

## Wick Country Park – Wildlife Sightings – 2021

### Introduction

Beginning in February 2020, it was decided to carry out a monthly wildlife walk in the Wick County Park, generally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, weather etc. depending! The aims of the walk are:

1. To enjoy the park, it's wildlife and get some fresh air.
2. To record and count the wildlife we see/hear, namely; birds, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals and anything else of note, e.g. moths and reptiles.
3. To gain a greater understanding of what wildlife lives in and/or uses the park and monitor any changes in their populations.
4. To promote the wildlife of the park to the Friends and general public via the Website and Facebook etc.

### Methodology

We will walk roughly the same route each month, covering the most likely wildlife friendly habitats of the park. The number of each individual species seen or heard is recorded to gain some idea of abundance/population. We will also attempt to record whether a species is breeding in the park.

As you will all realise, it is impossible to count 100% of any of the wildlife in the park but over time, by carrying out a regular count, we will be able to record most of the wildlife that exists in the park and get a rough estimate of their numbers. However, for some species, e.g. nocturnal species, a more targeted approach may be needed, i.e. specific night time walks or events such as a "moth night."

### Reporting

Each month, an email report will be issued, recording the wildlife seen/heard that month. Then at the end of the year, an annual report will be issued. After 2020 is completed, it becomes a little bit more complicated, as we can then compare year to year. The annual reports will then contain more information, highlighting any noticeable differences between the years.

All bird records will be sent to the Essex Bird Recorder, as part of the wider monitoring of UK bird populations. Similarly, all butterfly, moth and dragonfly records will be sent to the Essex recorders for these orders of insects. Mammals have not been included in this process at the moment, mainly because we see so few, but this may be something to consider in the future, especially in respect of bat species.

### Species Recorded in 2021

Below are the detailed lists of all the wildlife seen/heard during 2021, compared to the 2020 details set alongside.

#### Birds 2021 – 53 Species

Summary of Birds recorded in WCP – 2021							
Number of Species	53	Visits	12				
		2021			2020		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	12	4	33%	8	4	36%
Black-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	300	9	75%	105	11	100%
Canada Goose	Branta canadensis	52	9	75%	17	11	100%
Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	10	12	100%	10	11	100%

Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	2	2	17%	1	1	9%
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	10	10	83%	9	8	73%
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	3	3	25%	2	3	27%
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	4	4	33%	5	5	45%
Common Gull (Mew Gull)	<i>Larus canus</i>	10	2	17%	2	2	18%
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	30	3	25%	4	2	18%
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1	2	17%	1	1	9%
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	8	12	100%	6	10	91%
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	0	0	0%	1	1	9%
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1	1	8%	0	0	0%
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	42	9	75%	30	10	91%
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	5	1	8%	11	3	27%
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	3	3	25%	5	3	27%
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	52	12	100%	40	11	100%
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	5	5	42%	5	5	45%
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	6	4	33%	7	3	27%
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	35	12	100%	22	11	100%
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	3	5	42%	8	4	36%
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	5	11	92%	4	9	82%
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	3	4	33%	4	2	18%
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	12	12	100%	13	11	100%
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	6	5	42%	6	3	27%
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	0	0	0%	1	1	9%
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	4	33%	1	1	9%
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	8	10	83%	10	7	64%
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	27	11	92%	23	10	91%
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	4	5	42%	5	7	64%
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	1	1	8%	7	6	55%
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	20	1	8%	3	5	45%
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	23	12	100%	19	11	100%
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	2	1	8%	30	1	9%
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	0	0	0%	1	1	9%
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	3	3	25%	1	2	18%
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	3	3	25%	1	2	18%
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	9	8	67%	7	7	64%
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1	2	17%	3	1	9%
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	2	1	8%	2	2	18%
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	9	6	50%	3	4	36%

Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus	6	4	33%	2	2	18%
Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	0	0	0%	2	2	18%
Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	1	1	8%	0	0	0%
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	1	1	8%	0	0	0%
Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	19	6	50%	17	7	64%
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	8	12	100%	5	10	91%
Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	0	0	0%	1	1	9%
Redwing	Turdus iliacus	16	3	25%	40	1	9%
Rook	Corvus frugilegus	11	1	8%	1	1	9%
Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	1	1	8%	0	0	0%
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	1	3	25%	2	5	45%
Stock Dove	Columba oenas	3	4	33%	1	2	18%
Town Pigeon (Feral Rock Dove)	Columba livia 'feral'	3	1	8%	6	2	18%
Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	2	1	8%	3	1	9%
Western Jackdaw	Coloeus monedula	6	1	8%	21	1	9%
White Wagtail (Pied)	Motacilla alba yarrellii	1	1	8%	0	0	0%

