

London Birding Monthly Highlights

The LNHS recording area occupies a 20-mile radius of St Paul's Cathedral. This area encompasses a wide range of wildlife habitats and some outstanding nature reserves which result in a surprisingly high number of species of birds being recorded each year. Around 350 species of birds have been recorded since 1900 and in a typical year, over 200 species are recorded. Given below are a series of monthly highlights from January 2016.

January 2022

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

It was a slow and steady start to 2022, with much of December's birdlife remaining across the reserve. The **Dartford Warbler** was still to be found along the river wall, with a second bird out on Rainham West on the 21st. Likewise the two **Firecrests** remained, and the odd **Chiffchaff** and **Blackcap** were noted along with a smattering of winter **Thrushes**, **Water Pipits**, **Rock Pipits** and **Bearded Tits**. The five **Barnacle Geese** were usually to be found out on Wennington, and two local roving **Pink-footed Geese** were seen briefly on the 26th, with a single **Brent Goose** on the 7th and 9th. Three **Great White Egrets** were new in on the 1st, with one the following day and another dropped in on the 25th. An immature **Spoonbill** became a fixture from the 8th. **Avocet** peaked at 42, but generally wader numbers were low. Three **Common Sandpipers** and a couple of **Jack Snipe** added interest. The odd **Caspian**, **Yellow-legged** and **Med Gull** were seen along the river, along with a fine 'Viking' **Gull** on the 2nd. **Marsh Harriers** were even displaying in the mild conditions, and the first **Red Kites** were seen on the 28th and 29th. Up to four **Ravens** have been a regular attraction.

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There were plenty of lingerers from 2021, with the **Dusky Warbler** at Walthamstow Marshes proving popular till the 5th, and the five **Russian White-fronted Geese** at Fairlop till the 9th. The KGV Reservoir hosted the **Great Northern Diver**, **Red-necked Grebe** and at least two **Scaup** all month, and up-valley the **Cattle Egret** at Hall Marsh was joined by a second from the 12th. Two single **Bitterns** were around Seventy Acres along with about ten **Goosander**, 4 **Smew**, male **Scaup** and the usual array of **Water Rails**, **Red Kites**, **Siskins** and **Kingfishers**. A pair of **Red-crested Pochards** were on Holyfield Lake from the 12th. **Great White Egrets** were seen over Gallions Reach (5th), Thames Chase Forest Centre (14th) and over North Ockendon (18th), while two **Cattle Egrets** moved up and down the lower Mardyke from the 15th. Two **Pink-footed Geese** lingered around Damyns Hall from the 23rd but were highly mobile. The **Greylags** and **Goosanders** were seen at Mollands Lane, Hainault Forest, Connaught Water and Weald Park. **Firecrests** were found at six sites, and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was seen at Creekside NR from the 31st. There were **Brambling** flocks of 20 and 30 in the Lea Valley at Cayton Hill and Holyfield Hall Farm, but it was the finch flock at Navestock that drew attention as the numbers climbed to a very impressive 350 **Brambling** (at least) with fewer **Chaffinch** amongst them. Encouragingly, up to four **Hawfinch** were seen around Harold Hill. A **Yellowhammer** was a good find at Wanstead Flats on the 1st, and both **Woodcock** and **Avocet** at Beckton STW on the 1st were equally notable.

December 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The **Cattle Egrets** must have got wind that the cows were leaving for the winter, as the last one was seen on the 3rd the week before they left. With mild conditions there was not much change in wildfowl numbers, but a hint of east brought in a flock of 15 skittish **Barnacle Geese** that headed north. Five more dropped in on the 21st and stayed into New Year, with another 11 briefly on the 23rd. **Dunlin** peaked at 1100, and 70 **Golden Plover** on the 17th were a one-day wonder. **Green** and **Common Sandpipers**, **Jack Snipe** and a couple of **Ruff** added interest. The Thames was quiet bar a few **Caspian** (five on 22nd) and **Yellow-legged Gulls**, but a **Shag** feeding mid river was a bonus on the 22nd. At least five **Marsh Harriers** are wintering, and **Ravens**, **Buzzards** and **Peregrines** were daily, along with our very tame female **Kestrel**. A **Red Kite** drifted through on the 10th and a **Merlin** was seen on the 28th. The only **Short-eared Owl** was seen in the rain on the 4th. **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** are wintering and two **Firecrest** were seen around the car park area, while the male **Dartford Warbler** continued to tantalise along the river wall. **Bearded Tits**, **Stonechats** and **Water Pipits** were around the trails, and **Rock Pipits** were along the tide line.

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The Lea Valley was on form once again with a good selection of winter birds available. The **Great Northern Diver** remained on the KGV Reservoir along with up to 18 **Goosander** (13th), two **Scaup** and good numbers of **Goldeneye**. Nine **Black-tailed Godwit** dropped in on the 9th, with a **Red-necked Grebe** from the 11th and **Black-necked Grebe** from the 13th. Both stayed into 2022. A 1w **Caspian Gull** was seen on several dates at Walthamstow Wetlands, along with two **Scaup** (20th) and a few **Goosander** and **Goldeneye**. A **Jack Snipe** was on Walthamstow Marshes on the 5th, but the Marshes hosted the star local find of a **Dusky Warbler** on the 14th, which stayed into New Year along with a **Siberian Chiffchaff**. Another **Sibe Chiffy** was up Valley at Hooks Marsh on the 8th, a **Cattle Egret** returned from the 18th, and the Seventy Acres complex held ten **Goosander**, the immature male **Smew** and two **Bitterns**. A pair of **Red-crested Pochard** were on Holyfield; the nearby farmland continued to host up to 45 **Brambling**, with the **Chaffinch** flock and four **Russian White-fronted Geese** from the 18th to 20th. There were 29 **Goosanders** at Weald Park from the 4th, with a single at Dagenham Chase (21st), three on Strawberry Hill Pond (with 32 **Mandarin**) on the 18th, and five more at Mollands Lane (8th). Four **Cattle Egrets** flew over Fairlop (6th) and were new for the site, and five **Russian White-fronted Geese** arrived on the 20th, with a **Siberian Chiffchaff** there on the 21st and 22nd. The small flock of 20 **Golden Plover** were still the only ones in the area. A female **Red-crested Pochard** was a good find in Wanstead Park on the 16th, and an incongruous **Red-throated Diver** flew up the Ingrebourne Valley on the 15th. **Ravens** were seen over the Upminster and Rainham farmland and over Wanstead Flats, where it is still a very good bird (12th), and **Firecrests** were noted at five sites with seven birds involved. The adult **Caspian Gull** remained on Eagle Pond and a 1w **Iceland Gull** was at Gallions Reach on the 19th, with four **Avocets** at Beckton STW on the 5th being a good record so far up Thames. A **Spoonbill** was seen feeding along the foreshore at Grays on the 27th, and a lone male **Hawfinch** was seen at Thorndon CP South from 3rd-9th.

