

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA**

**BOROUGH BREEDING BIRD SURVEY**  
**2004**

**SURVEY REPORT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The survey period ran from the beginning of April until the end of August. The sites surveyed included all of the Sites of Metropolitan Importance, as defined by the Borough Ecological Survey 1993, as well as a single Site of Borough Importance Grade 1 (the Chelsea Physic Garden).

A sample of gardens from the Ladbroke Grove Garden Complex, (a series of private gardens, amongst housing in the centre of the Borough), were surveyed this year. These are classed as Sites of Borough Importance Grade 2 and the largest, Ladbroke Square Garden, has been surveyed in previous years.

Holland Park was the main focus of attention, because the Park is large and contains a number of enclosures that are actively managed for wildlife, and the continued gathering of ornithological data aids conservation initiatives at the site.

In addition to the sites already mentioned, smaller ones, such as Meanwhile Wildlife Garden and Kensal Green Gas Works were also partly surveyed, and are analysed in the context of the larger sites which they border.

## **SURVEY TECHNIQUES**

The major sites were visited on a regular basis throughout the breeding season, with efforts sometimes concentrated on locally uncommon species. All of the major sites received at least one early morning visit in April or May, to note singing birds.

Birds were confirmed as breeding when nests were found, or when recently fledged juveniles were seen, and when adults were observed carrying nest material or food. In cases where only an adult male was singing regularly from suitable habitat, or when fully grown young were seen (which may have arrived from a different site), this is described as possible breeding. Therefore, for example, where a species is said to have 1-2 breeding pairs,

this implies that 1 pair was confirmed as having bred with a second pair possibly having bred.

In a small number of cases it was not possible to obtain the exact numbers of birds at a site. In these instances the number of confirmed breeding birds is indicated followed by a plus sign, implying that there may have been more.

Bird ringing was carried out at Holland Park and at the Grand Union Canal, with 173 birds ringed, (including 158 nestlings), and a range of nests was inspected at most sites. 5 Blue Tits were retrapped from previous years and 6 Canada Geese with rings from other sites were noted. All ringing activities were carried out under BTO/EN (British Trust for Ornithology/English Nature) Licence. The author is a BTO/EN A-Permit holder.

## **WEATHER DURING THE SURVEY PERIOD**

Weather affects birds in several ways, for example: aiding or inhibiting breeding, affecting winter survival rates, and determining the arrival and departure dates of migrants.

The winter of 2003/04, immediately prior to the survey period, was a mixture of mild periods interspersed with 2 short cold snaps, when it also snowed. Thankfully the colder spells did not last for significant periods and therefore they will not have caused any major population declines.

There was some wet and windy weather in April, but unlike the last few years, it remained mild and May turned out to be a settled month, with plenty of sunshine. The first half of the summer remained good, until the first significant rain arrived at the end of June. There was more wind and rain in July, but interspersed with plenty of brighter spells. The beginning of August was very hot and dry, and then there were several weeks of rain before it cleared up again. Overall it has been a good summer for the birds.

## **NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

The original Borough Bird Survey of 1995-96 described how, despite having the highest concentration of people in London and the least amount of green space, some of the sites within Kensington and Chelsea are remarkably rich in avifauna. The same can still be said and this year's survey found 52 wild bird species, with 29 breeding and another 5 species possibly breeding. These are very similar to last years figures.

Of special interest are the uncommon species for inner London, which include: Stock Dove (3 pairs), Tawny Owl (1 pair), Green Woodpecker (1 pair), Great Spotted Woodpecker (2 pairs), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (1 pair), House Martin (11+ pairs), Grey Wagtail (1 pair), Blackcap (5+ pairs), Goldcrest (2+ pairs) and Long Tailed Tit (6+ pairs). Good numbers of common garden birds continue to exist at the larger sites, such as Holland Park, and common wildfowl can be found at the Borough's two riverine sites.

A pair of Kestrels nested but, despite several birds being seen, Sparrowhawks did not. The exotic Rose Ringed Parakeets (also known as Ring Necked Parakeets) are now a regular sight in the Borough and may soon breed. This spring the weather was much more settled and consequently the Blue Tits enjoyed their best breeding season since 1999.

House Sparrows have not bred since 2001 and none were seen at any of the sites surveyed. Other finches remain in low numbers throughout the Borough, with Greenfinch being the most common (7+ pairs), and small numbers of both Chaffinch (2+ pairs) and Goldfinch (3 pairs) present. A lack of weed rich feeding areas, particularly in winter, is believed to be the inhibiting factor. However, where bird feeders have been positioned and kept topped up, finch populations have stabilised and may even have slightly increased.

By the River Thames, for the third year running, Grey Wagtails successfully nested and the colony of House Martins reared good numbers of young. This is the largest colony of House Martins in central London.

<p align="center"><b>LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED IN THE BOROUGH</b></p> <p align="center"><b>April - August 2004</b></p>
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<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>SCIENTIFIC NAME</b>	<b>BREEDING</b>
<b>STATUS</b>		
Gt CRESTED GREBE	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	non breeding
CORMORANT	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	non breeding
GREY HERON	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	non breeding
GREYLAG GOOSE	<i>Anser anser</i> (feral)	non breeding
CANADA GOOSE	<i>Branta canadensis</i> (feral)	5 pairs bred
MALLARD	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	2+ pair bred
TUFTED DUCK	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	non breeding
SPARROWHAWK	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	breeding not confirmed
KESTREL	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1 pair bred
MOORHEN	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	11 pairs bred
COOT	<i>Fulica atra</i>	11 pairs bred
BLACK HEADED GULL	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	non breeding
LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	bred nearby
GREATER BLACK BACKED GULL	<i>Larus marinus</i>	non breeding
HERRING GULL	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	bred nearby
COMMON TERN	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	bred nearby
FERAL PIGEON	<i>Columba livia</i> (feral)	bred at all sites
STOCK DOVE	<i>Columba oenas</i>	3 pairs possibly breeding
WOODPIGEON	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	bred at most sites
TAWNY OWL	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1 pair possibly bred
SWIFT	<i>Apus apus</i>	1-3 pairs bred
ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET	<i>Psittacula krameri</i> (feral)	non breeding
GREEN WOODPECKER	<i>Picus viridis</i>	1 pair probably bred
Gt SPOTTED WOODPECKER	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	1-2 pairs bred
Lssr SPOTTED WOODPECKER	<i>Dendrocopus minor</i>	1 pair possibly bred
HOUSE MARTIN	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	11-13 pairs bred
SWALLOW	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	passage migrant
PIED WAGTAIL	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>	1 pair possibly bred
GREY WAGTAIL	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1 pair bred
WREN	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	bred at most sites
DUNNOCK	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	bred at most sites
ROBIN	<i>Erithicus rubecula</i>	bred at most sites

