



# Skylarks



## A Message from the Committee

Welcome to the latest edition of the Skylarks newsletter. It's a completely different start to the new year than we had expected, we do hope you are all keeping well and the Committee would like to send you our very best wishes for 2021. The past year has been a testing and turbulent time but hope is now on the horizon and normality will hopefully return soon.

Life for the wildlife in the Wick Country Park has not changed of course and an excellent and comprehensive report is included in this issue detailing all the recorded sightings during the past 12 months. The credit of this is due to Martin Singleton who has organised the group monthly wildlife walks which unfortunately have to be put on hold due to the current restrictions. However Martin has continued going to the park every month to carry on with the recording of sightings and kept the reports going, these can be found on the Friends of the Wick Country Park website.

At this time of the year we would have had the January Jaunt and AGM but understandably that could not be arranged. At this stage the AGM is postponed – we will let you know when it will be when Covid allows.



TAKE CARE



Come along to the Park and enjoy a walk and see the wildlife. If you do make any good wildlife sightings, please share them by sending an email to [contact\\_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk](mailto:contact_us@friendsofthewickcountrypark.co.uk) and we will add them to the 'Nature Notes' on the website. If you could manage a picture or two that would be even better! Hopefully normality will come back into our lives soon so we can hold some events later in 2021. Until then take care and stay safe.

## 'Wick Country Park – Wildlife Sightings – Full Year Report 2020'

Martin's extensive Wildlife Sightings Report again uses his expertise in identification and recording the wildlife we are lucky to have so near to us.

### Birds - 53 Species

Summary of Birds recorded in WCP – 2020				
Number of Species	53	Visits	11	
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% of Visits
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	8	4	36%
Black-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	105	11	100%
Canada Goose	Branta canadensis	17	11	100%
Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	10	11	100%
Cetti's Warbler	Cettia cetti	1	1	9%
Common Blackbird	Turdus merula	9	8	73%
Common Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	2	3	27%
Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	5	5	45%
Common Gull (Mew Gull)	Larus canus	2	2	18%
Common House Martin	Delichon urbicum	4	2	18%
Common Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	1	1	9%
Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	6	10	91%
Common Pheasant	Phasianus colchicus	1	1	9%
Common Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	30	10	91%
Common Swift	Apus apus	11	3	27%
Common Whitethroat	Sylvia communis	5	3	27%
Common Wood Pigeon	Columba palumbus	40	11	100%
Duncock	Prunella modularis	5	5	45%
Eurasian Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla	7	3	27%
Eurasian Blue Tit	Cyanistes caeruleus	22	11	100%
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	8	4	36%
Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	4	9	82%
Eurasian Jay	Garrulus glandarius	4	2	18%
Eurasian Magpie	Pica pica	13	11	100%
Eurasian Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus	6	3	27%
Eurasian Skylark	Alauda arvensis	1	1	9%
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	1	1	9%
Eurasian Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	10	7	64%
European Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	23	10	91%
European Green Woodpecker	Picus viridis	5	7	64%
European Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	7	6	55%
European Herring Gull	Larus argentatus	3	5	45%
European Robin	Erithacus rubecula	19	11	100%
Fieldfare	Turdus pilaris	30	1	9%
Goldcrest	Regulus regulus	1	1	9%
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	1	2	18%
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	1	2	18%
Great Tit	Parus major	7	7	64%

Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	3	1	9%
Greylag Goose	Anser answer	2	2	18%
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	3	4	36%
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus	2	2	18%
Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	2	2	18%
Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	17	7	64%
Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	5	10	91%
Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	1	1	9%
Redwing	Turdus iliacus	40	1	9%
Rook	Corvus frugilegus	1	1	9%
Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	2	5	45%
Stock Dove	Columba oenas	1	2	18%
Town Pigeon (Feral Rock Dove)	Columba livia 'feral'	6	2	18%
Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	3	1	9%
Western Jackdaw	Coloeus monedula	21	1	9%

53 bird species were recorded on our visits, which is a very good total for the park. There are 7 species we have seen on every visit - Black-headed Gull, Canada Goose, Carrion Crow, Common Wood Pigeon, Eurasian Blue Tit, Eurasian Magpie and European Robin. In addition, we have Common Moorhen, Common Starling, Eurasian Coot, European Goldfinch, and Mallard which were seen on 80% to 90% of our visits. These 12 birds are our most common residents and you will see all of these on most visits to the park. Blackbird too can probably be added to this list as we saw this on 73% of our walks.

Wren, Green Woodpecker, Great Tit, Long Tailed Tit and very pleasingly Greenfinch were seen on more than 50% of our walks - Greenfinch having suffered big declines over the last few years and it is nice to see that it is present in the park. Song Thrush can be bracketed in this group too as we saw this species on 45% of our walks - another much reduced species living in the park.

