

Wildlife Walk, Wick Country Park, December 16th 2020

Our final walk of 2020 took place this Wednesday and despite the mud and depth of puddles (wellies recommended for anyone visiting the park over the next couple of weeks) we managed to see quite a lot of wildlife.

It was a sunny morning and quite breezy but birds especially were quite active. At the main park gates, the usual Starling flock of was flying around and earlier in the day a flock of Jackdaws had been seen along the path to the car parks. As we got into the pavilion car park, there were lots of Thrushes flying around the treetops but not many were landing, so it took a while to identify them as Fieldfares – at least 30 in various flocks. Moving through to the boardwalk, several Goldfinches were feeding on the alder cones, together with a few Blue Tits. Robins were singing in the hedgerows as always and a few Blackbirds were active there too. Along the way we saw some birds in the hedges that eventually we identified as Redwings – another winter thrush species. While watching these, a very nice flock of Long Tailed Tits wandered along the hedge giving us some nice close views for once. At the lake, there were lots of birds – around 100 Black Headed Gulls, 10 Canada Geese and the usual Moorhens, Coots and Mallards.

Looking through the Black Headed Gull flock we managed to identify a couple of Common Gulls too. While at the lake a large flock of Redwings flew over – we counted 36. Redwings and Fieldfares are winter visitors to the UK, mainly from Scandinavia, and work their way down the country eating all the berries they can find. The park is absolutely full of berries at the moment so they should be here for a quite a while yet until all the berries have been eaten. We added a sole Cormorant flying over the lake before we moved to the back of the lake to find another flock of Long Tailed and Blue Tits moving along the hedgerow together with 2 Greenfinches – very nice to see. We also saw a Squirrel here. More Redwings were seen along the stretch back to the pavilion and a Green Woodpecker was heard here, together with another Squirrel. At the pavilion we had a Dunnock and saw a few Herring Gulls in a mass of Black Headed Gulls as someone fed the Canada Geese. Finally, on way back to the main gates, we saw a couple of Great Tits and a few Feral Pigeons flying over. A very good morning overall and nice end to the year with large flocks of Black Headed Gulls, Fieldfares, Redwings, Jackdaws and Starlings being seen, plus quite a few small birds in the hedges

A couple of days later back home, I counted all the Black Headed Gulls in a photo I took and there were 105! The photo would not have captured them all as some birds were always flying around so we could have something like 120+ Black Headed Gulls in the park at the moment. The trick for anyone with good eyesight is to identify a Mediterranean Gull amongst them – it's likely that there will be at least one.....perhaps!

Birds – 25 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	16/12/2020	105
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	16/12/2020	10
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	16/12/2020	10
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	16/12/2020	6
Common Gull (Mew Gull)	<i>Larus canus</i>	16/12/2020	2
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	16/12/2020	6
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	16/12/2020	30
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	16/12/2020	8
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	16/12/2020	2
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	16/12/2020	6
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	16/12/2020	4
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	16/12/2020	8
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	16/12/2020	9
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	16/12/2020	1
European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	16/12/2020	2
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	16/12/2020	3
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	16/12/2020	7
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	16/12/2020	30
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	16/12/2020	1
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	16/12/2020	2
Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	16/12/2020	13
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	16/12/2020	5
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	16/12/2020	40
Town Pigeon (Feral Rock Dove)	<i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>	16/12/2020	3
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	16/12/2020	21

Mammals – 1 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count
Eastern Grey Squirrel	Sciurus carolinensis	16/12/2020	2

In the next few days I will issue a full year report on what we have seen and it will be nice to look back at everything we have seen in 2020. I'll also send the photos I too on the day via WhatsApp.

Until then, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and best wishes for a “normal” 2021!

regards

Martin