November 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The **Cattle Egret** duo became five on the 2nd, and by the 7th there were ten following around the cows, with at least three making it through to December. This was a new site record and a

taste of things to come I think, while **Great White Egrets** were seen on five single dates. A single **Barnacle Goose** (9th) was seen with the vast **Canada** flock, and a couple of **Scoter** were seen on the Thames with a female **Goldeneye** on the 20th and a single **Brent Goose** on the 22nd. With a continued westerly air stream duck numbers dwindled rather than increased. **Caspian Gulls** were regularly noted along with adult **Little Gull** (27th), the odd **Yellow-legged Gull** and a cracking ‘**Viking Gull**’. Two **Ruff** were wintering, and **Jack Snipe** were occasionally seen along with both **Green** and **Common Sandpipers**. Four **Knot** (22nd) were noteworthy, with about 1000 **Dunlin**, and one or two **Grey** (but still no **Golden**) **Plover** were seen. The ‘usual’ raptors all put on a good show and a ring-tail **Hen Harrier** drifted quickly through on the 18th. The only **Short-eared Owl** was one high and south on the 3rd, and **Raven** once again became a daily feature. The lingering **Ring Ouzel** stayed till the 3rd and the **Dartford Warbler** was true to the river wall throughout. **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** were seen and a **Firecrest** was noted on the 19th and 20th, while **Bearded Tits**, **Water Pipits** and **Rock Pipits** were still to be found. The star find of the month, however, was a crisp **Hooded Crow** that flew north on the 23rd and was probably the first one sighted since the 1980s.

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The **Black-necked Grebe** almost made it to December on Wanstead Flats, but the freeze on the night of the 28th caused it to at last move on. There was a good spread of winter wildfowl in the Lee Valley, with **Scaup**, **Goosander** and **Goldeneye** still on the KGV and a **Black-necked Grebe** there from the 12th to the 14th. A hulking **Great Northern Diver** was present from the 22nd. Up to seven **Goosanders** were also around the Seventy Acres complex, with the resident female Smew being joined by a 1w male on the 28th. An adult **Caspian Gull** was noted on several dates and at least one **Bittern** regularly put on a show. A **Cattle Egret** was at nearby Holyfield Hall Farm on the 19th, with six **Tree Sparrows** and several **Brambling** the next day. The large **Chaffinch** flock contained at least 20 **Brambling** by month end. A **Jack Snipe** was seen on Walthamstow Marsh on the 26th, and the Wetlands had five **Great White Egrets** pass through on the 4th; **Water Pipit** (18th) and a late **House Martin** (19th) were the highlights. Two more **Bitterns** were reported by fishermen in the Ingrebourne Valley, and there were 30 **Brambling** on the 6th, plus 20 on the 14th with a large **Chaffinch** and **Linnet** flock. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was found on the 21st, whilst a **Kite** appeared on the 4th, at what is the leanest time of year for local sightings. **Ravens** were a regular sight over Platford Green and rural Upminster, with four together on a couple of dates. A **Great White Egret** was also seen out on Bulphan (9th) with two lower down the Mardyke on the following day. **Woodpigeon** were light this year, with just the one big movement of 21213 over Grays on the 3rd, along with a few finches and thrushes that included late **Ring Ouzels** on the 3rd and 5th. Another **Ouzel** was noted at Fairlop on the 9th where the only local **Golden Plover** flock increased to 19 by the 21st. Up to eight **Goosanders** were seen in Weald Park with a **Hawfinch** there on the 21st. **Firecrest** were seen on Wanstead Flats (two on 7th), Woodford Green (4th) and Orsett (10th). The adult **Caspian Gull** returned to Leyton Flats on the 18th and another was at Gallions Reach on the 12th, where an adult **Iceland Gull** was seen again on the 18th.

October 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Many of the good species from late September lingered into October, with the **Pectoral Sandpiper** staying until the 10th; once again there was a fine selection of big white birds. The two **Cattle Egrets** became four on the 17th and five from the next day, while **Great White**

Egrets were seen on several dates, with two on the 29th at least. A **Spoonbill** dropped in on the 9th and 10th, and the East Tilbury **White Stork** circled on the 17th before heading back to its usual field. A single **Brent Goose** was noted from the 14th, and 12 **Egyptian Geese** were spotted the same day; a site record! Winter duck numbers increased with an unseasonably early high of 1600 **Wigeon** on the 23rd. A female **Goosander** flew to the river on the 22nd, but the Thames was otherwise quiet, with just a few **Caspian** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** of note. **Marsh Harriers** were still on the reserve and there was a single **Red Kite** and ringtail **Hen Harrier** on the 17th; the first autumn **Short-eared Owl** was seen on the 12th. The 14th saw late **Swallows** and a **Wheatear** with a **Sand Martin** and **Lesser Whitethroat** on the 9th. A scattering of **Bramblings**, **Siskins** and **Redpolls** were amongst a steady trickle of **Chaffinches**, and a fine male **Dartford Warbler** was found on the 9th and stayed into November, just like a male **Ring Ouzel** from the 22nd. There were four more **Ring Ouzel** on the 12th but just a few small groups of **Redwings** and **Song Thrush** were seen. **Bearded Tits** and **Ravens** were daily favourites and **Rock** and **Water Pipits** were in by mid-month, At least ten squealing **Water Rails** were out on the trails late on the 16th.

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The **Black-necked Grebe** just does not want to leave Wanstead Flats, but the rewards for the patchworkers over there were scant with **Jack Snipe** (8th and 10th), **Woodlark** (11th) and **Merlin** (13th) being the standouts, along with a nocmig **Dunlin** (9th), 1200 **Redwings** (13th) and ten **Fieldfare** (17th). **Eight Cattle Egrets** were noted alongside the KGV res on the 5th with three there the next day when two late **Yellow Wagtails** and a **Black Redstart** were also seen. A **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** and two **Garganey** were found on the 9th and six **Goosander** were back on the 12th. Across the road there were six **Scoter** (9th) and down at Walthamstow Wetlands the highlights were two more **Rock Pipits** (7th), **Short-eared Owl** (24th) and a calling **Yellow-browed Warbler** (24th). A late **Sand Martin** headed south through Sewardstone (23rd) and a **Bittern** showed a few times on Seventy Acres from the 9th with a near adult **Caspian Gull** reported there on and off. **Ravens** were noted at several sites and a male **Ring Ouzel** was in Rainham on the 24th, with a **Merlin** nearby at West Horndon on the 3rd. A surprise adult **Sabine's Gull** was seen off Gallions Reach on the 21st, and a **Great White Egret** was at Fairlop Waters on the 9th while a garden **Yellow-browed Warbler** in Brentwood the same day. A meticulous count of 1937 **Redwings** moved through Chingford Plain on the 13th and a **Jack Snipe** was picked up dead in Ardleigh Green.

