



THE BIRDS, BUTTERFLIES AND DRAGONFLIES OF WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS



Annual Report 2020

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Welcome to the 2020 Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bird Report

Not unsurprisingly, COVID-19 has had its impact on the Commons with significant increases in visitor numbers leading to an inevitable rise in disturbance and littering. Widening of many paths and the appearance of new ones where people have wanted to explore or simply avoid each other has been a clear consequence. Many folk assume that the heather is a very robust plant but, in fact, it is particularly sensitive to trampling.

Even before the pandemic, managing the balance between people and wildlife on the Commons has always been challenging but clearly the Staff and Keepers faced an enormous task in 2020 which is still ongoing. However, if COVID-19 has demonstrated one thing, it is the realisation of how vital our green and open spaces are for people's wellbeing. Encouragingly, there has also been a renewed interest by the public in our wildlife and natural history.

The total species count was 85 (85 - 2019) which is still one of the lower counts in recent years but certainly not surprising, particularly with some observers unable or simply refraining from visiting the Commons. There is still a worrying decline in the abundance of some species particularly Meadow Pipit, Wheatears, Swifts and hirundines such as House and Sand Martins. Whether this is primarily due to lack of insect food is still uncertain but just one record of Snipe and no records of Woodcock certainly suggest increased disturbance is a factor.

Nevertheless, some birds are thriving, not least the Firecrest, Buzzard and Red Kite while the Commons still happily resound to the song of Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs each year. Kingfisher sightings seem to be increasing, hopefully due to the improvements along the Beverley Brook and thankfully, the Swallows returned once again for another year at the stables. Unusual records included Shelduck, Pheasant and Cetti's Warbler but the undoubted highlight of the year was the rescue of a grounded Swift - of which more in the report.

Anyway, please do keep your sightings coming in and I really hope at some point in 2021 to see many of you out and about on the Commons again.

Thanks are extended to all contributors to this report, a full list of which may be found below, and to Angela Evans-Hill for producing the report.

Contributors: Bella Covill, Angela Evans-Hill (AEH), Paula Graystone, Graham Guthrie, Peter Haldane (PH), Les Evans-Hill (LEH), Paula Redmond, Simon Riley, Simon Rocksborough-Smith (SRS), Tim Straw, John Weir, Jan Wilczur, John Dean, Jon Reeves (JR), Bethany Reeves, Derek Frampton, Alastair Brown, Kath Brown, Hugh Nicholson, Kate Gibson, James Owen, Kate Veale, Mike Caldwell, Ros Taylor, Thomas Purvis (TP), Kevin Allen (KA), Mike Waller, K.Bates, Martin Honey, John Lock, Guy Brown, B.Timms, Caroline Woodley, Michael Mac, Kate Cooke, Julia Hardy, Simon Edelsten, Jenny Senior, Adrian Marsh, John Carroll, Victoria Hawthorn, Sheena Moore.

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DETAILS OF BIRDS RECORDED ON WIMBLEDON AND PUTNEY COMMONS 2020

Observers' initials are shown against records where appropriate

Species

Canada Goose

Status: locally breeding resident.

Greylag Goose

Status: bred at Kingsmere in each year from 2000 to 2005, but has since become an infrequent visitor.

Two pairs at Rushmere 30 Apr (Kate Cooke).

Mute Swan

Status: prior to 2007, an irregular visitor to the Common's ponds, now a regular breeder at Queensmere in recent years.

A pair with a juvenile at Kingsmere 4 Jan, was in addition to the regular pair at Queensmere (AP) that was on nest 1 Apr (PH). From the six that hatched 7/8 May (Kevin Allen KA), five cygnets were still at Queensmere 15 May (PH).



Shelduck

Status: rare visitor

One flew over the Windmill Car Park towards Queensmere 6 Apr (KA).

Egyptian Goose

Status: breeding resident –with goslings appearing very early in the year.

A pair was at Queensmere 1 Apr (PH). There were 15 including several juveniles at Rushmere 30 Jul (AP).

Mandarin Duck

Status: feral breeding resident.

A pair on Scio Pond 19 Mar (John Dean) and two males on Kingsmere 16 Apr (Martin Honey).