<u>BLACKBIRD</u>	<i>Turdus merula</i>	bred at most sites
<u>SONG THRUSH</u>	<i>Turdus philomilos</i>	6-7 pairs bred
<u>MISTLE THRUSH</u>	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1-2 pairs possibly bred
<u>WHITETHROAT</u>	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	3-4 pairs bred
<u>BLACKCAP</u>	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	6-7 pairs bred
<u>SEDGE WARBLER</u>	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	passage migrant
<u>CHIFFCHAFF</u>	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	2 pairs possibly bred
<u>WILLOW WARBLER</u>	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	passage migrant
<u>GOLDCREST</u>	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	2-4 pairs bred
<u>LONG TAILED TIT</u>	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	6-7 pairs bred
<u>COAL TIT</u>	<i>Parus ater</i>	1-2 pairs bred
<u>BLUE TIT</u>	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>	bred at most sites
<u>GREAT TIT</u>	<i>Parus major</i>	bred at most sites
<u>SPOTTED FLYCATCHER</u>	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	passage migrant
<u>JAY</u>	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	2-4 pairs bred
<u>MAGPIE</u>	<i>Pica pica</i>	3-5 pairs bred
<u>CARRION CROW</u>	<i>Corvus corone</i>	4-6 pairs bred
<u>STARLING</u>	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	a few bred at most sites
<u>CHAFFINCH</u>	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	2-4 pairs bred
<u>GREENFINCH</u>	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	7-8 pairs bred
<u>GOLDFINCH</u>	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	3 pairs bred

TOTAL= 52 species (excluding feral pigeon)

NUMBER BREEDING= 29

NUMBER POSSIBLY BREEDING = 6

## HOLLAND PARK

### SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE

*Grid Ref: TQ2479*

*Size: 16ha (40 acres)*

*Owner/manager: RBK&C*

*Number of visits: 12+*

### **OBSERVATIONS ( 34 species recorded, including 20-25 breeding)**

CORMORANT: individuals were seen flying over.

GREY HERON: 1 or 2 were irregular early morning visitors to the ponds.

MALLARD: as with last year, fewer Mallard were present than in the past. The maximum count was only of 8 males on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May. There was evidence of successful nesting, when a female appeared on the Kyoto pond in the second half of July, but with only a single duckling. Predation by foxes, rats and corvids seem to inhibiting breeding success.

SPARROWHAWK: no nest was found in the Park but a male was seen hunting, particularly during May and June. This species has not bred in the Park since 2002 but may do again sometime in the near future.

MOORHEN: 3 pairs were present but only 2 raised young. Regrettably, the favoured nest site for the Kyoto pair was needlessly exposed by over zealous gardeners. Consequently that pair failed to hatch any young. One of the adults at Kyoto was ringed as an adult in 2000 and it was again present this summer (making it at least 6 years old). As usual, the pair on the Wildlife Pond lost their early clutches to predators, but succeeded in raising a small brood later in the summer. Amazingly the pair on Lord Holland's Pond had 2 broods, whereas in previous years they have struggled to raise 1.

HERRING GULL: small numbers were seen flying over, these may be breeding birds from other areas in and around London.

LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL: small numbers were seen flying over, these may be breeding birds from other areas in and around London.

WOODPIGEON: At least 10 pairs bred.

STOCK DOVE: This species appeared in the Park for the first time in 2001, and although breeding has been suspected, it has never been confirmed. This year a pair was again often seen in the Wildlife Reserve.

TAWNY OWL: 1 pair probably bred. Adults were heard, and one was seen hunting in the early hours on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May.

SWIFT: 1-2 pairs bred nearby. The maximum count was only 3, on several dates.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER: 1 pair bred just outside the Park. This resident pair were omnipresent and were observed feeding young in May. The remains of a fledged juvenile, probably killed by a Sparrowhawk, were found in the Wildlife Reserve on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June.

GREEN WOODPECKER: not as common as in recent years, with only single birds occasionally heard in the spring.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET: becoming more common and on several dates they were seen perched in trees around the Park. The largest count was of a flock of 5 on the edge of the North Lawn on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May. There are suitable tree holes for this species to nest and although they have not bred in the Park this year, they may do soon.

WREN: 11-12 pairs bred. The same numbers as last year. This species remains common in the Park.

DUNNOCK: 2-3 pairs bred. The same number as last year, but still in much reduced numbers compared with 1995.

ROBIN: 11 pairs bred. A similar number to last year.

BLACKBIRD: 20+ pairs bred. A similar number to last year.



SONG THRUSH: 3-4 pairs bred. A slight increase on last year. The population remains stable, albeit in low numbers.

MISTLE THRUSH: 1-2 pairs bred. A pair was regularly present on the Sports Field, and on several occasions 3 adults were noted collecting food, suggesting that a second pair may have nested just outside the Park. This is a repeat of what happened last year.