September 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

It was another month of big white birds, with two **Cattle Egrets** and two **Great White Egrets** being present all month; an additional three GWEs were seen on the 8th and 28th, and three Cattles were spotted on the 18th. A single **Spoonbill** was seen on the 3rd, with three on the 13th, a single through to the 17th, and another on the 24th. **Little Egrets** peaked at a respectable 36 on the 10th, and not to be outdone, a **White Stork** dropped in late on the 10th and stayed until the 11th. It was un-ringed and from the primary pattern appears to be the bird that took residence at Stanway from the 14th. There were a few new waders recorded, with a **Wood Sandpiper** (13th), a mobile **Pectoral Sandpiper** (from 24th), a **Curlew Sandpiper** (11th), up to 122 **Black-tailed Godwits**, as well as the odd **Ruff**, **Green Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, and returning **Redshanks** and **Lapwings**. River watching produced **Great Skuas** on the 4th and 13th, and a good **Tern** passage on the 14th yielded a record 159

Sandwich Terns, along with 250 **Common** and seven **Little Terns**. The next day, 17 more **Sandwich Terns** were noted. **Caspian Gulls** were seen on several dates, with three spotted on the 23rd and at least five individuals seen while a **Guillemot** whizzed upriver on the 18th and 19th. A **Honey Buzzard** on the 3rd was the pick of the raptors, and **Hobbies** put on a great display. A few **Wheatear** and **Whinchat** passed through, and both **Spotted** and **Pied Flycatchers** (7th) were found. The first **Stonechats** had returned before the end of the month. A single **Tree Pipit** was heard on the 18th, and the last young **Cuckoo** was being harassed on the 16th. **Skylarks**, **Meadow Pipits**, and the odd **Siskin** were seen as the month moved on, and **Jays** were seen in a small group, but were surpassed by the 44 seen on the 28th.

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There was a good selection of drift migrants recorded through the month, with a scattering of **Wheatears**, **Whinchats** (for instance nine on Wanstead Flats; 11th) and **Spotted Flycatchers**, as well as 14 **Redstarts** from nine sites, 21 (if all different) **Pied Flycatchers** from five sites with the four spotted on two dates on Wanstead Flats and three at Dagnam Park comprising the high counts. Four **Tree Pipits** were seen and a **Wryneck** once again proved popular on Wanstead Flats from the 4th-6th, with another on Maylands GC on the 17th. In the Lee Valley, Walthamstow Wetlands held **Black Tern** and **Scoter** (1st), two **Little Stints** (2nd), a **Great White Egret** (5th) and a late **Swift** (7th), while up-valley the KGV also had two **Black Terns** and a **Little Stint** (5th), with another of the latter on the 25th when two **Garganey** were also present; three **Turnstones** there on the 12th were noteworthy. The resident female **Smew** was still around Seventy Acres and 30 **Barnacle Geese**, two **Pintail**, and the first **Bittern** of the season were seen on the 29th. The **Black-necked Grebe** still seems very happy on Wanstead Flats, and the site also recorded a record six **Curlew** on the 5th, a **Mandarin** (16th), and a juvenile **Gannet** (26th). Looking up produced some quality flyovers, with a **Black Kite** over Epping (14th – it may have been in the area for over a year...), **Sandwich Tern** and **Spotted Redshank** over Woodford Green (9th), and 11 **Spoonbills** over Bedfords Park (20th). Looking at the road gave one birder a close encounter with a juvenile **Honey Buzzard** that was originally sat on the tarmac near Chipping Ongar on the 22nd, while a chance glance up afforded stunning views of a juvenile **Osprey** at Little Belhus on the 19th. A **Great White Egret** was in the Ingrebourne from the 22nd-27th, and a **Garganey** at Weald Park on the 20th was a site first. Down on the Thames there were 108 **Sandwich Terns** at North Woolwich on the 14th, and a **Guillemot** upriver at West Thurrock Marshes the same day, while at Beckton there were 11 **Common Sandpipers** (4th), **Mandarin** (12th) and **Guillemot**, as well as the reappearance of the adult **Iceland Gull** (19th).

August 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The theme of big white birds continued throughout August with a single **Great White Egret** present through to the 8th, becoming two from the 10th into September, with four on the 14th. An adult **Cattle Egret** was seen on the 10th and was joined by two juveniles from the 13th with all three appearing on and off from then on. The sole **Spoonbill** sighting was on the 23rd and the number of **Little Egrets** reached about 20 most days. It seems like the second pair of **Marsh Harriers** did get two young off, with five juveniles on several early dates including the two 'new ones' being aerially fed by the parents, which is great news. **Peregrine** and **Hobby** sightings increased, and the **Ravens** were seen now and then. Wader passage was slow but at least there was some water for them, and amongst the **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** there

were **Woods** on the 6th, 10th (two) and 13th. The highest count of **Whimbrel** was six on the 7th, and **Black-tailed Godwits** peaked at 63 on the 26th, while there were a few **Dunlin**, **Turnstone**, **Ruff** and **Ringed Plover** sightings. Seven **Sanderlings** were seen on the 25th and three **Bar-tailed Godwits** were a good early record on the 28th. The river was quiet with 60 **Common Terns** being the high count, along with a single **Arctic** and **Sandwich**, two **Blacks**, and a **Little Gull** on the 23rd. **Yellow-legged Gull** numbers were low with 25 on the 11th being the high, and juvenile **Caspian Gulls** were noted on several dates from the 8th. A juvenile **Black-necked Grebe** was a great find on the 13th and it was last seen on the 23rd, while a **Guillemot** paddled up river on the 25th. There were a few **Yellow Wagtails** but just one **Whinchat**, two **Wheatears**, and a couple of young **Cuckoos**.

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A **Nightjar** at Dagenham Chase (30th) was the undoubted star find, but it also had two **Ravens** (11th), **Pied Flycatcher** (9th), **Wheatear** (10th) and **Tree Pipits** on the 28th and 30th. The **Black-necked Grebe** remained on Wanstead Flats all month, and as usual the site attracted its fair share of passage passerines with **Tree Pipits** on four dates totalling eight birds, **Pied Flycatchers** on 26th and 27th, **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Whinchats** on several dates, 12 **Wheatear** on the 16th, and **Redstarts** on the 19th, 21st and 22nd. Throw in a **Garganey** (26th), **Caspian Gull** (15th-16th) **Curlew** and **Whimbrel** on noc mig on the 24th and it was another good month which leaves the site already just shy of its record year! A **Wood Warbler** was a great patch find at Dagnam Park (16th) and **Tree Pipit** were also seen there on the 27th. The latter were also seen in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 21st (three), 27th and 28th, with a **Redstart** there on the 21st, four **Black-tailed Godwits** (14th), and **Garganey** (27th). Young **Cuckoos** were seen there, North Ockenden, and on Wanstead Flats, and three were being fed by **Reed Warbler** parents along the same hedge line on Bulphan Fen on the 4th. Another **Pied Flycatcher** was in Weald Park on the 27th and one was ringed in Hornchurch on the 22nd, while there were a couple more local **Tree Pipits**, **Whinchats**, and a garden **Redstart** in Woodford Green (23rd). Walthamstow Wetlands had a good mix of birds, with a high count of 58 **Little Egrets** (18th), **Arctic Tern** (24th) and a **Black Tern** (16th), while there were plenty of notable passerines with several **Wheatears** from the 3rd, **Tree Pipit** (18th), **Spotted Flycatchers** (from 21st) and **Whinchat** (from 18th). A few waders moved through with lots of **Common Sandpipers**, **Ringed Plover** (19th) and regular **Greenshanks**, including five on the 21st. Up the Lee Valley there were also a few waders through the KGV Reservoir with **Dunlin** (two on 1st), **Wood Sandpipers** (10th and 21st) and at least 33 **Common Sandpipers** (14th). The first **Goldeneye** were back on the 12th with six **Goosander** from the 30th, a **Black-necked Grebe** (28th), and a single **Black Tern** was seen on the 12th. Elsewhere there were a surprising 31 **Barnacle Geese** on Cornmill on the 20th and **Great White Egret** over Lakeside on the 17th. Down at Gallions Reach there was a juvenile **Montagu's Harrier** reported on the 12th with an unseasonal adult **Iceland Gull** and **Sandwich Tern** there on the 23rd.