Shoveler

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

4 at Kingsmere 13 Feb (K.Bates) with a female at Kingsmere 17 Sep (Michael Mac).

Mallard

Status: breeding resident with numbers increasing during the autumn and winter.

A female with 11 ducklings at Rushmere 4 May (PH).

Gadwall

Status: used to be a regular visitor to Queensmere but not seen since 2014

A very tame male at Rushmere 5th and 12 May (JR).

Pochard

Status: infrequent visitor

A female was at Queensmere 7 Mar (TS) – from being a regular winter visitor albeit in low numbers, this species was last seen in 2015.

**Tufted Duck**

Status: breeding resident (since 2000), winter visitor and passage migrant.

Maximum count of 24 on Queensmere 7 Apr (KA).

Little Grebe

Status: has bred on Bluegate in previous years but an increasingly rare visitor

One at Bluegate on 14 Apr (KA) and 16 Apr (Alastair Brown) with three there on 17 Apr (Kate Cooke / JR) including birds seen nest building. A pair was still at Bluegate 8 May (KA) and 12 May (JR) but there were no further sightings after 15 May (Tim Straw TS).

Unfortunately, there was no evidence of any successful breeding, almost certainly due to the rapidly reducing water level with the dry spring.

Grey Heron

Status: regular non-breeding visitor.

Little Egret

Status: increasingly observed in recent years.

One at Bluegate 22 Jul (JR), there again on 25th (Mike Caldwell) and 26th (KA). Two were at Kingsmere 17 Sep (Michael Mac) and 18 Sep (Bella Covill, Caroline Woodley) with four there on 23 Sep (AP), 26th (Thomas Purvis TP) and 28th (Michael Mac).

**Cormorant**

Status: a regular visitor to our larger ponds, primarily in the winter months.

Sparrowhawk

Status: breeding resident.

Red Kite

Status: increasingly observed flying over the Common in recent years.

Singles included one drifting SE over Ladies Mile 10 Feb (AP), over Putney Heath 25 Mar (LEH), low over the Plain 1 Apr (TS), low over Windmill 25 Apr (PH), low over the Mounds 29 Apr (JR) and over the Plain 15 May (PH). Two were seen over Kingsmere heading SE 30 Jul (AP) with one over A3 24 Sep (John Lock) being the only record for the remaining autumn and winter.

Common Buzzard

Status: resident and very likely breeding – passage migrants also occur.

Two at Putney Heath 18 Jan (LEH) with almost daily reports of ones and twos in the spring with a pair regularly seen near Kingsmere (KA). A young bird was heard calling near Robin Hood Road 31 Jul (per Jan Wilczur) suggesting breeding birds nearby. Two flew over Putney Heath 13 Sep (LEH).

Moorhen

Status: breeding resident.

Coot

Status: breeding resident.

Common Snipe

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, particularly following spells of wet weather.

Two were on the Plain 30 Jan (Paula Graystone). For a bird that used to be a regular winter visitor to the Plain, a disappointing showing, especially considering the very wet conditions during the early winter period.

Black-headed Gull

Status: common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Common Gull

Status: fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant.

Herring Gull

Status: uncommon winter visitor and passage migrant, mostly seen flying over.

Lesser Black-backed Gull

Status: scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Common Tern

Status: non-breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

One fishing at Rushmere 11 Jun (AP) with two there 23 Jul (James Owen) and one there 26 Jul (KA). Possibly birds commuting to Wimbledon Park.

**Feral Pigeon**

Status: fairly common feral resident.

Stock Dove

Status: breeding resident

15 were feeding on the Plain 18 Aug (JR).

Woodpigeon

Status: common breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Common Cuckoo

Status: passage migrant, has become increasingly scarce in recent years.

Heard calling near Warren Farm 13 May (Simon Edelsten), Memorial Ride 14 May (Julia Hardy) and near Queensmere 18 May (AEH).

Pheasant

Status: very occasional visitor

A male was calling on Putney Heath 14 Mar (LEH).

Tawny Owl

Status: breeding resident.

Common Swift

Status: regular but decreasing summer visitor, appearing to breed outside of the Common's perimeter.