BLACKCAP: 3 pairs bred. A surprising reduction in numbers, considering that this warbler is still very common nationally. The habitat remains suitable and the weather was fine but only half the number of pairs were present in recent years.

SEDGE WARBLER: a report was received of a singing Sedge Warbler, heard in the Northern half of the Park at the beginning of May. This species is more usually associated with wetlands and has only once before occurred in the Park (May 1996). As is to be expected, the bird did not stay.

CHIFFCHAFF: 1-2 pairs possibly bred. 2 males were singing from mid April into May. The reduction in numbers of blackcaps, who are known to bully Chiffchaffs, may have helped this species to increase.

GOLDCREST: 2-3 pairs bred. All 3 of the usual territories were occupied.

LONG TAILED TIT: 2-3 pairs bred. A similar number to last year and juveniles were seen from the beginning of May onwards.

COAL TIT: 1 pair possibly bred. Suitable habitat exists, but possibly competition for nesting territories with the larger Blue Tit may be the reason why Coal Tits do not increase in the park.

BLUE TIT: 34 pairs bred (30 in nest boxes), which was a decrease on last year's number. However, following several years of poor breeding success (due to bad weather), this year was one of the best on record and so it is hoped that the population will quickly bounce back.

The table below shows the results of the nest box survey, undertaken on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

number of boxes checked = 47 number of boxes with broods = 30 number of boxes not used = 17
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largest brood = 10 smallest brood = 5 <i>average* brood size = 8.7</i>
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*\*average taken from 18 broods checked.*

See page 31 for a comparative chart of brood sizes 1995-2004

GREAT TIT: 6 pairs bred (4 in nest boxes, and 1 pair nested in a bat box), which was slightly fewer than last year. 3 broods were ringed, with brood sizes of 8, 6 and 5, which were larger than those ringed last year. As with the Blue Tit, this species had a good breeding season and recent losses should soon be replaced.

JAY: 1-2 pairs bred. The same number as last year.

MAGPIE: 1 pair bred. A similar number to last year.

CARRION CROW: 1-2 pair probably bred, a similar number to last year. No accurate counts were made, but the numbers of Carrion Crows in the Park are much lower following the removal of some of the birds in 2001.

STARLING: 5-6 pairs bred nearby. This was a slight increase compared with recent years. Most pairs nest just outside of the Park and visit to look for food. Juveniles were seen from June onwards.

CHAFFINCH: 1-2 pairs bred. A similar number to last year. Small numbers of Chaffinches are frequently seen feeding from the seed feeders, and it is thought that these have helped them to remain in the area.

GREENFINCH: 1-2 pairs bred. A similar number to last year but the number of Greenfinches remains low, possibly because nesting birds are frequently disturbed by over zealous hedge trimming in and around the Park.

### **HOLLAND PARK RINGING TOTALS**

<b><u>SPECIES</u></b>	<b><u>FULL GROWN</u></b>	<b><u>PULLI</u></b>	<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>
GREAT TIT	1	19	20
BLUE TIT	13	139	152
<i>GRAND TOTAL</i>			<i>172</i>

5 breeding adult female Blue Tits were retrapped in May, their ringing details are given below, (all had been ringed in the Park).

<b><i>BLUE TITS</i></b>		
<b><u>RING No.</u></b>	<b><u>DATE AND AGE WHEN RINGED</u></b>	
P727914	17.05.02	pullus
P727799	10.05.02	pullus
P727746	10.05.02	2 or more years old
P727752	10.05.02	pullus
R400197	16.05.03	2 or more years old

P727746 was also retrapped last year and is now at least 4 years old. R400197 was ringed last year as a pullus (chick) and retrapped this year as a breeding adult.

### **COMMENTS AND COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

The number of species remained similar to previous years, although the numbers of birds, such as Blue Tit, have decreased because of unfavourable

climatic conditions in recent years. This year, after a better spring, there was an increase in the numbers of young produced by the likes of the Blue Tit. Sparrowhawks did not breed, but all of the other woodland species did. Amongst this list there are several species not normally associated with central London (Tawny Owl, Stock Dove, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, Long Tailed Tit and Goldcrest).

There has been a steady increase in the number of Rose Ringed (Ringed Necked) Parakeets visiting the Park and these may stay to breed in the future. This exotic feral species has been expanding its range throughout West London for several decades.

A nest box for Mallard, positioned above head height on a tree near to the Wildlife Pond or the Kyoto Pond, would help prevent eggs being predated by foxes and rats.

*More information and analysis from the site can be found on pages 30 and 31.*

## **GRAND UNION CANAL (PADDINGTON BRANCH)**

**Also including Kensington Gas Works, Meanwhile Wildlife Garden and part of the railway embankment.**

*SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE*

*Grid Ref: TQ2382*

*Length: 1.2km (0.75 miles) in RBK&C*

*Owner/manager: British Waterways*

*Number of visits: 3*

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possible breeding

M = passage migrant

CORMORANT

GREY HERON

CANADA GOOSE – B (5)

MALLARD – B (1+)

TUFTED DUCK

KESTREL B (1) nearby

COOT – B (11)

MOORHEN – B (7)

BLACK HEADED GULL

HERRING GULL

LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL

COMMON TERN

WOODPIGEON -B (5+)

SWIFT - PB nearby

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - B nearby

GREEN WOOPECKER - B nearby

ROSE RINGED PARAKEET - flying over

WREN – B (2-3)

DUNNOCK – B (1-2)

ROBIN – B (1-2)

BLACKBIRD – B (3+).  
SONG THRUSH - PB nearby  
WHITETHROAT - M & B (2)  
BLACKCAP - B nearby  
CHIFFCHAFF - M  
WILLOW WARBLER - M  
LONG TAILED TIT - B nearby  
BLUE TIT - B nearby  
GREAT TIT - B nearby  
JAY - B nearby  
MAGPIE – B nearby  
CARRION CROW -B nearby  
STARLING – B (2-3)  
GREENFINCH – B (1)  
GOLDFINCH – B (1)

### **COMMENTS AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

Waterfowl continue to do well, with coot and moorhen a common sight. Only one brood of 5 Mallard ducklings was seen, despite at least 20 adults being regularly present. This has been the case in recent years, possibly due to predation by foxes and rats. The number of nesting Canada Geese was the same as last year, with 14 goslings present in July. The maximum count of this species (including adults and juveniles) was of 55 on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July.

