

Wildlife Walk – August 2022

The monthly wildlife walk took place on Thursday 18th August, having been postponed from the day before due to forecast thunderstorms which never actually happened. However, Thursday proved to be an excellent day with 2 new species for the park list, both of which were very good sightings. Thursday was a warm day with sunny spells and birds were very active in the hedgerows. When I arrived, Colin mentioned that he thought he saw a Spotted Flycatcher but when he looked with binoculars he only saw a juvenile Goldfinch, so this was dismissed. Later in the walk, while looking at a largish flock of Goldfinch, a bird popped up onto a branch and there it was, a Spotted Flycatcher indeed! We then spent a few minutes looking for this again and saw lots of other birds, including a very nice family of Greenfinch. Moving to the bridge and the other side of the hedge, we picked up the Goldfinch flock again and following them as we hoped was the Spotted Flycatcher, giving us all even better views. This is a very good record for the park and the first one I have seen in Wickford. The Spotted Flycatcher is a much declined bird in the UK, mainly breeding now in the North and West of the UK, although a few pairs are clinging on in North East Essex. The bird we saw will be a passage migrant, feeding up in the park before moving South to Africa for the winter. This shows that the park is not only important for resident and migrant birds breeding and over-wintering here but also as a place for migrating birds feeding up before moving on. The other bird highlight of the day was the number of Swallows over the park, again feeding up before travelling all the way to South Africa for their winter holidays.

In contrast to previous visits recently, the number of butterflies in the park was very much reduced, with many having been and gone for this year. However, if we continue into autumn with the warm weather we may get a second or even third generation of some species. We did see a couple of very nice Holly Blues and a Large White but only 3 Gatekeepers and 3 Meadow Browns which are by far the most common butterflies in the park during the summer.

Our second new species of the day was a damselfly, spotted by Denise, hanging from vegetation in the hedgerow, just past the old pillbox but before the large mound, and it was a Willow Emerald. This is a European species that has recently colonised the UK and is increasing both its range and numbers especially in the South East. We have for a couple of years speculated that we would find one in the park, having been seen in the surrounding area, and we have eventually found one. It is normally found on trees overhanging water, mainly willow or alder, so the lake trees would be a good place to find this species. It lays its eggs on the bark of the trees and the larvae hatch and fall off into the water, where they live for quite a while (I don't know how long but it will be months if not years) and they later emerge as the adult damselfly. Depending on the age of your guide book, this species is such a sudden and recent colonist, that it is not in many dragonfly guides - including mine!

So, a very good day in the park and our wildlife lists continue to grow.

Details of all species seen/heard have been tabulated below.

Just a reminder of the remaining dates for the walks this year:

September – 21st

October – 19th

November – 16th

December – 14th

All starting at 10.30am from the Pavilion car park. Please note these dates in your diaries but as usual I will confirm by email / WhatsApp whether the walks will go ahead depending on weather etc.

The dates are also available on the [Friends of the Wick Country Park Website](#).

Martin Singleton

Birds – 22 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Notes
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	18/08/2022	15	Lots flying around the park today, great to see
Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	18/08/2022	3	One overhead and two near the lake
Common Blackbird	Turdus merula	18/08/2022	1	Just one in the pavilion garden
Common Buzzard	Buteo buteo	18/08/2022	1	One seen very high from the lake
Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	18/08/2022	2	At the lake
Common Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus	18/08/2022	3	Very good views of at least three birds feeding in the lake reedbed
Common Wood Pigeon	Columba palumbus	18/08/2022	11	Usual birds around the park
Eurasian Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	18/08/2022	1	Near the picnic area
Eurasian Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus	18/08/2022	7	Several seen and heard in the hedgerows
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	18/08/2022	1	In the hedge while looking for the Flycatcher
Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	18/08/2022	1	At the lake
Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica	18/08/2022	9	Lots of birds around the park
European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	18/08/2022	12	At least a dozen birds moving through the hedgerows
European Green Woodpecker	Picus viridis	18/08/2022	2	One calling from the large mound and one at the lake
European Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	18/08/2022	3	Nice to see a family moving through the hedgerows with the Goldfinch
European Robin	Erithacus rubecula	18/08/2022	3	One seen and two more heard
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	18/08/2022	1	One overhead near the pavilion
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus	18/08/2022	1	One overhead
Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	18/08/2022	3	Two heard on the car park road and another with Blue Tits
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	18/08/2022	8	On the island at the lake
Rock Dove (Feral)	Columba livia 'feral'	18/08/2022	15	Flock overhead from the lake
Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa striata	18/08/2022	1	Moving through the hedgerows with the Goldfinch flock - a great sighting for the park

Dragonflies – 2 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Notes
Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta	18/08/2022	3	Our first records of this late summer/autumn dragonfly - seen hunting along the hedgerows
Willow Emerald	Chalcolestes viridis	18/08/2022	1	Our first record of this recent UK colonist - seen hanging from vegetation in the hedgerow

Butterflies – 6 Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Date	Total Count	Notes
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	18/08/2022	3	Only 3 seen today - looks like they are done for this year
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	18/08/2022	3	Seen mainly on brambles with some nice specimens seen well
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	18/08/2022	3	A nice one near the bridge and two others around the park
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	18/08/2022	3	Similar to Gatekeeper, this species is nearly gone for this year
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	18/08/2022	1	Just one at the back of the lake
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	18/08/2022	1	Just one in the usual shaded area at the back of the lake