July 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The unringed **White Stork** reappeared on the 1st and was seen most days out on Wennington until the 11th, and from the 2nd-4th was often with a **Spoonbill** with a **Great White Egret** not far away. That **Great White** was last seen on the 9th but another arrived on the 31st. With the first July water on the marsh for many years there was a trickle of early wader passage with a few **Black-tailed Godwits** arriving along with **Whimbrel**, **Curlew**, **Greenshank**, **Common**

Sandpiper and **Wood Sandpipers** on the 20th and 23rd. Breeding **Redshanks** almost completely vacated the area but there were still a few young **Lapwing** and **Avocet** around. There were 11 **Little Ringed Plovers** on the 20th, which likely included some bred on site. **Med Gulls** moved through from the 17th, including the first juveniles; likewise **Yellow-legged Gulls** began to arrive along the Thames. Sixty **Common Terns** headed upriver in the storm on the 30th, and as is now traditional, there were sporadic reports of one or two **Sandwich Terns** throughout. **Grasshopper Warblers** started reeling again on the 16th and the first young **Cuckoo** was seen the same day. One brood of four **Marsh Harriers** certainly fledged, but there were also still four adults present along with the other usual raptors.

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The **Black-necked Grebe** really loves Wanstead Flats and stayed throughout, while a **Whinchat** on the 18th was notable; the **Egyptian Goose** flock reached a new record of 188 on the 17th. There were a few waders through the Lee Valley with **Dunlin** and **Common Sandpipers** on the KGV and five **Black-tailed Godwits** (19th), **Dunlin** (11th) and **Whimbrel** (27th) through Walthamstow Wetlands. A **Black-necked Grebe** was also seen here on the 17th and two **Sandwich Terns** went through on the 24th. Back at the KGV there were two **Scoter** on the 21st. There were **Common** and **Green Sandpipers** in the Ingrebourne Valley and at Dagenham Chase, where there were also two **Black-tailed Godwits** on the 21st. A **Curlew** called over North Ockendon on the 12th. The 17th was a flying **Ant** day, and at least 17 **Med Gulls** were picked up over back gardens, with three more the next day - a **Spoonbill** over Chafford Hundred on the 20th was a classy garden tick. A **Grasshopper** started reeling again in the Ingrebourne Valley and a young **Cuckoo** was seen there too. Down on the Thames there were **Arctic Terns** off Gallions Reach on the 4th, 9th and 26th, and a single **Sandwich Tern** on the 26th and the **Woolwich Ferry** on the 19th.

June 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The run of poor weather continued, but it did mean that the marsh stayed wet and lush for a change. Wader breeding success appeared good with record **Redshank** numbers, **Lapwing** about the same, and possibly 14 pairs of **Avocets**. **Warbler** and **Bearded Tit** broods were much in evidence and **Gadwall**, **Shoveler** and **Pochard** broods were all seen. **Spoonbills** were seen throughout with three on the 6th and 26th; it is unclear how many individuals were involved. A **Great White Egret** appeared on the 27th and a **White Stork** circled on the 30th. Young **Little Egrets** were seen from our local colony and a **Cattle Egret** was seen on the 12th. **Marsh Harriers** and **Peregrines** were present daily, and the **Ravens** were seen occasionally but tended to move further afield now that their young have fledged. There were several **Red Kites** noted, including three on the 12th. The Thames was quiet with no terns and just four **Scoter** (26th), and the last 'spring' wader passage was of 31 **Ringed Plover** and a **Dunlin** on the 1st, with return 'autumn' passage of **Green Sandpiper**, **Curlew**, and **Black-tailed Godwits** by mid-month – 'summer' was very short this year! A **Crossbill** flew over on the 7th.

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A **Caspian Tern** downriver past Gallions Reach on the 19th was undoubtedly the find of the month. The site had **Scoter**, **Sandwich Tern** and two **Arctic Terns** on the 25th, with six more **Arctics** on the 28th. The **Black-necked Grebe** amazingly lingered on Wanstead Flats and still attracted admirers, while a couple of sightings of **Quail** on the 6th and 7th in the protected **Skylark** enclosure. **Spoonbills** were also a feature across Met Essex with two over Dagenham

Chase on the 13th and one at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 4th. The reserve also held two **Avocet** (10th), **Black-necked Grebe** (16th), a very unseasonal female **Wheatear** from the 17th, 11 **Scoter** (18th) with another female from the 21st-23rd, **Med Gull** (25th), and the return of the male **Scaup** from the 25th. **Redshank**, **Lapwing** and **Common Sandpiper** were all noted on return passage before month end. **Green Sandpipers** were noted in the Ingrebourne Valley from the 23rd, and a **Cattle Egret** was with 55 **Little Egrets** in the Mar Dyke on the 4th, of which 37 were juveniles. A **Crossbill** was seen over Noak Hill (24th) and a male **Red-backed Shrike** was photographed at Childerditch on the 12th.

May 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

In complete contrast to April, May was incredibly quiet, with the cold and windy weather keeping migration under wraps. There was still a wintery feel to proceedings with **Fieldfares** till the 1st and one of the **Jack Snipe** till the 7th, while the 3cy **Glaucous Gull** was seen on and off till the 8th. Bizarrely after a very poor winter two **Short-eared Owls** appeared on the 7th and stayed till the 14th before moving on. There were the expected assortment of Arctic bound waders, with **Bar-tailed Godwits**, **Ringed Plovers**, **Grey Plovers**, and **Sanderling** in small numbers, with the odd **Turnstone**, **Dunlin**, **Whimbrel**, **Greenshank** and **Knot**; however, there was nothing else caught up with the passage. **Tern** numbers were low with little obvious movement bar seven **Arctics** on the 8th and 40 on the 9th. **Sandwich Terns** were seen on three dates and a **Little Tern** went down river on the 28th. **Med Gulls** were regular and 11 **Little Gull** were seen on the 8th. A **Cattle Egret** dropped in on the 26th, and the first of a series of **Spoonbills** arrived on the 27th. **Swift** numbers were high and undoubtedly brought down by the poor weather, but there were very few **Hirundines** amongst them. **Hobbies** became regular mid-month and there were **Raven** and **Kite** sightings on several days. A **Merlin** shot through on the 8th – our second late spring record this year. There were few additions to the passerine migrants, with two **Spotted Flycatchers** on the 3rd followed by a single on the 19th. **Whinchats** were seen on the 6th and 7th and a **Tree Pipit** flew over on the former date.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