Tufted Duck were again seen on the Canal, but are not thought to have bred this year. Small numbers of Common Terns fished in the Canal, and, throughout the summer, adult Lesser Black Backed Gulls were often seen flying over. Black Headed Gulls began to return in July, having bred elsewhere.

Several common species of warbler were observed on migration, with only Blackcap and Whitethroat staying to breed. 2 pairs of Whitethroats nested, which is an increase on the usual 1 pair. Small numbers of Greenfinches and Goldfinches were seen. However, there were no sightings of House Sparrows this year. There is a population present on the North of the Canal

(outside of the Borough), and previous sightings probably relate to birds from there.

The former Kensal Green Gas Works is being redeveloped, and the area surrounding the gas towers, which used to be overgrown and offer good scrub habitat to birds, was levelled last year in preparation for building work. However, no work has started and the area has begun to grow back, offering feeding areas for finches and warblers.

The Eastern end of the site, which is the more built up, still suffers from the dumping of litter and mindless vandalism, and sadly it seems the area will never be allowed to live up to its potential. The ornamental pond, together with Meanwhile Gardens was sympathetically planted and landscaped in 2000. However, many of the plants have been disturbed and some areas completely wrecked.

### **RINGING INFORMATION**

1 adult Canada Goose was ringed.

Metal rings and darvics (plastic coloured rings) were seen on some of the adult Canada geese, giving interesting information on their movements:

5208257 (adult male) was ringed as an adult on 10.07.1999 in Regents Park.

Orange NPY (adult male) was ringed as an adult on 26.06.2001 at Kew Bridge.

Orange NPA (adult female) was ringed as an adult on 26.06.2001 at Kew Bridge.

Blue BPD (adult female) was ringed as an adult on 01.07.1992 at Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith. It had also been retrapped at Ravenscourt Park in 1993, 94, 95 and 96.

Blue HAY (adult) was ringed as an adult on 12.07.1994 at Kew Bridge. It had also been seen on the Canal in 1995 and 96.

Blue HPC (adult) was ringed as an adult on 14.07.1994 at Battersea Park.

*More information and analysis from the site can be found on page 29.*

## **THE RIVER THAMES AND CHELSEA CREEK**

*SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE*

*Grid Ref: TQ2777*

*Length: 2.7km (1.7 miles) in RBK&C*

*Owner/manager: Port of London Authority & Environment Agency.*

*RBK&C own Chelsea Creek.*

*Number of visits: 4*

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possibly breeding

M = passage migrant

GREAT CRESTED GREBE

CORMORANT

GREY HERON - B nearby

GREYLAG GOOSE – B nearby

CANADA GOOSE - B nearby

MALLARD

SPARROWHAWK

KESTREL

MOORHEN – PB (1)

COOT

BLACK HEADED GULL

HERRING GULL - PB nearby

LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL - PB nearby

GREATER BLACK BACKED GULL

COMMON TERN - M

WOODPIGEON - PB nearby

SWIFT - B nearby (3+)

PIED WAGTAIL

GREY WAGTAIL—B (1)

HOUSE MARTIN – B (11-13)



WREN – B (1)  
DUNNOCK – PB (1)  
ROBIN – PB (1)  
BLACKBIRD - PB  
BLUE TIT – B (1)  
CHIFFCHAFF - M  
MAGPIE - PB nearby  
CARRION CROW - PB nearby  
STARLING  
GREENFINCH – B (1-2)  
GOLDFINCH – B (1)

### **COMMENTS AND COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

Cormorants, Grey Herons, Greylag Geese and Mallard remained common along this stretch of the Thames, although no mallard ducklings were seen. A Great Crested Grebe was using the mouth of Chelsea Creek in the early spring. This species has been recorded before at the site, although always as a non breeder.

Pied and Grey Wagtails were seen, and a pair of Grey Wagtails nested. The colony of House Martins, based around the streets just North of Chelsea Wharf, increased from 5-7 pairs last year to 11-13 pairs. The numbers are back up to those present 4 or 5 years ago. This colony is only one of a few in central London and is the only one in the Borough.

### **CHELSEA CREEK**

A pair of Moorhens probably nested in what is not ideal habitat (they are normally a freshwater species). Single pairs of Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Wren, Greenfinch and Goldfinch were present and nested in the scrub around the Eastern end of the Creek. This scrub has become quite thick in recent years, providing good nesting habitat. A pair of Blue Tits nested in the brickwork of one of the adjacent old buildings. Single Kestrels and a

Sparrowhawk were seen flying over the site. The highest count of Grey Herons was 8 on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.