We identified 53 bird species in 2021 which is exactly the same number as 2020! However, we added 5 species to the overall “park list” and these were: Common Reed Bunting, Little Egret, Little Grebe, Sedge Warbler and Pied Wagtail. This of course means that 5 species seen in 2020, were missing in 2021. I will leave you to look at the details and work out which these are but one in particular is worth mentioning, the Lesser Whitethroat. Prior to 2021, these were recorded for several years in the park, and it is disappointing we did not see or hear any this year. I saw several in Wickford this year so they were in the area but not in the park – perhaps they will return in 2022?

In December 2021, 3 birds were added to the UK red list due to severe declines in their populations since 1996. These were: Common House Martin (-57%), Common Swift (-58%), and European Greenfinch (-67%) and our own records perhaps reflect some of this. In 2020 we saw Common Swift on 3 occasions with a maximum count of 11. In 2021 we only saw them once with a maximum count of 5. European Greenfinch sightings are even worse, we saw Greenfinch 6 times in 2020 with a maximum count of 7. We only saw one single Greenfinch in the whole of 2021! There is no doubt this species is in real trouble and numbers have massively reduced in our area. Its cousin, the Chaffinch, has also massively declined recently but our sightings remain stable, although just a few years ago it would have been one of the most common birds in the park. Despite UK wide declines, our records of Common House Martin increased in 2021, with a maximum count of 30 birds seen on one visit. Another declining bird is the Song Thrush, and our sightings were reduced from 5 in 2020 to only 3 in 2021. Sadly, there does not appear to be any real significant increases in any bird numbers expect for Black Headed Gull, where we did see a particularly large flock of around 300 birds one visit. However, you cannot really read anything into a single year’s changes and only after several years will we see the effects of any changes in bird populations in the park.

In respect of birds breeding in the park, the most obvious group are the water birds around the lake where we can see the chicks being cared for by the adults. Here we saw breeding success for Canada Goose, Moorhen, Coot and Mallard, all with chicks at various times of the spring and summer. In addition, we can reasonably assume that some of the summer migrant birds are breeding here, and we can add Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, and Reed Warbler to the list. In respect of resident birds, we can also assume that many of these are breeding in the park, and without listing them all here I would estimate another 14 or 15 species are breeders. This would give us a reasonable estimate of 22 / 23 breeding species in the park itself. There are also many other species which breed in the surrounding areas and

use the park for feeding e.g. Starling, House Sparrow, Swallows and House Martins, so there is no doubt that the park is an important area for breeding birds in Wickford.

Finally, here is the total summary of all the birds seen in the park over the last 2 years:

Total Summary of Birds recorded in WCP - All Years				
Number of Species	58	Visits	23	
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	12	8	35%
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	300	20	87%
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	52	20	87%
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	10	23	100%
Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	2	3	13%
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	10	18	78%
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	3	6	26%
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	5	9	39%
Common Gull (Mew Gull)	<i>Larus canus</i>	10	4	17%
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	30	5	22%
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1	3	13%
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	8	22	96%
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	1	1	4%
Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1	1	4%
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	42	19	83%
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	11	4	17%
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	5	6	26%
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	52	23	100%
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	5	10	43%
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	7	7	30%
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	35	23	100%
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	8	9	39%
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	5	20	87%
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	4	6	26%
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	13	23	100%
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	6	8	35%
Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1	1	4%
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1	5	22%
Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	10	17	74%
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	27	21	91%
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	5	12	52%
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	7	7	30%
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	20	6	26%
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	23	23	100%
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	30	2	9%
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	1	1	4%
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	3	5	22%
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	3	5	22%

Great Tit	Parus major	9	15	65%
Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	3	3	13%
Greylag Goose	Anser anser	2	3	13%
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	9	10	43%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus	6	6	26%
Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	2	2	9%
Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	1	1	4%
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	1	1	4%
Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	19	13	57%
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	8	22	96%
Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	1	1	4%
Redwing	Turdus iliacus	40	4	17%
Rook	Corvus frugilegus	11	2	9%
Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	1	1	4%
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	2	8	35%
Stock Dove	Columba oenas	3	6	26%
Town Pigeon (Feral Rock Dove)	Columba livia 'feral'	6	3	13%
Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	3	2	9%
Western Jackdaw	Coloeus monedula	21	2	9%
White Wagtail (Pied)	Motacilla alba yarrellii	1	1	4%

The list shows the largest daily count of birds seen during all of our walks and the number of times that species has been seen. The percentages can be viewed as the likelihood of seeing that species on a visit to the park, although the seasons need to be taken into consideration here, e.g. Common Whitethroat has been seen on 26% of our walks but in winter the likelihood of seeing this bird will be nil as it's a summer migrant!