The first returning birds were a dozen seen heading N over Putney Heath 25 Apr (LEH). The next sighting was near the Hand in Hand pub on 6 May by Bethany Reeves who recounts.....

'Yesterday evening I found a grounded swift in the middle of the road. Swifts have really small feet so they find it very tricky to set off, once on the ground (they can fly for almost 10 months without landing!). So whilst stopping lots of cars in the road from running him over, I called Dad to ask for advice. He quickly arrived with a shoebox to put him in, and we took him home where we tried to see if he'd take off with a little help. Unfortunately, he was too weak/dehydrated, so we kept him inside overnight, feeding him sugary water every now and then. I went to bed last night thinking that the chances of survival were very slim, as he looked so sad and tired in the box. But this morning, we went up to the common to try again, and this time he took flight!!'



No records were received for the usual congregations that appear over the Plain in June although 40 were over the Mounds 8 Jul (AP) and 20 were at Rushmere 30 Jul (AP). A single bird over Gravel Pit cottage 31 Aug (LEH) was the last record of the year.

Kingfisher

Status: an increasing visitor to the Beverley Brook.

All sightings were for singles from the Beverley Brook including 7 Jul (PH), 1 Sep (Adrian Marsh), 22 Sep (John Carroll), 4 Oct (Victoria Hawthorn) and 7 Oct (Sheena Moore) - sightings appear to be increasing suggesting the recent improvements to the Beverley Brook are to the Kingfisher's liking.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Status: resident but extremely elusive

Just one record of a bird at Ladies Mile 1 Apr (Jenny Senior).

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

Green Woodpecker

Status: breeding resident.

Kestrel

Status: breeding resident.

Hobby

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

The first bird of the year was over Putney Heath on the relatively early date 5 Apr (LEH) with further sightings at Rushmere 16 Apr (KA) and 20 Apr (B. Timms) and then later at Putney Heath 20 Jun and 28 Jun (LEH). Elusive as ever in terms of locating any nesting site, two were seen over Gravel Pit cottage 22 Aug and 28 Aug (AEH/LEH) while three birds (two males and a female) were seen at Putney Heath 7 Sep (Hugh Nicholson). The last sighting of the year was for two over Putney Heath on 13 Sep (LEH).

**Peregrine Falcon**

Status: occasional visitor, usually flying over

Singles flew over Wimbledon Ride North 18 Jan (JR), over Ladies Mile heading NE 8 May (LEH) and over Ladies Mile 24 Oct (TP).

Ring-necked Parakeet

Status: naturalized breeding resident.

Jay

Status: breeding resident.

Magpie

Status: breeding resident.

Jackdaw

Status: common resident and occasional breeder.

Carrion Crow

Status: breeding resident.

Coal Tit

Status: breeding resident.

Blue Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Great Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Barn Swallow

Status: passage migrant, but has started to breed again in recent years.

The first bird was back at the Windmill Stables on 8 Apr (Guy Brown) with a pair there 10 Apr (AEH). A single feeding at Rushmere on 15 Apr (JR) was no doubt passing through.

Three were flying around the Plain 15 May (PH) and while a pair were in residence at the stables, no counts were received - however seven flying around the Plain Aug 13 (TP) suggest the local breeding pair had successfully managed to fledge some youngsters. Three S over the Windmill 30 Sep were the last of the year (AP).

It is hoped to put up some Swallow nest bowls this spring, in and around the stables which may encourage other birds but will allow for a head start on nest building, if we have a very dry spring as for 2020.

**House Martin**

Status: increasingly scarce passage migrant, much declined in recent years - last bred in 2004.

There were no spring records at all. 70 went through W in small groups on 23 Sep (AP) while 20+ flying S over Ladies Mile 30 Sep (AP) were the last of the year. For a bird that once bred regularly around Wimbledon, a sad demise for this characterful species.

Skylark

Status: increasingly scare visitor

Two birds were reported flying around and displaying between Camp and Sunset Road 6 Jun (Julia Hardy) – single birds were then on the Plain on 10 Jun (JR) and 11 Jun (AP) but no further records were received suggesting disturbance was just too great for any birds to remain. Two were on the Plain 22 Oct (John Weir) with one there 11 Nov (Mike Waller).