## **KENSINGTON GARDENS AND KENSINGTON PALACE GROUNDS**

*SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE*

*Grid Ref: TQ2588*

*Size: 13.5ha (24 acres)*

*Owner/manager: Royal Parks Agency*

*Number of visits: 3*

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possibly breeding

M = passage migrant

GREY HERON

MALLARD

MOORHEN – B (1)

WOODPIGEON – B (3+)

SWIFT

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER - PB nearby

GREEN WOODPECKER - PB nearby

WREN – B (2+)

DUNNOCK – B (1+)

ROBIN – B (3+)

BLACKBIRD – B (6+)

SONG THRUSH

MISTLE THRUSH – B (1+)

BLACKCAP – PB (1)

CHIFFCHAFF - M

GOLDCREST- B (1)

LONG TAILED TIT – B (2)

COAL TIT –PB (1)  
BLUE TIT – B (3+)  
GREAT TIT – B (1+)  
SPOTTED FLYCATCHER - M  
JAY - PB nearby  
MAGPIE – PB (1)  
CARRION CROW – PB (1)  
STARLING - B nearby  
CHAFFINCH PB (1)  
GREENFINCH – B (1+)

### **COMMENTS AND COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

A pair of Moorhens successfully nested again on the ornamental pond, where Grey Herons were also sometimes seen fishing. Migrant Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were heard singing in the spring, but whereas in most years these birds quickly move on, a male Blackcap continued to sing for most of the early summer, suggesting that a pair may have bred. A second male was also present on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, when a migrant Spotted Flycatcher was also seen.

Some of the shrubberies, created near to the new children's play area, have matured and now present good nesting habitats for species such as Blackbird and Long Tailed Tit. Some of the formal hedging in the Palace grounds was left untrimmed (at the suggestion of Paul Clark), and therefore Blackbirds and Robins nested undisturbed.

Fewer song thrushes were found this year and it is unclear as to whether they nested or not. A pair of Mistle Thrushes raised at least 1 brood of young and a good number of juvenile Blackbirds were evident in July. Juvenile Robins, Wrens and Dunnocks were also seen. There were no sightings of Sparrowhawks this year.

At least 1 pair of Greenfinches nested and it seems likely that a pair of chaffinches also did. There were several sightings of small flocks of Rose-Ringed Parakeets.

## **KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY**

### *SITE OF METROPOLITAN IMPORTANCE*

*Grid Ref: TQ2382*

*Size: 17.8ha (44.5 acres) in RBK&C*

*Owner/manager: The General Cemetery Company*

*Number of visits: 3*

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possibly breeding

M = passage migrant

CORMORANT - flying over

GREY HERON - flying over

MALLARD

SPARROWHAWK

KESTREL – B (1) nearby

STOCK DOVE – PB (2+)

WOODPIGEON – B (15+)

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER – B (1)

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER – PB (1)

GREEN WOODPECKER – B (1)

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET

SWALLOW - M

WREN – B (9)

DUNNOCK – B (1+)

ROBIN – B (7+)

BLACKBIRD – B (8+)

SONG THRUSH – B (1)

BLACKCAP - M and B (2-3)

WHITETHROAT - M and B (1-2)

CHIFFCHAFF - M

WILLOW WARBLER - M

GOLDCREST – PB (1)

LONG TAILED TIT – B (1)  
COAL TIT  
BLUE TIT – B (5+)  
GREAT TIT – B (3+)  
JAY – B (1)  
MAGPIE – B (1)  
CARRION CROW – B (2-3)  
STARLING – B (4)  
GREENFINCH – B (2-3)  
GOLDFINCH – B (1)

### **COMMENTS AND COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

Maximum counts of 4 adult Stock Doves were made on several dates. A pair was seen investigating a nest hole on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April and a male was seen displaying on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. However, no juveniles were seen later in the summer. No juvenile Woodpeckers were seen either this year, although adults of all 3 Woodpecker species were observed at the site. This the first year that Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers have been recorded at the Cemetery, when a pair was found feeding together on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. This year, only a single male Sparrowhawk was seen, but there was a pair of Kestrels that bred nearby.

In April and early May migrant Warblers and Swallows passed through the area. This year 2 or 3 pairs of Blackcaps stayed to nest, as well as at least 1 pair of Whitethroats. Both of these species have benefited from the large areas of scrub left uncut. In the last 2 years there does not seem to have been as much cutting back of ivy and woodland as in the past, which will have helped nesting birds. Greenfinches remain reasonably common at the site and a pair of Goldfinches successfully nested.

## CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN

*SITE OF BOROUGH IMPORTANCE: GRADE 1*

*Grid Ref: TQ2777*

*Size: 2ha (5 acres)*

*Owner/manager: Cadogan Estate, run by CPG Management Council*

*Number of visits: 1*

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possible breeding

M = passage migrant

CORMORANT - flying over

GREY HERON

MUTE SWAN - flying over

MALLARD

HERRING GULL - flying over

LESSER BLACK BACKED GULL - flying over

WOODPIGEON - B nearby (2+)

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

WREN – B (1-2)

DUNNOCK – B (1+)

ROBIN – B (1-2)

BLACKBIRD – B (2+)

LONG TAILED TIT

COAL TIT

BLUE TIT – B (1)

GREAT TIT

JAY

MAGPIE - B nearby

CARRION CROW - B nearby

STARLING - B nearby

GREENFINCH – B (1)

RINGED-NECKED PARAKEET- flying over

## **COMMENTS AND COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEARS**

There has been a slight reduction in the numbers of birds visiting the site, for example, neither Song Thrush nor Mistle Thrush were seen there this summer. Only a few years ago Great Tit, Blue Tit and Coal Tit nested, but this year only a single pair of Blue Tits bred.

The reasons for the decline in nesting Tits can be explained by the fact that the tit population has been declining a little and many of the old nest boxes in the Garden are falling apart. New ones that were put up were poorly positioned.

The pair of Blue Tits nested in a specially constructed nest box, which had a video link to a monitor in the classroom. The female laid 13 eggs and the fair weather helped them to fledge a good number. Compare this with only 8 eggs laid last year, with no chicks fledging because of poor weather.

## **OLYMPIA WOOD**

*(Not classified under the Borough Ecological Survey 1993)*

*Grid Ref: TQ2479*

*Size: approx 50m x 150m*

*Owner: RBK&C*

*Number of visits: 0*

No access was possible, due to the constant closure of the car park that gives access to the site.