Our total list is now 58 but we know that there are several other species that have been seen in the park but not during our walks. What we will we catch up with in 2022?

### Butterflies – 22 Species

Summary of Butterflies recorded in WCP - 2021							
Number of Species	22	Visits	12				
		2021			2020		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits
Brimstone	Gonepteryx rhamni	1	1	8%	1	1	9%
Brown Argus	Aricia agestis	3	1	8%	1	1	9%
Comma Butterfly	Polygonia c-album	3	2	17%	1	1	9%
Common Blue	Polyommatus icarus	2	2	17%	6	3	27%
Essex Skipper	Thymelicus lineola	6	2	17%	1	1	9%
Gatekeeper	Pyronia tithonus	13	2	17%	43	2	18%
Green-veined White	Artogeia napi	5	1	8%	6	4	36%
Holly Blue	Celastrina argiolus	1	1	8%	2	2	18%
Large Skipper	Ochlodes venatus	3	1	8%	1	1	9%
Large White	Pieris brassicae	10	4	33%	23	3	27%

Marbled White	Melanargia galathea	17	1	8%	1	2	18%
Meadow Brown	Maniola jurtina	135	4	33%	36	3	27%
Orange Tip	Anthocharis cardamines	1	1	8%	2	1	9%
Peacock Butterfly	Inachis io	2	3	25%	2	2	18%
Red Admiral	Vanessa atalanta	3	2	17%	1	1	9%
Ringlet	Aphantopus hyperantus	2	1	8%	6	1	9%
Small Copper	Lycaena phlaeas	0	0	0%	2	1	9%
Small Heath	Coenonympha pamphilus	2	1	8%	0	0	0%
Small Skipper	Thymelicus sylvestris	6	2	17%	3	2	18%
Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae	1	3	25%	1	1	9%
Small White	Artogeia rapae	25	4	33%	2	4	36%
Speckled Wood	Pararge aegeria	9	6	50%	6	5	45%
White-letter Hairstreak	Strymonidia w-album	2	1	8%	0	0	0%

A good year for butterflies with 22 species identified, some in very good numbers. Two new species were added in 2021, Small Heath and White-letter Hairstreak. In respect of the latter, these were actually seen just outside of the park but were seen and identified in the park during 2021 so I have included this species on our list. Generally, all of the butterfly species we saw in 2020 were seen again in 2021 with the exception of Small Copper which we missed this year.

In respect of numbers, Gatekeepers were not present in the same numbers as 2020 but there were huge numbers of Meadow Browns and it was a good year for them. Marbled Whites were also present in very good numbers and this species has now become a common sight in the park. The butterfly most seen is the Speckled Wood, seen on 50% of our walks, normally in the shaded areas behind the lake. It is also worth mentioning the Brown Argus, which is an excellent sighting for the park, and we saw 3 individuals this year, including one that looked like it was laying eggs. Let's hope we get a decent population of this lovely little butterfly in future years.

Our overall butterfly list is now 23 which is a very good total for the area. We probably have very few to add to this list, but you never know what might turn up next year and there will be a couple of residents we have missed.

### Dragonflies – 8 Species

Summary of Dragonflies/Damselflies recorded in WCP - 2021							
Number of Species	8	Visits	12				
		2021			2020		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits
Black-tailed Skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum	7	1	8%	4	2	18%
Blue-tailed Damselfly	Ischnura elegans	4	2	17%	0	0	0%
Brown Hawker	Aeshna grandis	1	2	17%	2	1	9%
Common Blue Damselfly	Enallagma cyathigerum	10	2	17%	0	0	0%
Common Darter	Sympetrum striolatum	5	2	17%	0	0	0%

Emperor (Blue) Dragonfly	Anax imperator	1	1	8%	0	0	0%
Large Red-eyed Damselfly	Erythromma najas	3	1	8%	0	0	0%
Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta	5	2	17%	13	2	18%

2021 saw a welcome increase in both the number of species and general number of dragonflies/damselflies seen. 5 new species were added to the park list: Blue-tailed Damselfly, Common Blue Damselfly, Common Darter, Emperor (Blue) Dragonfly, and Large Red-eyed Damselfly. We also saw all the species we identified in 2020.