Long-tailed Tit

Status: common breeding resident.

Willow Warbler

Status: formerly a common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant - greatly declined over the last two decades.

First heard singing at Sunset Road 10 Apr (TS) and then at Beverley Pavilion 16 Apr (SRS). There were three on Putney Heath 22 Apr (LEH), two on 23rd (Simon Riley) one there 24 Apr and five (three on the Mounds, two at Ladies Mile) 29 Apr (TS). In recent years, one or two birds sprint through in early April so it has been a better spring passage than normal.

The first returning bird was a juvenile at Ladies Mile 28 Jul (JR), while there were well over a dozen in the mixed tit flock at Ladies Mile 28 Aug (AP) with five at Putney Heath on 1 Sep and a single there on 2 Sep being the last record for the year (TP).

Common Chiffchaff

Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird wintering.

First heard at Ladies Mile 11 Mar (AP), two were at the Mounds 12 Mar (Michael Waller), one at Warren Farm 19 Mar (SRS) with counts of eight on Mar 23 (LEH) and 4 Apr (Martin Honey). One calling at Ladies Mile 15 Oct (AP) was the last record of the year.

Blackcap

Status: common breeding summer visitor and passage migrant, with the occasional bird wintering.

Three males at Putney Heath 23 March (LEH) with five singing at Beverley Meads 13 Apr (SRS) and five at Putney Heath 17 Apr (LEH). The only autumn record of note was five at Putney Heath on 17 Sep (Michael Mac).

Garden Warbler

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

First bird of year was at Tibbetts Corner 22 Apr (LEH) with singles at the Mounds on 24th (KA) and at Ladies Mile 26 Apr (JR). Two at Ladies Mile on 14 Jun (JR) with one singing was encouraging, given the earlier fire there.

Common Whitethroat

Status: breeding summer visitor and passage migrant.

Two on 19 Apr at the Mounds (LEH) were the first of the year followed by a single near the Windmill 23 Apr (Simon Riley). Five territories with three at the Mounds, one at S.end of Plain and one at Inner Windmill ride were identified on 7 May (KA) – a pair was at E.end of Plain (TS) with a single bird singing from there 11 Jun (AP).

Lesser

Whitethroat

Status: occasional spring and autumn migrant

Single birds at the Mounds 4 Aug (JR) and 15 Aug (JR) were good records.

Dartford Warbler

Status: occasional winter visitor

One calling at Ladies Mile on 13 Oct and again on 15 Oct with a mere glimpse of its tail as it flitted through the gorse (AP) – for a bird renowned for being elusive, this one really didn't want to be seen at all and was only heard again on 22 Nov and 2 Dec at Ladies Mile (LEH).

Cetti's Warbler

Status: increasing throughout the UK

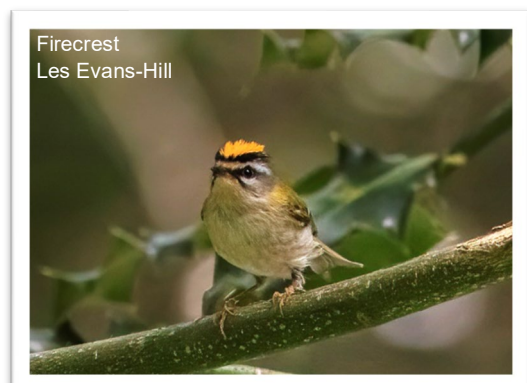
One at the Beverley Brook 25 May (James Owen) – this species has been a rapid coloniser since the 1970's although this is the first record for the Commons as far as I'm aware – its explosive burst of song is its best characteristic given its extreme reluctance to show itself.

Firecrest

Status: once a winter visitor and passage migrant, now an increasing breeding resident.

One at Putney Heath 18 Jan (LEH) with two there on the 19th, both calling (LEH).

Two males were at Putney Vale Cemetery 22 May (LEH), two singing at Putney Heath 30 May & 14 Jun (LEH) and a family with at least two fledglings at Putney Vale Cemetery 21 Jun (LEH). This is the second proven breeding evidence for this increasing species on the Commons. Two were



singing on Aug 8 at Scio Pond and Tibbets Ride, one singing at Putney Heath 15 Aug (TP) and a juvenile seen there Aug 23 (LEH).

