13	6	2	4	1	1			1	2

Common Buzzard:

A good year with up to five birds on fourteen dates of birds flying over. CA had a pale bird in GHW ON 8TH April.



Photo Charlie Alpera

Little Owl:

One or two in MC but becoming difficult to locate.

Tawny Owl*:

A feather found in GHW in August. Just outside the patch one seen in Kingshill Allotment on a pylon in August.

Green Woodpecker:

Regularly seen in MC and also HH and SMC. Four breeding territories.

Great Spotted Woodpecker:

Regularly seen in GHW, and MC. Probably five breeding territories: 2GHW, 2MC, 1MP

Kingfisher:

Very irregular with only a few sightings on pools and Beverley Brook



Kingfisher by Michael Leonard

Kestrel:

One or two regularly in MP, MC and Gas holders. Probably bred as two juveniles with adults on gas holders in August.

Peregrine:

Regular most of year with two to four birds on pylons and gasholder. With four birds in the summer suggests juvenile birds. This may have come from Morden site.

Hobby: *

Three sightings all from MP: 14/06, 3/08, 17/08

Ring-necked Parakeet:

Resident all year and breeds in GHW, MC and DFW

Jay:

Present all year. More obvious in the autumn when seeking for acorn. Breeds in GHW and MC.

Magpie:

Present all year. No estimate of breeding population.

Jackdaw:

Up to 60 on HF during first winter period. 250 at roost during January. Bred in MC and GHW. Present on HF and Paddock with variable numbers during second winter period, with up to 60 regularly.

Carrion Crow:

Present all year with between 80-100 birds primarily on HF and MC. Biggest count was 130 plus on 13th January. Possibly a patch record.

Raven:***

An excellent year with six sightings possibly relating to the same pair. Usually on the gasholders or pylons: 23 April 2 flew SE, 25 April flew east, 12th August 2 on gasholders, 14th August 2 on gasholders, 13th November 1 flew SE, 12th December one on pylon MP.

Blue Tit:

Present all year unknown number breeding

Great Tit:

Present all year unknown number breeding.

Cole Tit:

Nine observations during the year with one to three birds in MC, GHW and DF. Three in MC in May suggests breeding.

Sand Martin:

25th April one flying over MP was the only observation.

Swallow:

Five spring observations between 7th April (7) until May 29th all flying north. 3rd July 2 north.

Cetti's Warbler:**

One possibly two territories all year around the pools.

Long-tailed Tit:

Present all year. Unknown number of breeding territories-estimate 10 pairs. Max 12 counted on December.

Chiffchaff:

One in GHW on two dates during second winter period. Two besides pools on Jan 1st. By 5th March 4 on patch and 10 by end of month. 16 breeding territories. Regular in MP in October. One on two dates in November and two on three dates in December around the pools

Willow Warbler:*

A good year with sightings in spring and late summer. Spring sightings all by CA: April 7th, 14th, 15th(4), 16th(3). Two observations in August in GHW of a single bird.

Reed Warbler:

First on 13th April then eight singing birds my months end. Ten breeding territories. Last on 28th August.



Photo by Michael Leonard

Sedge Warbler:

7th, 10th and 11th April on the pools. No evidence of breeding territory.

Blackcap:

22nd February a male near MP. Then from 6th March and seven by 31st March. 21 breeding territories. Two different birds in November and on two dates in December.

Whitethroat:

Another poor year. First on 30th April. One breeding territory around pools. One 22nd June on horse fields then two sightings in August GHW.

Lesser Whitethroat:

Three observations: 30th April, 2nd June, 14th August. No evidence of breeding.

Garden Warbler*

11th June one along edge of GHW.

Firecrest*:

A normal year. Five observations all GHW either in holly or ivy: 1st February, 17th and 23rd November, 2nd and 13th December.

Goldcrest:

Five observations in first winter period in GHW and MC. One singing by allotment near Arthur Road on 30th April and one song in MC mid-June suggest breeding. One or two on three dates in autumn/winter in GHW, MP and lanes.

Wren:

Present all year. Estimated 35 breeding territories of this vocal bird

Nuthatch:

Very poor year with just a few observations in February in GHW

Starling:

Regular on HF first winter period with maximum of 100. Generally smaller numbers until young fledged in June then maximum of 100. Generally more obvious in autumn and second winter period with 30-100 birds but 500 on one date. Breeds on the patch.

Song Thrush:

Present all year. Nine estimated breeding territories.

Mistle Thrush:*

Two observations: 8th November towards north end of JH and 18th two in MC flew off.