We are also very lucky to get many summer visitors in the park, in total 8 summer migrants were seen on our walks and all are probably breeding in the park or nearby. These are: Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Common & Lesser Whitethroats, Reed Warbler, Swallow, House Martin and Swift.

The most notable winter visitors this year were Redwings and Fieldfares, both of which are thrush species and migrate here from Scandinavia and Russia. Other winter visitors included Gulls - the Black Headed Gull flock was over 100 in December, plus Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Common Gull. Also, it is very likely that "our" Robin, Blackbird, and Blue Tit numbers are boosted by visitors from Northern Europe.

In respect of breeding birds, all of the lake birds look to have successfully raised young this year. We all saw Canada Goose, Mallard, Coot and Moorhen chicks. Reed Warblers almost certainly were breeding too around the lake. It is difficult to estimate how successful other species breeding was during this year. We did see a lot of Swallows later in the year, which could mean they had a good breeding year. At the moment there are large flocks of Blue Tits and Long Tailed Tits in the park, so they look to have done well but there are few Great Tits in the flocks so they may have not have done so well. In addition, we may be seeing birds in winter that have migrated from Europe. We will only really gain some knowledge of breeding success over the years when we can compare numbers of birds from one year to the next.

## Butterflies - 21 Species

Summary of Butterflies recorded in WCP – 2020				
Number of Species	21	Visits	11	
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% Sightings
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	1	1	9%
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	1	1	9%
Comma Butterfly	<i>Polyommata c-album</i>	1	1	9%
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	6	3	27%
Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>	1	1	9%
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	43	2	18%
Green-veined White	<i>Artogeia napi</i>	6	4	36%
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	2	2	18%
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	23	3	27%
Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>	1	1	9%
Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>	1	2	18%
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	36	3	27%
Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	2	1	9%
Peacock Butterfly	<i>Inachis io</i>	2	2	18%
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	1	1	9%
Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	6	1	9%
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	2	1	9%
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	3	2	18%
Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>	1	1	9%
Small White	<i>Artogeia rapae</i>	2	4	36%
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	6	5	45%

One of the highlights of this year has been the fabulous colourful butterflies in the park. However, it was a bit of a mixed year for butterflies with a very good total number of species seen but on some visits we saw hardly any. The very early warm weather brought out lots of butterflies in March/April but this seemed to lead to a lull in late spring, as the initial brood died off. We then had a mass of butterflies on the wing in summer, with incredible numbers of Gatekeepers, Meadow Browns and Large Whites, followed by another lull in late summer only for an autumn burst in September, where we saw some very nice Common Blues and Small Coppers.

Notable sightings for the park were, Brown Argus, Large Skipper, and Marbled White. Marbled White in particular looks now to be established in the park and hopefully numbers will increase over the coming years.

I am sure we are all looking forward to some warm weather when we will hopefully see lots more butterflies in 2021.



## Dragonflies - 3 Species

Summary of Dragonflies/Damselflies recorded in WCP – 2020				
Number of Species	3	Visits	11	
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% Sightings
Black-tailed Skimmer	Orthetrum cancellatum	4	2	18%
Brown Hawker	Aeshna grandis	2	1	9%
Migrant Hawker	Aeshna mixta	13	2	18%

A disappointing total when we know that there are more species in the park. This proves you will not capture everything on our walks. My own records show that I saw Common Blue Damselfly, Blue-tailed Damselfly and Large Red Damselfly, in addition to the above. I am sure there are other species present too. Perhaps next year we will manage to record more species.

## Mammals - 3 Species

Summary of Mammals recorded in WCP – 2020				
Number of Species	3	Visits	11	
Common Name	Scientific Name	Max Day Count	No of Sightings	% Sightings
Common Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pipistrellus	10	1	9%
Eastern Grey Squirrel	Sciurus carolinensis	2	3	27%
Soprano Pipistrelle	Pipistrellus pygmaeus	5	1	9%

This was disappointing too but not a surprising total bearing in mind that many mammals are nocturnal and very wary of disturbance. Our night walk produced 2 species of bat that we managed to identify and at least 1 other that we did not. Our best chance of seeing mammals will be during an evening/night walk and we will go ahead with at least one of these in 2021.



One final note please do not forget your wellies if you are walking round the park in the current very wet weather!!

### Friends of the Wick Country Park Committee:

Christine Lee - Acting Chairperson, Hazel Broomfield - Treasurer, Marie Singleton - Secretary,  
Hannah Cooper - Membership Secretary, Alaric Cundy - Webmaster  
Peter Bates - Skylarks 3K Race Events

### Basildon Borough Council Countryside Services:

Mark Williams - Countryside Ranger. To resolve an issue go to [www.basildon.gov.uk/street](http://www.basildon.gov.uk/street) or customer service on 01268 533333 (option 5). Any site enquiries to 01268 206665

**Neighbourhood Policing Team:** Telephone 0300 333 4444 or 07875 003503