Autumn records included one at Tibbets Ride Wood Sep 20 (TP), two at Queensmere 20 Nov (Mike Waller), one at the SE corner of the Plain (Alastair Brown) and one at Putney Heath (LEH) both on 22 Nov.

Goldcrest

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

Wren

Status: abundant breeding resident.

Nuthatch

Status: breeding resident.

Treecreeper

Status: breeding resident.

Common Starling

Status: an increasingly scarce breeding resident.

Some slightly better counts this year with 30 on Putney Lower Common 1 Apr (PH), 70 at Rushmere 19 Aug (TP) and 50 at Ladies Mile 31 Oct (TP).



Blackbird

Status: common breeding resident.

Fieldfare

Status: occasional passage migrant and winter visitor particularly in harsh weather.

There were 20 W over Ladies Mile and 30 W over the Plain 15 Oct (AP) with 25 over the Mounds 20 Nov (Mike Waller).

Redwing

Status: regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

In the first half of year, flocks were generally small with 20 at Putney Heath 18 Jan (LEH) and 30 at Ladies Mile 20 Feb (AP), including several that were airing their vocal cords and beginning to sing. 25 were at Putney Heath on 20 Mar (LEH) with three near the Windmill 6 Apr (KA) being the last sighting for these departing winter visitors.

The first of the autumn were two at the Mounds 30 Sep (AP) followed by 40 SW on 11 Oct (KA), 24 at Ladies Mile 13 Oct (LEH) and a significant movement of 300+ W during a couple of hours on 15 Oct (AP). 35 were at Scio Pond 5 Dec (TP).

Song Thrush

Status: common breeding resident.

Mistle Thrush

Status: breeding resident.

Spotted Flycatcher

Status: once a regular breeding species, now an increasingly scarce passage migrant.

Just one record with a single at Ladies Mile 28 Aug (AP).

Robin

Status: abundant breeding resident.

European Stonechat

Status: regular passage migrant and scarce winter visitor.

Spring migrants started moving through early with two at Windmill Ride 25 Feb, four (m & f + two 1st winters) there on the 26th and a pair on the 29th and 1 Mar (LEH).

First of the autumn was a male on the Plain 7 Sep (Hugh Nicholson, LEH) followed by two on 28 Sep (Michael Mac) and 30th (AP), two at Ladies Mile on 8 Oct (LEH) with three on the Plain 15 Oct (AP) that included an adult male and what looked to be two juvenile males.

Northern Wheatear

Status: increasingly scarce passage migrant.

A male was on the Plain 26 Apr (JR, Jan Wilczur) with another male at Ladies Mile 1 May (JR).

The only record for the autumn was a female/juv at Rushmere 17 Aug (AP) ending a poor year for this species.

Crossbill

Status: occasional visitor particularly in late summer.

Two flew N over the Mounds, calling loudly, 30 Jul (AP).

House Sparrow

Status: increasingly scarce breeding resident usually on the edge of the Commons— last pair at Windmill 2011

An encouraging sighting of 20 on the bank of Rushmere 17 Aug (AP). The increase in vegetation / trees in the NW corner of Rushmere is proving to be very popular for several birds including starlings, pied wagtails, greenfinches and the sparrows which maybe using it as a roost site. 13 at Rushmere 22 Oct (TP).

Dunnock

Status: common breeding resident.

Grey Wagtail

Status: scarce breeding resident and passage migrant.

Three at the Beverley Brook 25 May (James Owen) was the highest count.

Pied Wagtail

Status: breeding resident and winter visitor.

10 at Rushmere on 17 Aug (AP) with several juveniles was a reasonable count.

Tree Pipit

Status: occasional late summer / early autumn migrant

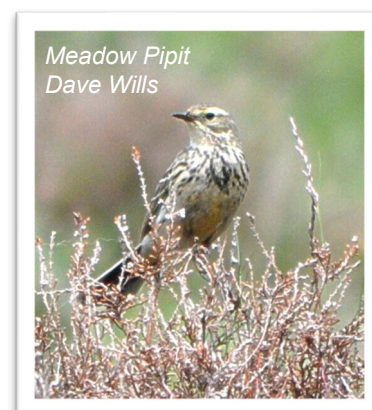
One at Inner Park ride / Ladies Mile 22 Aug (JR).