Redwing:

Very small numbers in first winter period in all areas with maximum 31 on 29/01 in GHW. Last seen 19th April two flying over. Very scarce in autumn and last winter period maximum four on three dates

Fieldfare:

20th January 1 on HF was only observation.

Blackbird:

Present all year. Unknown number of breeding territories

Robin:

Present all year. Estimated 50 breeding territories.

Wheatear*:

Very poor year with no autumn records. 1st April one, 14th April 3 on HF



Photo Charlie Alpera

Common Redstart: **

21st April a male in MP. This was found by RF. It flew between the tennis courts and the pools.

House Sparrow:

Present all year particularly in areas beside feeder at stables, scrub by path across horse fields and around the pools. Good concentrations of up to 50 in first locality and 30 by second.

Dunnock:

Present all year. Estimate twenty breeding territories.

Grey Wagtail:

Regular on Pyl and Beverley Brooks and occasionally on HF. Two breeding territories on the brooks.

Pied Wagtail

Present all year especially on HF. Up to 15 in first winter period then maximum 5 in the spring. Maximum of 12 in July includes juvenile birds. Good numbers between August and November would almost certainly include migrants. 40 On 29th September. November and December lower numbers between 10 and 20 birds.

Meadow Pipit:*

Very poor showing all on HF: one on 22nd September and 7th November

Chaffinch:

Present in variable numbers on HF during first winter period maximum 17 birds. One or two birds seen in breeding season but no obvious territorial behaviour. 15 south west on 22nd October. Then regular on HF from mid-October with maxima of 27 on 7th November and 40 on 11th. Still up to 18 birds by years end.

Brambling :**

A female on HF with Chaffinch's on 27th October and 7th/8th November

Greenfinch:

Almost non-existent during both winter periods. Good numbers of breeding territories throughout the patch but not counted. Especially evident in MP and MC.

Goldfinch:

Present throughout the year. Regular in January with maximum of 12 on 16th in MC. In February and March maximum of 20. Difficult to estimate breeding numbers but particularly common in HH. Regular in autumn with maximum of 30 on HF 15th October. Up to 10 in second winter period.

Reed Bunting:

Very poor showing. November 13th a female on pools. There has been a decline in wintering birds around the pools and this cannot be due to the lack of reeds. There were no birds in the breeding season.

Cumulative Species Total 2007-2024

The patch list is **122 species**. There are in addition **14 species** from the period prior to 2007.

Standard Walk Count:

Seven standard walks through a prescribed route were made in January, March, April, May, July, August and November. The walks took approximately two hours (usually between 10am and noon) and recorded all birds seen and heard. The route was between the horse fields, GHW along Beverley Brook, across JH into MC, west edge of MC then to entrance and back along east edge, lane north - south to stables, lane east-west to MP entrance then pools and back to beginning of horse fields.

The following shows totals of number of birds and numbers of species:

Jan 7th 361 birds of 30 species

Mar 26th 284 birds of 28 species

April 14th 261 birds of 30 species

May 29th 251 birds of 35 species

July 3rd 200 birds of 29 species

Aug 6th 233 birds of 25 species

Nov 4th 927 birds of 26 species(exceptional number but contained 500 starling and 99 Stock Dove)

Standard Walks Count in Gas Holder Wood:

Twenty-seven counts were made during the year. Usually for about 40 minutes counting all birds seen and heard on a prescribed route from the entrance near to the horse fields into the wood and following Beverley Brook and out of the far entrance. Walks were made as follows:

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	2	3	5	2	3	2	2	0	0	4	1

Thirty-one species were seen

With the **median average of 15, range 19-11 species**

The total number of birds per visit had a **median average of 53 with range of 80-22** (this ignores a high value of 112 when 33 Redwing were present)

Species presence as a percentage of total visit to nearest whole number in rank order:

Robin, Ring-necked Parakeet 100, Wren, Blue Tit, Great Tit 89,

Woodpigeon 85, Carrion Crow 81, Magpie 70, Blackbird 67, Great spotted Woodpecker, Stock Dove 63, Chiffchaff 56, Heron, Jackdaw 48,

Blackcap, Song Thrush 44, Jay, Moorhen 41, Dunnock 37, Green Woodpecker, Long-Tailed Tit 26, Goldfinch 23, Collared Dove 19, Mallard 15, Greenfinch 13, Goldcrest, Grey Wagtail 7, Kestrel, Sparrow Hawk, Firecrest 4.

Habitat Notes-Charlie Alpera

During February **the reed beds in MP were cut**. There was only a small amount of cutting mainly on the long water.

