

10 Birds of London



About the London Natural History Society

The London Natural History Society traces its history back to 1858. The Society is made up of a number of active sections that provide a wide range of talks, organised nature walks, coach trips and other activities. This range of events makes the LNHS one of the most active natural history societies in the world. Whether it is purely for recreation, or to develop field skills for a career in conservation, the LNHS offers a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities. Beginners are welcome at every event and gain access to the knowledge of some very skilled naturalists.

On top of its varied public engagement, the LNHS also provides a raft of publications free to members. The London Naturalist is its annual journal with scientific papers as well as lighter material such as book reviews. The annual London Bird Report published since 1937 sets a benchmark for publications of this genre. Furthermore, there is a quarterly Newsletter that carries many trip reports and useful announcements.

The LNHS maintains its annual membership subscription at a modest level, representing fantastic value for money.

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The selection of species is a subjective decision of the contributor(s) and not based on quantitative criteria such as population numbers, database records or presence on recording grids in surveys. These PDFs are not available in print form from the LNHS.

Taking your interest further

Details of other organizations with an interest in wildlife and a whole host of information is on the LNHS website. Past copies of the printed LNHS publications are available from Catherine Schmitt. Details on www.lnhs.org.uk.

Contributing to the LNHS Education Series

If you would like to contribute to LNHS Learning please get in touch with one of the following section chairpersons in the LNHS or Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne who is coordinating the series.

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Mute Swan

With its elegant white plumage, Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) is always a pleasure to see. It can be stunningly ethereal on a misty, frosty morning or as the sun goes down. It has been contended that swans have more feathers than any other bird on Earth.



Mallard

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) is another species which can perhaps be taken for granted, but the blue speculum and the males' iridescent green heads make this duck a pleasure to spot. The mallard is thought to be the most abundant duck on the planet and is the ancestor of many domestic breeds.



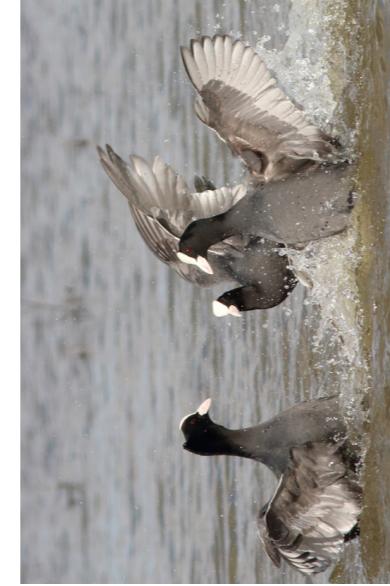
Grey Heron

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) is very common along the Thames, standing upright and silent as it fishes. Somewhat awkward and 'hefty' in flight, this rather scruffy bird is one of the author's favourites. In past centuries, roast heron was a prized delicacy in Britain.



Coot

Coot (*Fulica atra*) can be found almost anywhere in London that has water. Although poor fliers, coots can dive to depths of up to two metres and are strong runners. Look closely and you'll see that they have huge blue feet. Their white foreheads gave rise to the centuries-old expression 'as bald as a coot'.



Magpie

Magpie (*Pica pica*) is not everyone's favourite bird but it is actually very striking with its wings and long tail having a lovely green-blue sheen. You will probably see this noisy bird even when not looking for it. A lot of superstition surrounds magpies, including that seeing one on its own is unlucky.



Wren

Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) is a tiny little bird with an upright tail. Being brown and small it can easily hide itself, but it is very common. It is also extremely noisy for such a small creature - adult wrens weigh about the same as a £1 coin - but their song is very loud and striking. Their territories are small, so you can often hear 3 or 4 singing in fairly close proximity.



Robin

The confident, friendly Robin (*Erythacus rubecula*) is easy to find with its unmissable bright orange breast. Its lovely song defends its territory and if that's not enough, robins will fight to the death for their patch. In 2015, the robin topped a poll to choose the UK's first national bird.



Goldfinch

Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) is fantastic with its bright red face, yellow wing bar and fawn back. It can be seen in flocks and is easily attracted to gardens where it will squabble noisily if there isn't space at the feeders for everyone. Any fans of Renaissance religious painting will know that this bird turns up repeatedly, heavily endowed with symbolism.



Starling

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) is actually red-listed (meaning its population is threatened) but is not too hard to find in London luckily. Easily overlooked, it is a super bird with plumage that looks like the night sky on a clear, crispy winter night. The starling is an accomplished mimic and can copy swifts, curlews, car alarms and ring tones.



Blackbird

The dapper Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) is very distinctive with its bright yellow bill and eye ring and its smart black plumage (males only). The blackbird has a distinctive alarm call and a beautiful song, there's nothing nicer than a blackbird singing on a summer evening. Blackbirds have their own patron saint, Kevin of Glendalough.