## **LADBROKE SQUARE GARDEN**

*SITE OF BOROUGH IMPORTANCE: Grade 2*

*Grid Ref: TQ2480*

*Size: 5ha (12.5 acres)*

*Owner/manager: communal association*

*Number of visits: 6*

This site was covered in the original Borough Bird Survey 1995/96, as part of the Ladbroke Garden Square Complex, and again in more detail last year.

### **LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED**

B = breeding (with number of pairs in brackets)

PB = possibly breeding

M = migrant

WOODPIGEON - B(2+)

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

SWIFT - flying over

WREN - B(1-2)

ROBIN - B(2)

BLACKBIRD - B(5+)

SONG THRUSH - B(2)

BLACKCAP – B(1)

GOLDCREST

LONG TAILED TIT - B(1)

COAL TIT - PB(1)

BLUE TIT - B(1-3)

GREAT TIT - PB(1)

JAY – B(1)

MAGPIE – B(1)

CARRION CROW

STARLING

**COMMENTS:** There exists at the Garden a good number of mature trees, including species beneficial to birds (oak, silver birch, hawthorn, holly etc), and areas of hedging around the perimeter. There are also shrubs situated in clumps, but despite this a lot of the birds which feed in the Garden, were nesting in the private gardens that border the site on the Northern edge. The reason being that the hedging and shrubs in the Garden are not generally thick enough to safely hide nests from predators.

There are some tit nest boxes, but the majority were unused. Possibly the garden is only big enough to support a few pairs, but it could also be that the boxes need cleaning out and repositioning. A bird feeder, near to the Gardener's house, attracted a small number of birds. However, for the most part of the summer, the feeder remained empty. The provision of sunflower seeds as well mixed seed may help to increase the numbers and range of species.

A pair of Blackcaps were present from early May onwards and they nested. Last year's single pair of Song Thrushes increased to 2 and there were a good number of juvenile Blackbirds present in July. A pair of Magpies and a pair of Jays also nested. Single Great Spotted Woodpeckers were occasionally recorded. However, sadly no species of finches were recorded.

## **LADBROKE GROVE GARDEN COMPLEX**

*In addition to the Ladbroke Square Garden, a sample of the smaller gardens within this complex were surveyed. A single visit was made to each of the following privately owned and communal association gardens. Some of these were surveyed in 1995/96, others have never been.*

*These are all SITES OF BOROUGH IMPORTANCE : GRADE 2*

### **STANLEY CRESCENT GARDEN**

**HABITAT:** large ash, turkey oak and plane trees, with a good mixture of hawthorns, birches, prunus and some holly, together with areas of lawn. There is a tit nest box but it is broken and unusable. The seed feeder has also been rendered unusable by the squirrels.

**BIRDS:** Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Long Tailed Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jay, Magpie and Carrion Crow. Families of Tits were seen, as well as juvenile Robins, Blackbirds and Jays.

**COMMENT:** a perspex dome over the seed feeder, to act as a squirrel guard, will help to keep them off and allow the birds to benefit from some extra food. All 3 species of tit occur and so a few new nest boxes, with metal fronts, would provide more safe nest sites for tits. Natural nest sites exist in the bushes on the edge of the garden, but more could be created to aid species such as Blackbird and Robin.

### **ARUNDEL AND LADBROKE GARDENS**

**HABITAT:** mainly tall plane trees, with some limes, horse chestnut, turkey oak, some smaller hawthorns, prunus, holly, ornamentals and a tall privet hedge, together with areas of lawn. There were 2 tit nest boxes but one was upside down and the other was poorly sited. The small seed feeder was empty.

BIRDS: Woodpigeon, Dunnock, Robin, Blue Tit and Carrion Crow. The only juveniles seen were a family of Robins.

COMMENT: the large London plane trees cast heavy shadows over this small garden. These non native trees do not attract much bird life and therefore the garden is poorer than others nearby. However, an area of tall privet hedging could offer nest sites to Thrushes, Robin and Dunnock. The provision of some new nest boxes and keeping the seed feeder filled up would help attract more birds into the garden.

### **ELGIN/LANSDOWNE COMMUNAL GARDEN**

HABITAT: weeping willow, horse chestnut, ash, holm oak, holly, yew, prunus, silver birch, hawthorn and rowan, together with areas of lawn. There are also areas of privet hedge. There are 2 well positioned tit boxes and the seed feeder had seed in it.

BIRDS: Woodpigeon, Wren, Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird, Long Tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jay, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Starling, Chaffinch and Greenfinch. In addition to these, I understand that Great Spotted Woodpecker and Coal Tit have been seen on the seed feeder and that Goldcrests sometimes occur in the evergreens.

A juvenile Woodpigeon was seen, as well as families of Blue and Great Tit. A juvenile Greenfinch was using the feeder and a female Chaffinch was feeding young.

COMMENT: of all of these smaller gardens, this one had the best variety of habitat and was the only one with seed in its bird feeder. Consequently it had the greatest variety of bird species. The feeder was providing valuable food to 2 species of finch, both of which are not common in the Borough. The nest boxes looked usable and there were natural nest sites in hedges and shrubs. I also understand that they have a policy of trying to plant sympathetically for wildlife, and the presence of hawthorns and hollies will certainly help the local birds.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In general, it could be said that considering the lack of green space within the Borough, there are a good number of wild birds. Those that are in decline, such as the House Sparrow and the Dunnock, are also in decline elsewhere in London and throughout the UK. This year, in marked contrast to recent years, weather conditions aided most species to breed successfully. This was particularly noticeable amongst the populations of Blue and Great Tits, who enjoyed their best breeding season since 1999.