The **Black-necked Grebe** stayed all month on Wanstead Flats and proved very popular and obliging. An **Osprey** there on the 6th was the only other bird of note. Dagenham Chase continued its good spring run with **Ring Ouzel** on the 5th and 6th, **Grasshopper Warbler** from the 7th, **Whinchats** on the 8th and 10th, and the return of the male **Red-crested Pochard** on the 30th. A pair of **Spotted Flycatcher** was in the City of London Cemetery from the 6th, and other **Whinchats** went through Fairlop Waters and Walthamstow Wetlands. A male **Goosander** lingered on the KGV reservoir till the 14th, and the Lee Valley had several good passage waders with **Greenshanks**, **Turnstone** and **Wood Sandpiper** all reported with the latter at Hall Marsh on the 8th and 9th. The now urbanised **Russian White-fronted Goose** was still around the mid Valley on the 17th, and the female **Smew** and two **Red-crested Pochards** were on Seventy Acres on the 3rd. Three **Black-necked Grebes** appeared on Holyfield Lake the next day. A **Great White Egret** over Chafford Hundred (5th) was the only sighting, but the star find was a female **Golden Oriole** in Cely Woods on the 16th.

April 2021

RSPB Rainham Marshes

April is always a busy month, with the going of winter visitors and arrival of those coming from the south. It was a generally very cold and windy period but turned into one of the best single months on record, with 146 species recorded. Migrant warblers were all very early with the **Whitethroats** from the 1st and **Reed Warbler** from the 2nd. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was not far behind on the 9th with four by month end. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was a quality find on the 22nd. There was a good movement of **Swallows** and **Sand Martins**, but **House Martins** remained very scarce. The first **Swifts** were seen on the 22nd, but unusually there were hundreds within a few days. The first **Cuckoo** was back on the 15th and **Hobby** from the 17th, and amongst the **Yellow Wagtails** there were a couple of male **Blue-headed** and **White Wagtails** too. A very early male **Redstart** was found on the 1st and stayed till the 4th, and there were two other males on the 16th and 20th. **Wheatears** were seen on several dates with a male **Greenland** for a few days too, along with a pair of **Whinchat** on the 24th. A **Nightingale** that appeared on the 23rd would have been popular if it had stayed. **Tree Pipits** were seen on the 23rd and 28th, and a **Bee-eater** was heard up in the blue on the 23rd too. The most popular visitors were the **Ring Ouzels** with a single on the 9th preceding three on the 10th, with a single till the 12th again. Amazingly at least 20 **Fieldfares** were still around as May approached. A **Great White Egret** was seen until the 4th with another on the 18th, and a single **Spoonbill** on the 14th became two until the 21st. We were graced by six **White Stork** days from the 13th, comprising at least four individuals including two together on the 21st. A very early **Quail** was singing in Rainham Ridge on the 14th and a **Short-eared Owl** headed west on the 16th. **Red Kites** were seen almost daily, with one particular immature individual becoming a frequent visitor. The other usual raptors were seen daily, with a bonus male **Merlin** on the 29th and the now expected marauding **Ravens**. On the Thames there was a fine gull selection, with 11 species seen including regular double figure **Med Gull** counts, **Little Gulls** on the 19th (six), 23rd and 24th (singles), **Caspians** (27th and 28th), **Iceland** (23rd and 28th) and a **Glaucous** (27th). The first **Common Terns** were on the 11th, and there was a push of 135 up river on the 28th, along with **Arctics** on most days from the 19th with peaks of 37 (25th) and 100 (26th). Two **Sandwich Terns** on the 28th were the only other species. **Common Scoter** were seen on the 3rd (four) and 4th (six) and a single **Brent Goose** was noted on the 2nd. Out on the marshes duck numbers remained high, and three **Garganey** were seen on the 1st with another drake on the 20th. **Lapwing**, **Redshank**, **Avocet**, **Oystercatcher** and **Little Ringed Plover** were all settling in, and were part of 24 species of wader recorded during the month, which started well with a **Little Stint** (1st-2nd) and picked up later in the month as Arctic bound **Bar-tailed Godwits** (peak of 52 on 23rd), **Whimbrel** (peak of 12 on 18th), **Knot** (23rd), **Sanderling** (25th), **Spotted Redshank** (from 24th), and **Curlew Sandpiper** (26th and 28th) passed through. Amongst them were **Tundra Ringed Plovers**, **Grey Plovers**, **Dunlin**, **Green**, **Common** and a single **Wood Sandpiper** (27th). Two male **Ruff** were approaching full breeding finery as the month ended and were joined by three females; amazingly there were still **Jack Snipe** to be found amongst the lingering **Commons** with three on the 28th. Star wader was not heading any further north with a gangly **Black-winged Stilt** on the 20th.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

It was a busy April with a few lingering species but plenty of freshly arrived migrants too. The immature **Russian White-fronted Goose** was still touring Lee Valley sites all month, and now seem habituated with the local **Greylags** and to people. The **Cattle Egret** was last seen at Hall Marsh on the 2nd but was nicely replaced by a drake **Garganey** and a **White Stork** on the 14th and 15th. This was not the only Stork sighting with six seen heading north over Dagenham