There was some **damage done to Gasholder Wood** especially towards the brook, alongside the horse field and towards the north end by the brook. The cause was Merton Council, who cleared the drainage ditch and opened an unwelcome path alongside. This resulted in increased access, and in turn damage to trees, fires, the setting up of camps and encroachment to the horse fields. The stables were informed and the police became involved. It seems that some of the perpetrators were caught. Since then, there has been much less damage.

Some thinning of trees has been carried out in **The Millenium Woodland** and bat boxes put in place.

On 30th December, **SGN cut down some trees on the gasholder site by Kingshill Avenue, next to the Brook**.

The hay/flower meadows in MC are no longer being cut by motorised balers, and instead traditional methods are being employed. Despite being more expensive, this is a drive by Wandsworth Council to be more environmentally friendly.

The major issue during the year was the proposed development of the gas holder site and the building of high-rise flats. Formal applications have now been submitted to Kingston and Merton Councils, with Planning Committee decisions expected early in 2026. There have been many meetings involving local stakeholder groups. A website provides guidance on objections: <https://motspurparkgasholdersgetinvolved.com/>.

In view of the Gasholder development much thought has been given to the patch (**Sparrowfeld**) as an area of ecological importance. **The horse fields (historically called Hide Hill)** are an important and unique local habitat, especially for feeding and resting, for both migrant and resident bird species. This site should be designated as a **SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation)**. Using the good offices of Michael Freiter (for some years overall Manager in charge of The Hamptons), Sutton Council were approached with the proposal and hopefully it will be included in the next SINC review.

Further potential threat(s) to the patch: **Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field**
Various interrelated issues have emerged:

1. *Berkeley Homes* would like to connect the gas holder site, substantially increasing footfall to the park and wood. They are also in negotiations with Merton Council about 'improvements' to the park, but nothing is being made public.
2. **The Fulham Foundation** would like to build new offices, with the mini golf (mostly grass and shrub) identified as a potential site. It appears the charity also wanted to build a caged artificial grass pitch (AGP) with floodlights.
3. Merton Council, who have labelled themselves 'London Borough of Sport', would like to build an AGP themselves. They have a shortage in the Borough and have identified the park as a location (although they have also identified a shortage of natural grass pitches!). The Council seem very determined to build one, but not necessarily in collaboration with the Fulham Foundation. However, it is likely that the charity is high on their list of potential users, as they would be a regular revenue stream. It appears that the preferred location is currently next to the car park.



Bird Recollections 2005/2006

Since these annual bird reports have only appeared since 2012, I thought to fill in gaps within the yearly observations from years prior to 2012.

I first started watching again on the patch from late 2005. The incentive for this was the opening up of the Hamptons Estate to the general public . In particular I was keen to observe the pools. As far as I can remember Mayflower Park would have been less populated with shrubs as these had yet to grow. The Elizabeth mound was not grassed and was basically a rough weedy hillock. As far as the pools are concerned these were reed lined; the pool that was later to become the fishery had a reedy peninsula towards the far left end. This proved to be beneficial in the short term. There were no fish in the pools.

During 2005 I made four visits. In 2006 I made forty visits. I think most of my visits were to Mayflower Park but also the horse fields and Gas Holder Wood. Here are some highlights finishing with some comments.

2005: four visits to Mayflower Park (MP) in November and December: Up to 20 Teal, 20 Canada Geese, 20 Mallard, 10 Moorhen, 20 Redwing.

2006: January – three visits to MP: 10 Skylark, 15 Teal and Green Sandpiper.

March: three visits MP: Wheatear, Gadwall, Shoveler, Mute Swan, 10 Teal, Stonechat, Meadow Pipit, Reed Bunting.

April: ten visits to MP: Shoveler, 6 Teal, Mute Swan, 10 Linnet, 2 Canada Geese, 2 Egyptian Geese, 5 Little Grebe, Cormorant west, 2 Wheatear, 2 Mandarin, Grey wagtail, Yellow wagtail, Reed Bunting. GHW /HF: Willow Warbler, Whitethroat.

May: five visits to MP: Wheatear, 20-50 Swifts, 2 pairs Little Grebe, Grey Wagtail, 2 Canada Geese, 2 Egyptian Geese, Sedge Warbler, Tufted Duck pair.

HF: one visit: 30 Stock Dove, Whitethroat.

July: six visits to MP: pair Tufted Duck, Mallard with six ducklings, Coot two chicks, Little Grebe nest and young, Moorhen and young. On 23rd July Green and Wood Sandpiper, 50 Goldfinch.

August: four visits MP: Little Grebe and 4 young, 100 Goldfinch, 2 Swift, Cormorant, Grey Wagtail, Linnet. GHW: pair Bullfinch

September: eight visits MP: 50-100 Goldfinch, 50 Greenfinch, little Grebe, Linnet 5-10, 20 Mallard, Grey Wagtail, Snipe, 20 Collared Dove, up to 26 Mallard.