Meadow Pipit

Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, formerly bred - 13 pairs in 1983 with last pair in 2003.

One at west end of Rushmere 8 Feb (JR) was the only record in the first part of the year. Three on the Plain 5 Oct (LEH), one there 20 Nov (Mike Waller) and two at the Mounds 24 Nov (Michael Mac) made for a very poor autumn showing indeed.

This is probably one species that really reflects the decline in small passerines on the Common. While breeding has not occurred for several years, wintering birds would generally be present on the Commons from September right through to April each year but a few passing migrants seems to be the norm now.



Chaffinch

Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

26 were at the Mounds 25 Aug (AP), presumably an early autumnal movement.

Bullfinch

Status: scarce winter visitor

A female was still present from the previous autumn with sightings at the Mounds 18 Jan (JR), 28 Jan (JR), 19 Feb (AP), 21 Feb (JR) and 26 Feb (JR). A female flew over Kingsmere 30 Oct (AP).

Greenfinch

Status: declining breeding resident

Three over Putney Heath 6 Mar (LEH), possibly the same three at Fishponds Wood with one carrying nesting material 7 Mar (TS) and four at RE Memorial 25 Mar (TS). One feeding on edge of Rushmere with the sparrows 30 Jul (AP) and two, including a juvenile there on 17 Aug (AP). This species is clearly still struggling to get back to the numbers that once used to frequent the Commons.

Linnet

Status: occasional visitor

One flew E over the Plain 15 Oct (AP).

Siskin

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant

Four at Ladies Mile feeding on birch seed 15 Oct (AP) with a pair at Gravel Pit Cottage on a feeder 22 Oct (LEH).

Lesser Redpoll

Status: winter visitor and passage migrant.

Unusually there were no records for the early winter period. The first autumn sighting was one E at Ladies Mile 23 Sep (AP), then two at Ladies Mile feeding on birch seed 15 Oct (AP) and eight there on 30 Oct (AP). 50+ at the Mounds on 4 Dec (AP) was an encouraging record along with 15 at Ladies Mile (LEH) on the same day, seven there on 22 Dec (LEH) and 20+ at Inner Park ride 29 Dec (LEH).

Goldfinch

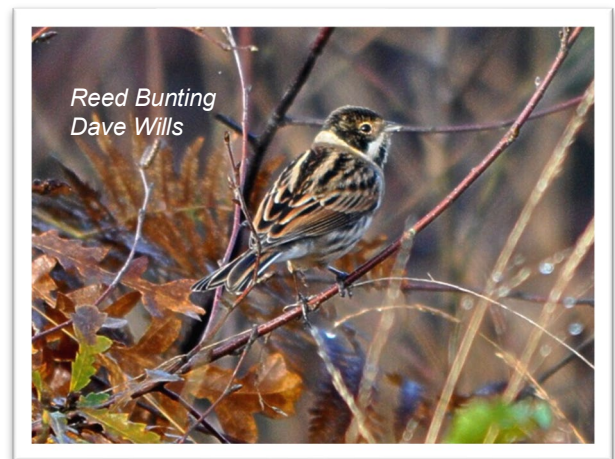
Status: breeding resident, passage migrant and winter visitor.

The only high count was for 23 seen on the Mounds 24 Nov (Michael Mac).