Chase, Gidea Park and Hornchurch on the 4th. One of the Rainham birds was seen over Romford (13th) and another in the Mardyke (26th) while a third was sighted over Hainault Forest (16th). A **Great White Egret** was seen at Dagenham Chase on the 15th and 16th with others at Fairlop and Walthamstow Wetlands on the 23rd. The female **Ring-necked Duck** was seen again on Holyfield Lake on the 9th and 10th, and there were four **Black-necked Grebes** there on the 26th. A single was sighted on the KGV Reservoir (27th), and three were at Roding Valley Meadows on the 20th. Back in the Lee Valley, there was a good run of birds at Walthamstow Wetlands, with **Short-eared Owls** (1st and 9th), two **Kittiwakes** on the 6th becoming three on the 8th, with one amazingly staying until the 12th. Three **Little Gulls** dropped in on the 16th, with 32 north on the 23rd. The first **Common Tern** sighting was on the 5th, and the 23rd saw two **Little** and four **Arctic Terns** join them with two of the former also on the 27th. A male **Garganey** (17th) proved popular. A male **Redstart** was seen on the 10th with another appearing on the nearby Marshes on the 13th, and **Garden Warbler** (18th) and **Ring Ouzel** (27th) added interest. **Ring Ouzels** were a draw during the month and other were seen at Wanstead Flats (2nd, 3rd & 10th), Ingrebourne Valley (2nd), Woodford Green (13th), Dagenham Chase (16th), Fairlop Waters (f 20th- 23rd, m 24th), Navestock (12th-15th with two on latter), and Boyles Court (12th-17th). There were still **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** to be found late in the month, and a flock of about 30 **Redpolls** at Tylers Common seemed to have several **Mealies** gleaming amongst them while **Nightingales** were back in regular haunts and further **Redstarts** were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley (9th) and on Tylers Common (21st). Both these sites also hosted **Tree Pipits** on the 10th and 20th respectively, while two more **Tree Pipits** were over Sewardstone on the 2nd. Three **Black Redstart** territories were found. The Ingrebourne Valley also had a **Woodlark** on the 11th, and finally got onto the local **Raven** sighting list. There may well be four pair using the Met Essex area now, along with the now numerous sightings of **Red Kite**. The only **Ospreys** were over Dagenham Chase on the 4th and 20th, while a **Marsh Harrier** over Fairlop on the 16th was a good local find. A **Merlin** was again seen across the Upminster farmland on the 8th, with a **Quail** singing there on the 19th. The first **Hobby** was seen over North Ockendon on the 6th and a few sites were reporting them from about the 18th. Up on the KGV Reservoir the drake **Smew** and **Scaup** lingered till 11th and 14th, along with a few **Goldeneye** and three **Goosander**. Two **Sandwich Terns** were seen on the 1st and 17th and there was a flurry of waders in the last week, with seven **Whimbrel** and **Greenshank** amongst other species on the 23rd. A flock of 28 **Kittiwakes** headed high and north over Sewardstone on the 4th, and **Med Gulls** were noted at many sites as this species continues to spread north of the Thames. Two **Caspian Gulls** were seen on Wanstead Flats on the 4th and the pair of **Red-legged Partridges** that day were probably the rarer species. The 24th saw four **Whimbrel** and three **Green Sandpipers** move through the site. Down on the river a 2cy **Iceland Gull** was seen at Beckton on the 27th, and eight **Arctic Terns** were seen the day before. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen hunting over West Thurrock Marshes on the 28th. **Grasshopper Warblers** were heard at Fairlop (20th), Tylers Common (19th) and four at Cornmill Meadows. Up above, the first **Swifts** graced our skies from the 15th. Encouragingly there were **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** at several sites.

March 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The water levels across the reserve slowly started to drop and the waders got down to the business of breeding with the first **Lapwing** nests from the 15th. Up to 30 **Avocets** were still around and nine pairs seemed to be commandeering an island by late in the month. There were a few **Black-tailed Godwits** around, two sightings of **Bar-tailed** (12th and 20th), and the two

Ruff were still around. **Greenshank**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Jack Snipe** and **Woodcock** added interest before the first two **Little Ringed Plovers** arrived on the 15th. There were still plenty of duck around with over a thousand **Wigeon** and a record 92 **Pintail**. A **Goldeneye** on the Thames on the 7th played second fiddle to a **Guillemot**, and a **Kittiwake** was seen on the 15th. **Med**, **Yellow-legged** and **Caspian Gulls** were reported along with a 3w **Iceland** on the 20th, but the most surprising find was a sub-adult **Long-tailed Skua** that harried gulls over the scrapes for a few minutes on the 12th. Any March Skua is unusual, but a Long-tailed is almost unheard of. A **Spoonbill** arrived on the 19th and stayed until the 24th, and a **Great White Egret** appeared the next day and lingered into April. There were still winter passerines to be found with a few **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** lingering all month, along with **Scandinavian Rock**, up to five **Water Pipits**, and a **Siberian Chiffchaff**, which was a good find on the 9th. Fresh in, **Common Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** arrived at about the same time in what was to be an early spring, with the first five **Wheatears** on the 26th and up to 15 over the next couple of days; **Sedge Warbler** (29th), **Willow Warbler** (30th), **White Wagtail** (27th), **Swallow** (29th) and **Sand Martin** (12th) followed, all sneaking in before April. A **Red-legged Partridge** on the 27th was rather oddly the rarity of the month after the Skua with last record probably being six years ago. **Marsh Harriers** are settling in nicely with up to eight on site and there were several **Raven** and **Red Kite** sightings along with the expected **Buzzards** and **Peregrines**.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

Winter lingered on, with birds in the Lee Valley in particular being fairly static. **Russian white-fronted Geese** were still at Walthamstow Wetlands and three were at Holyfield farmland till at least the 19th, and the female **Ring-necked Duck** reappeared on Holyfield lake on the 7th. Both male and female **Smew** were again around the Seventy Acres complex with a few **Goosanders**, and the **Cattle Egret** was at Hall Marsh on and off all month. Likewise, two **Great White Egrets** were sporadically seen at Cornmill Meadows. The two **Short-eared Owls** remained at Gunpowder Park and on the KGV the drakes of **Smew** and **Scaup** were still present with up to 13 **Goosanders** and a pair of **Mergansers** that were present from the 2nd-15th. Two **Velvet Scoter** were again noted on the 2nd and 3rd and 13 **Dark-bellied Brents** dropped in on the 1st after being seen on Walthamstow Wetlands a little earlier. Three **Black-necked Grebes** were seen on the 27th when the first **Wheatear** and **Sand Martin** were also noted there. **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** were seen on the 4th and 7th and **Short-eared Owl** (29th), three **Little Gulls** (31st) and two **Med Gulls** (13th) kept the interest going up there. Walthamstow Wetlands held three **Barnacle Geese** on the second and then a strange flock of three Barnacles and 28 **hybrids with Canadas** on the 6th. They were later seen over Wanstead Flats and could conceivably have been the similar flock that lives out on Blue House Farm near South Woodham Ferrers. A flock of 25 **Russian White-fronts** headed northeast on the 19th. The Wetlands also hosted the earliest county **Sand Martins** with singles on the 3rd, 5th and 8th and a **Swallow** and ten **Wheatears** on the 29th as well as **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** (18th), up to two **Great White Egrets** on several dates, two **Avocet** (24th) and a male **Scaup** (30th). Nearby there were two **Spoonbills** were on Walthamstow Marshes on the 4th. Five **Red-crested Pochards** were still in the Ingrebourne Valley and a pair also graced Dagenham Chase on the 19th and also hosted some other good birds including **Jack Snipe** on several dates, **Little Ringed Plovers** and a stunning male **Redstart** (27th), **Ring Ouzel** and **Osprey** (29th) and a **Little Gull** (22nd). A 1w **Iceland Gull** was seen on Barking Riverside on the 22nd before relocating to Wanstead Flats from the 23rd to 25th much to the locals delight. The 1w **Med Gull** was still around on and off and they too hosted some early migrants with **Wheatear** (23rd) and **Redstart** (30th). A single **Pink-footed Goose** was seen at Fairlop Waters on the 5th and three flew over on the 14th and a **Great White Egret** was seen in farmland in North Ockendon

on the 2nd with a male **Ring Ouzel** nearby on the 29th. The Upminster farmland again produced some good birds with the first local **Wheatear** (3rd), **Merlin** (6th), immature female **Goshawk** (11th), **Great White Egret** (19th) and an amazingly early **Cuckoo** on the 30th. The 26th saw a few more scattered local **Wheatears** and **Sand Martins** and **Willow Warbler** at Beckton (21st) and **Yellow Wagtail** over Woodford Green (31st) also got in before April! There were still traces of winter too with a few late **Redwings** and **Fieldfares**, and there were still six **Brambling** at Navestock with 13 **Yellowhammers** on the 9th. **Lesser Redpolls** were reported from several sites, and one in Chafford Hundred increased to 50 with at least one **Mealy** amongst them. **Marsh Harriers** were noted through Walthamstow (20th), Dagnam Park (16th) and over the Ingrebourne Valley and **Red Kite** and **Raven** sightings increased as expected. Perhaps the most hopeful sighting was of a **Marsh Tit** in Wintry Wood at the top of Epping Forest on the 26th – the first forest sighting for some time.