During the last couple of summers, hedges have been left untrimmed in the formal gardens of Kensington Palace, at the suggestion of Paul Clark (bird watcher and gardener) and as a result nests were left undisturbed. Could this policy not be replicated throughout the Borough?

The provision of seed feeders in Holland Park, Kensington Palace and Chelsea Physic Garden and the Ladroke Grove Gardens attracted Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Tits, Greenfinches and some Chaffinches. However, some of the feeders were not kept topped up. The finch species especially benefit from the provision of this extra food, as their natural food of weed seeds does not exist in great quantities in formal parks and gardens. It is recommended that the feeders are maintained, squirrel proofed and kept topped up throughout the year.

## OVERALL COMPARISONS WITH PREVIOUS YEARS

The following 2 tables show the breeding species at 2 different sites in the Borough, Holland Park and The Grand Union Canal. The Park represents the largest area of woodland within the Borough, some of which is managed for wildlife. The Canal represents the only large area of freshwater habitat with continuous areas of bankside vegetation.

*KEY: a whole number represents the number of pairs confirmed breeding. Where, for example, 1-2 pairs are indicated, this means that 1 pair was confirmed as breeding and a second was suspected of also breeding. In some cases a + sign appears after the number, this indicates that the exact number of pairs was not fully established. PB means possibly bred. Please note that no breeding survey was done in 1996.*

### GRAND UNION CANAL

SPECIES	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Canada Goose	4	4	3	3	6	6	6	5	5
Mallard	2	2+	2+	3	3	3	1	0	1
Tufted Duck	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pochard	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coot	9	5	5	8-9	8-9	10	11	11	11
Moorhen	5	4	5	4-5	6-7	4-6	5-6	6-7	7

COMMENTS: Coot and Moorhen continue to breed in good numbers and Canada Geese are still common. The biggest surprise is in the lack of breeding success of Mallard, which, despite being very common on the Canal, only hatched one brood of ducklings. Their breeding success has been declining, possibly affected by increased predation. The same has been happening at Holland Park and on the River Thames. The bankside

vegetation at the Western end of the Canal has become thicker and less frequently disturbed, which should create safer nesting sites. However, it may also provide habitat for families of foxes.

Although Tufted Duck are common on the Canal in winter, the site does not provide ideal breeding habitat for them, nor for the Pochard. The number of Canada Geese, Coot and Moorhen have probably now reached saturation point. Other aquatic, non breeding, birds observed include Cormorant, Grey Heron, Black Headed Gull, Lesser Black Backed Gull and Common Tern.

### HOLLAND PARK

SPECIES	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Mallard	3	3	4	2+	1+	1+	3	0	1
Sparrowhawk	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Moorhen	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2
Woodpigeon	15+	15+	15+	15+	15+	15+	15+	15+	15+
Stock Dove	0	0	0	0	0	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB
Tawny Owl	1	1	1	1	1	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB
Gt Spt Woodpecker	1	1	1	1	1	1 PB	1	1.	1
Wren	7	10	9-10	10	15	12	13	11+	11+
Dunnock	6+	5+	3+	3+	3+	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
Robin	13	13	10+	9	10	11	10	10	11
Blackbird	30+	26	20+	22+	22+	21+	20+	20+	20+
Song Thrush	3	3	5	5	3+	2	3-4	2-3	3-4
Mistle Thrush	2	1	0	0	1+	1	0	1-2	1-2
Blackcap	4	6	5	5	5+	4	4-5	4-5	3
Chiffchaff	1	1	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	1 PB	2 PB
Goldcrest	1 PB	0	1-2	1	1-2	2-3	2-3	1-2	2-3
Long Tailed Tit	2	3-4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2-3
Coal Tit	1-2	1	1	1	1	1	1-2	1-2	1 PB
Blue Tit	20	30	21+	31	37	32	38	36	34
Great Tit	5	4	5+	7	9	7	8	8	6
Jay	1-2	1	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1-2
Magpie	2	3	2	1-2	1-2	1-2	1	1	1
Carrion Crow	2	3	3	1+	1-2	1	1 PB	1 PB	1-2
Starling	3+	4-8	3	4	2	3	3	4-5	5-6
House Sparrow	30+	4-5	2	1	0	0	0	0	0

Chaffinch	0	0	1-3	1	1 PB	1 PB	1	1	1-2
Greenfinch	3	1	1+	1+	1	1-3	1-2	1-2	1-2

*Each year in Holland Park, the average brood size of the nesting Blue Tits has been calculated from the many broods that have been ringed in nest boxes, and the results are shown below:*

#### HOLLAND PARK BLUE TIT AVERAGE BROOD SIZE

1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
9.0	8.7	9.4	8.7	8.0	8.3	6.6	5.1	8.7

COMMENTS: many of the smaller birds (i.e. Wren, Goldcrest and Long Tailed Tit) have increased since 1995. There has been a run of mild winters, aiding the winter survival rates.

The average brood size of nesting Blue Tits (see table above) reflects the condition that the females were in prior to nesting. If the weather in the early spring is wet or cold, they will not be in peak condition to lay lots of eggs. Therefore, although we have had mild winters, the last few springs have been poor, resulting in a succession of lower than average brood sizes. This spring was blessed with long periods of fair weather and consequently the Blue Tits had a considerably better breeding season.

The 3 resident Thrushes have suffered mixed fortunes. The Song Thrush has been declining nationally for some years, and numbers were low in the Park at the beginning of the survey period. However, they seem now to be stable, albeit in low numbers. The Blackbird, although still a common garden and woodland bird, has declined slightly nationally and in the Borough. The reasons for these problems are not fully understood. There are still plenty to be found in the Park.

The fortunes of the Mistle Thrush, which has only ever been present in small numbers, suffered in 1998-99 after the disturbance of tree felling and the drying out of their favoured feeding area (the Sports Field). That area is now in better condition and the birds have returned.