Our total now stands at 8 species and hopefully we can add a few more in 2022 as I have seen other species in the park and the surrounding area.

### Mammals – 3 Species

Summary of Mammals recorded in WCP - 2021							
Number of Species	3	Visits	13				
		2021			2020		
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% Sightings	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% Sightings
Common Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	1	1	8%	10	1	9%
Red Fox	Vulpes vulpes	3	1	8%	0	0	0%
Eastern Grey Squirrel	Sciurus carolinensis	2	4	31%	2	3	27%
Soprano Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	0	0	0%	5	1	9%

We added 1 species to our mammal list, Red Fox, which was seen and heard during our moth night, hence the number of visits here being 13 instead of 12. We also identified a Common Pipistrelle bat that night using a bat detector. Other than that, the only other mammal we saw in the park was the Grey Squirrel. Our total now stands at 4.

At some stage we must eventually see a Hedgehog and I assume Badgers visit the park too but will ever see these?

In future, due to the low numbers of mammals being seen, I will record them via a simple list (as per moths) rather than a complex spreadsheet as now.

### Moths – 21 Species

Summary of Moths recorded in WCP - 2021					
Number of Species	21				
Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Count	Sighting	Status
Brimstone Moth	Opisthoptis luteolata	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Cloaked Minor	Mesoligia furuncula	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Common Wainscot	Mythimna pallens	21/08/2021	2	1	Adult
Dingy Footman	Eilema griseola	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Flame Shoulder	Ochropleura plecta	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Fox Moth	Macrothylacia rubi	08/09/2021	1	1	Caterpillar
Gypsy Moth	Lymantria dispar	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing	Noctua janthe	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Lime-speck Pug	Eupithecia centaureata	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult

Oak Eggar	Lasiocampa quercus	23/06/2021	1	1	Caterpillar
Oak Processionary	Thaumetopoea processionea	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Old Lady	Mormo maura	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Orange Swift	Hepialus sylvina	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Ruby Tiger	Phragmatobia fuliginosa	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Silver Y	Autographa gamma	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Straw Dot	Rivula sericealis	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Straw Underwing	Thalpophila matura	21/08/2021	2	1	Adult
Water Veneer	Acentria ephemerella	21/08/2021	2	1	Adult
White-point	Mythimna albipuncta	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Willow Beauty	Peribatodes rhomboidaria	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult
Yellow Shell	Camptogramma bilineata	21/08/2021	1	1	Adult

Our first year recording moths, mainly due to the moth night held in August. We identified 21 moth species in 2021 but there are surely many more to be found. Interestingly, we saw 2 hairy caterpillars during our walks last year, which were identified as Oak Eggar moth and Fox moth, which coincidentally are both in the same family of moths!

Thanks to Colin and Stuart for bringing along all the equipment for the moth night and hopefully we will organise another in 2022.

### Additional Targeted Visits

In addition to the monthly walks, we could consider some of the following in 2022:

1. Moth Night. This was very successful and entertaining in 2021 and we will go ahead with this in 2022 – probably in June or early July. We will try and do some star gazing too.
2. Bat Watch/Night Walk. I am sure we could get someone from the Essex Bat Group to lead a Bat Watch around the park and perhaps we can find some other nocturnal wildlife too. Early to mid-August might be ideal for this.
3. Spring Picnic. I think it might be interesting to sit near the lake for a few hours one afternoon/evening at spring migration time and do a bit of sky watching and cake eating. Who knows what we might see flying over after a few cream cakes?

Let's hope we get at least one of these in the diary next year.

### Recap 2021

I feel that we have had another successful year of wildlife walks and have seen lots of fabulous creatures in the park. My favourite moments are:

1. The moths coming to the light on our moth night plus seeing Jupiter and Saturn later.
2. Seeing good numbers of Marbled White butterflies and finding Brown Argus again.
3. The huge numbers of Meadow Brown butterflies in the park during the summer.
4. Luring a Cetti's Warbler out of the scrub using a call on my phone!

I hope you have all enjoyed the walks this year and I am looking forward to seeing you all again in 2022.

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