February 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The reserve was pretty much inundated with water for most of the month resulting in even fewer visitors but there were still some good wildfowl counts to be had with a whopping 71 **Pintail** on the 14th being accompanied by 1,859 **Wigeon**, 249 **Shoveler** and a record 521 **Coot**. **Teal** numbers dropped dramatically with just 220 counted on that date. **Dunlin** peaked at 934 and a couple of **Jack Snipe** was seen on the foreshore saltings but **Avocet** dropped to just 16. Hopefully they will come back into breed again. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** on the 6th was the first of the year and six **Grey Plover** were seen on the 14th. A single **Russian White-front** was seen on the 13th and the two **Barnacle Geese** remained throughout on Wennington. The snow brought in more **Fieldfares** with 200 along the river wall and the **Raven** paid a few visits. A **Red Kite** on the 28th was the first of the year.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

Russian White-fronted Geese were still to be found in February with a trio remaining around Holyfield and a single at Walthamstow Wetlands throughout. Two flew over Woodford Green on the 11th and two more dropped into Dagenham Chase on the 2nd and four more flew through on the 8th and three on the 17th. The female **Ring-necked Duck** was seen again at Nazeing on the 4th and 11th and a pair of **Smew** and perhaps as many as 20 **Goosander** were in the Seventy Acres Lake complex. Other **Goosanders** were seen at Walthamstow Wetlands (four on 11th), KGV Reservoir (up to 15), Connaught Water (four on 9th), Ingrebourne Valley (one on 20th), Mollands Lane (six on 1st). A female **Scaup** was in the Ingrebourne from the 17th-21st and up to five **Red Crested Pochards** and a **Goldeneye** were also using the small reservoir there. The male **Scaup** lingered at Belhus Woods till the 1st and two males remained on the KGV along with a smart drake hybrid and at least 22 **Goldeneye**. Two immature **Velvet Scoters** were found on the Girling Reservoir on the 20th (along with five **Black-necked Grebes**) and the **Scoter** had moved to the KGV the following day and had added one. Two were seen again on the 28th along with a male **Smew** and a **Black Redstart**. The two **Cattle Egrets** reappeared at Hall Marsh on the 23rd and there was a cold weather influx of very mobile **Great White Egrets** beginning with two over Dagenham Chase on the 13th and a single on the 17th and a minimum of three in the mid to lower Lee Valley with records most days from the 14th between Waterworks NR in the south and Holyfield Lake in the north with Cornmill and Gunpowder Park regularly hosting two together. A **Bittern** was seen once on Seventy Acres in what has been a very poor winter for the species locally and one was seen in the Upminster buffer lands

on the 27th. This area also produced the male **Merlin** again (4th) and plenty of cold weather action with good thrush numbers and regular counts of **Woodcock** with up to 11 on any given day. Two **Jack Snipe** (14th) and out of place **Greenshank** and **Grey Plover** added interest there too while 23 **Yellowhammers** were not far away at West Horndon. **Lapwings** were on the move before and during the snow and seemed to move south- west on a narrow line that went over Ardleigh Green, Romford, Buckhurst Hill and then down and over Leytonstone and Wanstead Flats. The Flats hosted record numbers with 565 (8th), 308 (12th) and 405 (13th) through with a supporting cast of a few **Golden Plover** and quite a few **Snipe**. Many birders added **Lapwing** to their garden lists that week. Other notable cold weather movements included a flock of 150 **Cormorants** photographed going north over Elm Park on the 13th and a very good smattering of hungry **Woodcocks** and winter thrushes. Some superb set-aside around Navestock and Navestock Side hosted over 350 **Stock Doves**, 120 **Skylarks**, 100 **Chaffinches** and 11 **Brambling** amongst other common species between at least the 11th and 13th and 250 **Stock Doves** and 300 **Linnet** were counted at Aimes Green at the same time. **Woodlarks** were noted moving over the Mardyke (23rd) and Woodford Green (26th) and eight **Crossbills** in Weald Park on the 6th were a surprise. **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were seen at four sites but this species remains very tricky nowadays and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was photographed in a Dagenham garden on the 19th. **Caspian Gulls** were seen at Eagle Ponds again (the adult on the 15th) with others at Walthamstow Wetlands (2nd), Hall Marsh (9th – when 55 **Snipe** were also seen) and Creekside LNR (2w on 7th). **Med Gulls** were seen at the Wetlands (1st and 4th), Harrow Lodge Park (adult on 9th-10th), Wanstead Flats (1w throughout), Dagenham Chase (adult on 24th) and Weald Park (1w on 5th) while a **Kittiwake** was seen on the Thames from Chafford Hundred on the 8th) and another tired first winter was seen on Wanstead Flats on the 9th.

January 2021

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

It was a very wet but generally mild month and there was little change from December. **Wigeon** rose slightly to 1,373 for the WeBS count on the 17th with 735 **Teal** and a very respectable 58 **Pintail**. **Lapwing** numbers remained low with just a high of 1,218 and **Dunlin** fluctuated between a handful and 813! A few **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Curlew** and a flock of 39 **Avocet** were regularly around but the only other waders of note were a couple of wintering **Ruff** and a single **Knot** on the 9th. **Ravens** and **Marsh Harriers** were seen regularly but the only **Short-eared Owl** sighting was on the 2nd. Two **Brent Geese** were around on New Year's Day and the two **Barnacle Geese** remained all month. **Water** and **Rock Pipits** were regular but with so few birders visiting the site, there were no other passerines of note.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