Within Holland Park there exists good woodland habitat that supports uncommon London birds such as Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Long Tailed Tit.

The House Sparrow is now extinct in most of central London and is unlikely to return. I would suggest that conservation efforts be put into viable schemes such as providing better habitat for other finches. The Greenfinch is now the most common finch, with a few Chaffinches also present in the Park. Seed feeders have helped both species to maintain their foothold, but there is little natural food available, and the regular trimming of hedges and shrubs in the formal gardens presents the constant danger of nest disturbance.

## BOROUGH BIRD BREEDING INDICATOR

It is recommended that the 15 species listed below be used as a guide to the fortunes of the birds within the Borough. The selection of species covers waterfowl, birds of prey, common garden songbirds, migrant warblers, corvids and finches. The table lists the total numbers breeding at 6 main sites in the Borough that have been repeatedly surveyed.

SPECIES	1995	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	SUMMARY
Sparrowhawk	4	2-3	2-3	2-3	3	1-2	1-2	0	0	decrease
Moorhen	8	7	7	9-10	10-13	9-11	9-10	10-12	11	stable
G'S'Woodp'	1-2	2-3	2-3	1-3	1-3	1-3	2-3	2-3	1-3	stable
Wren	25+	26+	23+	29+	32+	28+	28+	25+	25+	stable
Dunnock	20+	14+	10+	9+	11+	9+	7+	7+	7+	decrease
Robin	20+	18+	24+	21+	23+	24+	24+	24+	25+	stable
Blackbird	70+	59+	49+	46+	47+	44+	40+	40+	40+	stable
Song Thrush	9+	7-10	7-10	6-9	4-6	3-4	5-6	2-4	6-7	stable
Blackcap	4+	7-8	6-8	8-9	6-7	5-6	5-7	5-7	6-7	stable
Blue Tit	35+	41	30	38	48	41	45+	45+	42+	stable
Magpie	5+	5	5	4+	3-5	3-5	3-5	4-5	4-5	stable
Carrion Crow	8+	8	8	4+	4-6	4-6	3-5	4-5	4-5	stable
Starling	15+	14+	13+	12	8-9	10-11	10-11	10-12	10-11	stable
House Spar'	70+	35+	35+	10+	6-10	2-4	0	0	0	marked decrease
Greenfinch	10+	6+	6+	3-4	1-3	2-5	3-5	6-8	6-8	slight increase

### CONCLUSIONS

**SPARROWHAWK.** Prior to 1995 this species was almost completely absent from inner London. Then followed a period of re-colonisation, which peaked as the Borough surveys began in 1995, when 4 pairs nested. Only 1 pair was confirmed as nesting in 2002, then none last year. Although single birds were seen in Holland Park this year, no breeding could be confirmed. The harder recent winter, coupled with a decrease in the population of blue tits may have harmed the resident pair. There is also a fatal disease (*Trichomoniasis*) that is afflicting the feral pigeon population in West London, which may be past on to the Sparrowhawks who feed on them.

**MOORHEN.** The making of the wildlife pond in Holland Park, just prior to the original survey, together with better nesting habitat that now exists on

the Canal have helped this species increase and remain a common sight at several sites in the Borough.

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.** Being tied to areas with sufficient woodland, this species is unlikely to expand its range. It remains locally common at sites such as Holland Park and Kensal Green Cemetery.

**WREN.** A run of mild winters helped this small bird survive and increase in numbers, but last winter was colder, and so there was a fractional drop in the number of breeding pairs. They remain common.

**DUNNOCK.** The population has halved since 1995, which is similar to national statistics. The reasons are unclear. The low population in the Borough has now stabilised.

**ROBIN.** The population remains high at all of the larger sites.

**BLACKBIRD.** A reduction of about 20% has occurred since 1995, which is not quite as bad as national statistics, but the population is stable and they remain common.

**SONG THRUSH.** Small populations appear stable in the Borough and, in Holland Park their numbers rose slightly. The Song Thrush has been staging something of a come back nationally, after suffering a severe decline in numbers.

**BLACKCAP.** Nationally this is one of the commonest species of warbler, which has been on the increase. Numbers peaked in 1999 in the Borough, but although they have dropped slightly recently, the numbers present still remain impressive for inner London. In Holland Park the lowest number, since the surveys began, bred (3 pairs) but at other sites in the Borough they increased slightly.

**BLUE TIT.** In the last few years the population steadily increased, because of a run of mild winters and the provision of extra nest boxes. However, following several poor springs, resulting in poor breeding success, this species has seen a drop in numbers. This year the weather improved and so did the blue tit's breeding success.

MAGPIE. Numbers have remained fairly stable. Lack of nesting habitat and competition with Carrion Crows prevent them from increasing. The species was recently controlled at Kensington Palace.

CARRION CROW. Numbers have decreased following some controls on numbers at Kensington Palace and Holland Park. They are now stable in smaller numbers.

STARLING. Numbers have stabilised at a low number, which is similar to national statistics. It is possible that like the House Sparrows, they have been catching diseases off the feral pigeons, with whom they often feed. The number of breeding pairs has been stable for several years, and plenty of juveniles were evident in the second half of the summer.

HOUSE SPARROW. A severe decline has been witnessed nationally, especially in London. This finch is now extinct from all of the sites in the Borough, where only a few years ago it used to be prolific. The reasons are discussed in detail in the Borough Breeding Bird Survey 2003 page 31.

GREENFINCH. Formerly more common, this species has suffered losses to Sparrowhawk predation and loss of habitat in Holland Park. Nevertheless new seed feeders in the Park and the Ladbroke Square Gardens seem to be encouraging them to return. In the North of the Borough, at Kensal Green Cemetery, where more feeding and nesting habitat exists, there is a better population.

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