MC: 15 Mistle Thrush. GHW Hobby over

October: five visits to MP: six Meadow Pipit, 5-30 Linnet, 30 Goldfinch, 10 Greenfinch, Grey Wagtail, 2 Stonechat, 10 Reed Bunting. HF: two visits : 20 Pied Wagtail, 15 Meadow Pipit, 50 Linnet.

November: four visits MP: 3 Reed Bunting, Linnet 30, little Grebe, Moorhen, Stonechat, 5-10 Meadow Pipit, Snipe HF: Chaffinch 25, 12 Linnet, 5 Goldfinch, 10 Pied Wagtail.

December: four visits MP: 5 Teal, 2 Stonechat, Cormorant, 2 Meadow Pipit, 20 Linnet, Grey Wagtail, 10 Goldfinch, 5 Chaffinch. HF: 25 Linnet.

A noticeable aspect of the earlier years was the number of duck species on the pools: Mallard, Teal, Tufted Duck, Mandarin, Gadwall and Shoveler. And presence of good numbers of Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Reed Bunting, regularity of Stonechat, breeding Little Grebes. Wood Sandpiper was an outstanding observation. The presence of the weedy area on the present Elizabeth mound would have been conducive for some species. That there were no big fish in the pools may have meant there were more invertebrates. There was no mention of Reed Warblers which seems something of an anomaly. Good numbers of Linnet on HF and flock of Mistle Thrush in MC.

Patch Personality: Mark Bravery

Mark, who lives in Colliers Wood, has been visiting the patch monthly for the last six years. He first came one autumn afternoon in 2020 with fellow birder Steve Shimwell (an infrequent patch visitor) after seeing a reference to the patch. He has found some interesting birds in that period including Firecrest, Lesser Whitethroat (notably a family party in July) and Redpoll (now an extremely scarce visitor). He has found the largest Siskin flock (in Morden Cemetery). Mark tends to concentrate on the horse fields as this is an unusual habitat in Greater London- he has found there the largest Wheatear group for the patch (during the spring of 2024.)

His local patch is beside the River Wandle in Colliers Wood where he has found Water Rail, Hobby, Woodcock, Pied Flycatcher and, outstandingly, a Marsh Warbler.

Mark visits other areas in Greater London by himself and as well as a member of the Merton U3A birding group. One of his best finds was a Woodchat Shrike on Beddington Farmlands.

Danny Ramsay-an appreciation:

Danny Ramsay, was for many years a general groundsman in The Hamptons. His main job was making sure that the area was clear of rubbish. He spent much of his time walking around the site emptying bins and picking up rubbish. He retired in June of 2025. Naturally walking around, he was able to note any wildlife that was on the site. Danny never wrote anything down so all his observations of wildlife, especially birds, were passed on orally. He was particularly observant of passing birds of prey, hirundines, and of nesting Goldfinches and House Sparrows, indicating that there were more around than we realised. Danny was good at recognising wildflowers and planted several species of bog plants around the pools. He was adept at finding fossils and often showed me these. He was excellent with people especially children. I remember him at one of the Hamptons Open Days manning a stand by the pools and showing off the slow worms he had found. He also on occasions gave guided tours for children from Green Lane School. Danny is still in contact as he lives in Worcester Park.

Some notes on Dragonflies and Butterflies:

Brown Hairstreak: Robin Lloyd photographed one in MP 6th August (2nd Patch record)

Purple Hairstreak: on brambles outside GHW July 23rd and 28th

Marbled White: 50 in MC on June 24th

Ringlet: Small numbers in MC and near GHW

Gatekeeper: 60 on umbellifers along lane EW on July 8th

Banded Demoiselle: one DF August 12th

Beautiful Demoiselle: Beverley Brook June 9th

Plans for 2026:

Continue to monitor birds in GHW

Attempt to assess breeding territories of Stock Dove

Assess breeding territories of Greenfinch

Monitor breeding territories of summer visitors

Write up birds of Hide Hill over period 2006-2026

Robin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wheatear	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Common Redstart	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
House Sparrow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey Wagtail	1	3	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	1	-	✓	✓	
Pied Wagtail	15	15	✓	5	✓	7	12	✓	40	32	20	10	
Meadow Pipit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	
Chaffinch	23	20	5	-	-	-	1	✓	✓	15	40	18	
Brambling	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	
Greenfinch	2	4	4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goldfinch	23	20	20	✓	✓	✓	20	✓	✓	30	20	20	
Reed Bunting	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	

Legend: Numbers = max count observed | ✓ = present (no specific count) | - = not recorded