Reed Bunting

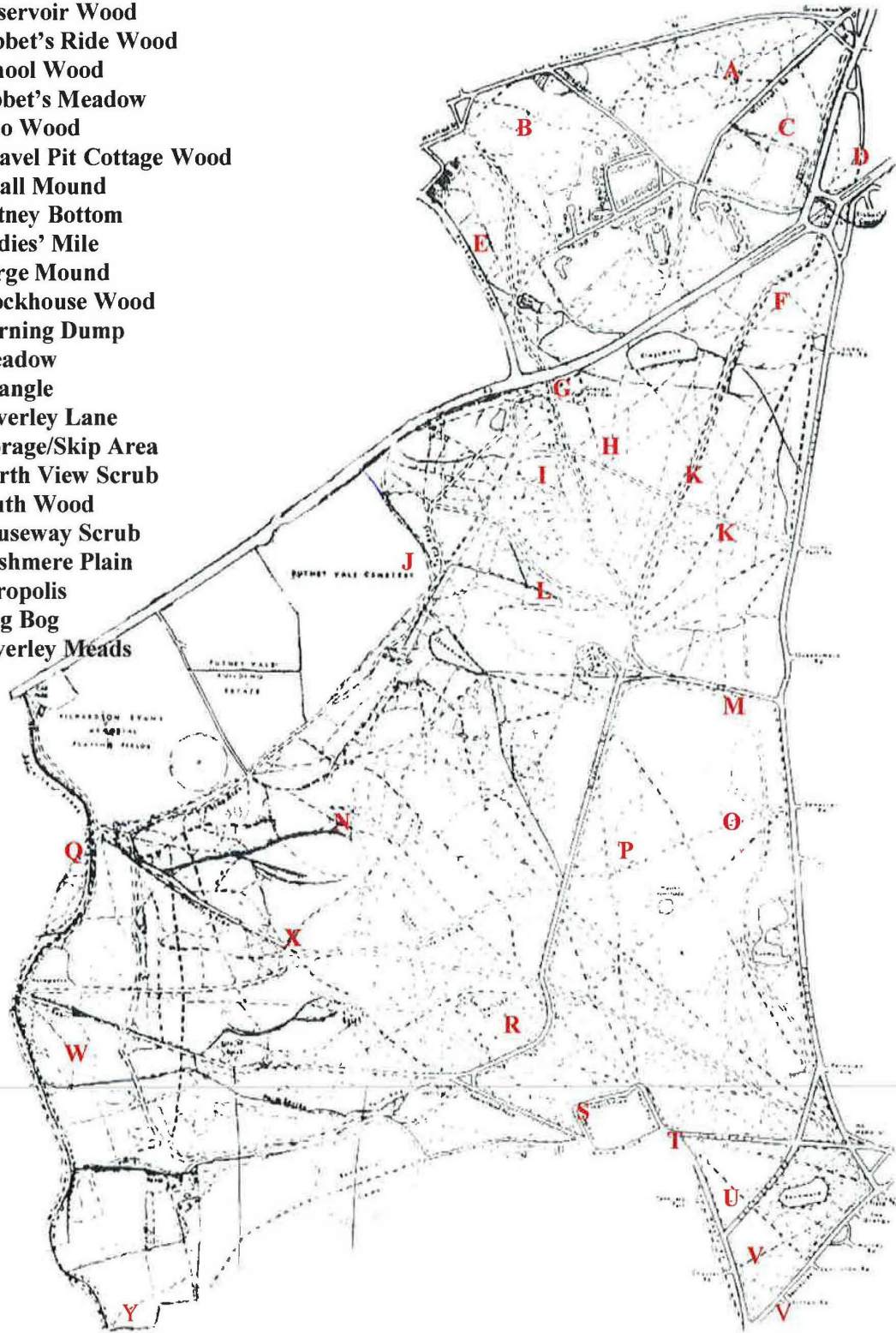
Status: passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally breeds.

Two on Putney Heath 18 Feb (LEH). In the spring, a male was singing at the usual patch on the Plain on 3rd, 6th and 10 Apr (KA), 12 May (JR), 15 May (PH) and 11 Jun (AP) but there was no sign of a female or of any breeding activity. However, there were three (2m 1f) on the uncut patch 8 Jul (AP) – possibly the resident male and another visiting pair. There were just three records for the rest of the year, with a female at Ladies Mile, 15 Oct (AP), again on 20 Nov (Mike Waller) and a male there 4 Dec (LEH / AP). Similar to the Meadow Pipit, numbers have declined markedly during the winter months while disturbance may just be too great for any successful breeding attempts.



A GUIDE TO FORMER, OR IMPROVISED, PLACE NAMES USED IN THIS REPORT

- A** Exeter House Wood
- B** Church Wood
- C** Reservoir Wood
- D** Tibbet's Ride Wood
- E** School Wood
- F** Tibbet's Meadow
- G** Scio Wood
- H** Gravel Pit Cottage Wood
- I** Small Mound
- J** Putney Bottom
- K** Ladies' Mile
- L** Large Mound
- M** Clockhouse Wood
- N** Burning Dump
- O** Meadow
- P** Triangle
- Q** Beverley Lane
- R** Storage/Skip Area
- S** North View Scrub
- T** South Wood
- U** Causeway Scrub
- V** Rushmere Plain
- W** Acropolis
- X** Stag Bog
- Y** Beverley Meads



Butterflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2020

With the warm start to the spring in 2020, several species emerged earlier than usual. In total 30 butterfly species were seen on the Commons in 2020. This compares to 28 species in 2019.

The species seen in 2020 were:

Large Skipper
Essex Skipper
Small Skipper
Brimstone
Large White
Small White
Green-Veined White
Orange Tip
Green Hairstreak
White-Letter Hairstreak
Purple Hairstreak
Brown Hairstreak
Small Copper
Common Blue
Brown Argus

Holly Blue
White Admiral
Red Admiral
Purple Emperor
Painted Lady
Small Tortoiseshell
Peacock
Comma
Silver-Washed Fritillary
Speckled Wood
Marbled White
Gatekeeper
Meadow Brown
Ringlet
Small Heath



The two additions to the 2020 list are Essex Skipper and Brown Hairstreak.

Weather conditions remained exceptionally dry with sunny periods for much of the spring and early summer. However, this does not seem to have resulted in any significant increase in butterfly abundance and in fact the common high summer "brown" species, in particular Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Ringlet seem to have suffered.

It is unclear why this is the case but maybe a combination of a very wet winter and the very dry spring impacted the survival of the pre-adult butterfly stages. That being said the rarer species on the Commons, such as Brown Hairstreak and Purple Emperor, all put in

appearances so there was some good news. In addition, Green Hairstreak, a species which was only discovered on the Commons a few years ago seems to be expanding its range, particularly on Putney Heath.

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Dragonflies of Wimbledon and Putney Commons 2020

Obituary – Bill Budd

We start this report with the sad news that Bill Budd, our primary recorder for dragonflies on the Commons, passed away in 2020 after a long illness. Bill, who was also the Surrey County Recorder for dragonflies, was passionate about this group of insects and gave much of his time to their study and recording, even having a new species named after him in recognition of the significant contribution he made to the study of Odonata: *Megalogomphus buddi*, a species found in Borneo.

Bill was also a much-valued member of the Commons' Wildlife & Conservation Forum and we will all miss his friendship and enthusiasm.

Report

This year conditions were much improved for viewing damselflies and dragonflies on the Commons. Water levels were high and most of the ponds were fully replenished following the winter rains. Bluegate Pond, for example, which is one of the more interesting ponds for dragonflies, dried out completely in 2019. That being said, given the circumstances in which we found ourselves in 2020, there was less observer attention and so species records were down on 2019.

In total 13 species were recorded on the Commons in 2020. This compares to 20 species in 2019.

The species seen in 2020 were:

Banded Demoiselle
Large Red Damselfly
Azure Damselfly
Blue-tailed Damselfly
Willow Emerald
Broad-bodied Chaser
4-Spotted Chaser
Hairy Dragonfly
Migrant Hawker
Brown Hawker
Emperor
Ruddy Darter
Common Darter

Those missing from 2019 were (7 species):

Beautiful Demoiselle
Common Blue Damselfly
Emerald Damselfly



Red-eyed Damselfly
Small Red-eyed Damselfly
Black-tailed Skimmer
Southern Hawker

Beautiful Demoiselle is a recent colonist to the Beverley Brook. It can be difficult to find amongst its much commoner relative, the Banded Demoiselle. Its status is unclear however it was seen in Richmond Park in 2020 so it is suspected to be breeding on the Commons. More observer effort is required to establish this.



Although not knowingly seen in 2020 the remaining 6 species are all no doubt present on the Commons. Recording is often down to one or two individuals and we would welcome contact from any visitors to the Commons with a knowledge of dragonflies and damselflies who might be able to help with future recording.

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