Leftovers from the **Russian White-fronted Goose** influx continued into 2021 with the Wanstead Flats duo doing the decent thing and making it to the 1st before moving on and the 22 at Holyfield Hall Farm were still around on the 4th with 18 on the 6th and three on the 17th. Two were up the Lee Valley at Netherhall on the 23rd and singles were at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 3rd and over Dagnam Park on the 6th while two appeared at Dagenham Chase from the 24th into February. Back in the Lee Valley there were about ten **Goosander** on the Seventy Acres complex with others seen at several other Valley sites. Seven were on Wanstead Flats on the 1st with three on Connaught Water (3rd), up to nine in Weald Park (11th) and eight at Mollands Lane (4th). A pair of **Smew** remained around Seventy Acres and males were seen

at Mollands Lane (4th) and the KGV Reservoir (1st) where three male **Scaup** and two **Black Redstarts** remained throughout. The **Cattle Egret** continued to roam between Hall Marsh and Cornmill and two others commuted with **Little Egrets** for the evenings of 14th and 15th over Brook Farm, Upminster. Another male **Scaup** was at Belhus Woods from the 17th and a **Great White Egret** was there on the 19th while the only **Bittern** was in Warren Gorge on the 8th. **Red-crested Pochards** were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley, Mollands Lane and a pair were on the KGV on the 1st but it was an elusive female **Ring-necked Duck** at Nazeing in the Lee Valley from about the 20th that took pride of place among the ducks. The adult **Caspian Gull** continued to be seen at Eagle Pond and was joined by a 3w on the 4th, 11th and 16th while a 1w was at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 9th and two more were at Creekside NR on the 24th. The only white-winger was a 2w **Iceland Gull** at Nazeing on the 23rd and the 1w **Med Gull** continued to reside on Wanstead Flats till at least the 22nd with an adult at Dagenham Chase (16th) and at Walthamstow Marsh from the 29th. There were quite a few end of day **Woodcock** sightings including six from the Ingrebourne and three **Common Sandpipers** were wintering on the Lee at Bow Creek. The male **Merlin** returned to winter in the Upminster farmlands from the 28th with an immature female **Goshawk** patrolling the same area while the female **Merlin** reappeared at Fairlop on the 8th. **Red Kites** were seen at several spots and **Ravens** were ranging around the top of the ELBF recording area including four together over Thorndon on the 23rd. Two **Short-eared Owls** remained at Gunpowder Park throughout. **Firecrests** were noted at four sites and **Siberian Chiffchaffs** remained with their **Common** cousins at both Dagenham Chase and Creekside LNR. Another showed well around a manure heap at Hayes Hill Farm during the last week while the mobile **Yellow-browed Warbler** reappeared at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 9th. There were still quite a few **Lesser Redpoll** flocks around and a single **Mealy** was found with them at Havering CP on the 22nd.

December 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

There was some increase in wildfowl numbers again as the month drew on, with **Pintail** peaking at a very respectable 46 and **Wigeon** at 1,260. Two **Barnacle Geese** were around all month along with occasional **Brent Geese** but the reserve had only a single **Russian White-front** (4th and 5th) despite the ongoing influx although three **Tundra Bean Geese** on the 5th were a short staying bonus. **Dunlin** reached the 1,000 mark but it was too mild to draw many other waders in and **Lapwing** remained low in number but **Avocet** did hit 41 and Ruff six. Gulling produced a **Caspian** on the 18th and then six on the 23rd and four on the 31st along with a few **Yellow-legged Gulls** and the odd **Med**. Seven **Marsh Harriers** were wintering and **Peregrine** and **Buzzard** were seen daily and a female **Merlin** was seen on the 20th but only one **Short-eared Owl** was seen occasionally. The rarity of the month was a bugling **Crane** that dropped in on the 23rd late in the day but was gone by first light the next day. **Bearded Tits** have become very elusive but there were good numbers of **Scandinavian Rock** and **Water Pipits** around along with hundreds of **Fieldfares** in the last week of the year.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

The **Russian White-fronted Goose** influx that started in the last two days of November continued through the month. The singles on Wanstead Flats and Walthamstow Marshes stayed all month and another joined the first at the Flats from the 18th. Elsewhere there were two over Chafford Hundred and one on Cornmill Meadows on the 1st with the latter staying till the 5th while flocks of five and 16 were over Upminster on the 4th and 12th. A flock of 16 at Holyfield

Hall Farm on the 1st increased to 22 by the 5th into the New Year and a single was at Fairlop Waters on the 12th. The three **Tundra Bean Geese** from Rainham flew over Upminster when they left the reserve on the 5th. **Goosanders** were seen at quite a few sites with a peak of 14 in Weald Park, 15 at Connaught Water, eight on the KGV and 11 on Seventy Acres. The resident female **Smew** at the latter site was joined by a drake in the last couple of days of December and a single **Bittern** was seen there on and off along with **Merlin** (2nd). The KGV Reservoir also held up to three male **Scaup**, a pair of **Pintail**, two female **Mergansers** (28th) and a **Black Redstart** from the 30th. Other **Black Redstarts** were seen at Holyfield Hall Farm (30th) and at Fairplay Farm in Upminster (18th) with 16 **Yellowhammers** in the hedges there. Six more **Yellowhammers** were noted at Nazeing on the 10th while up to 40 **Greenfinches** roosting in Brentwood cemetery is now a noteworthy event too. **Firecrests** were found wintering in four regular spots and a few **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** were recorded along with an influx of winter thrushes late in the month. The **Siberian Chiffchaff** was seen again at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 5th and 7th and even the **Yellow-browed Warbler** there reappeared on the 1st and 29th! Up to three **Short-eared Owls** were a little too popular at Gunpowder Park all month and patch workers found others in South Ockendon and Upminster. **Ravens** and **Red Kites** were noted at regular spots. The **Cattle Egret** was seen regularly between Hooks Marsh and Cornmill Meadows and a **Great White Egret** flew through the wetlands on the 4th with another at Weald Park on the 2nd and 3rd. The adult **Caspian Gull** continued to draw admirers at Eagle Pond and a 1st winter was also seen on Wanstead Flats with others at Seventy Acres and Creekside NR. Two 1st winter **Med Gulls** on Wanstead Flats showed well from the 19th. Down on the Thames there were 47 **Avocet**, seven **Yellow-legged Gulls** and a **Water Pipit** at West Thurrock Marshes on the 26th.

November 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

November was actually rather mild and duck numbers actually dropped with peaks of just 301 **Wigeon** and 310 **Teal** on the 15th although **Pintail** rose to 31 and **Shoveler** leapt to 242 suggesting an influx of perhaps more local birds rather than those of continental origins. **Dark-bellied Brent Geese** were seen on several dates but with no more than three at any one time and two **Barnacle Geese** were noted sporadically with the **Canadas**. Wader wise it was similarly static with low counts of **Redshank** and **Dunlin** but **Avocet** did creep up to 41 on the 6th and **Black-tailed Godwits** to 380 on the 26th. Up to three **Ruff** were on the pools along with a few **Snipe**. **Caspian Gulls** were seen on a couple of dates and a **Spoonbill** popped in for a day on the 20th. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen on a couple of dates and the **Ravens** became more regular as they often do this time of year. **Marsh Harriers**, **Buzzards** and **Peregrines** were encountered daily. **Water** and **Rock Pipits** are definitely back for the winter and a few mobile **Corn Buntings** were seen while a flyover **Richard's Pipit** on the 10th was the best passerine and a final touch of autumn.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

The massive **Wood Pigeon** passage from the end of October continued into November with concerted counting over Grays producing 37,326 on the 4th and another 30,000 over the next few days. **Lesser Redpolls** were a feature of the month with several settled flocks including 50 at Folkes Lane on the 27th), 50 on Wanstead Flats and over 70 at Gunpowder Park. Parties of **Crossbill** were seen over Belhus Woods (3rd) and Upminster (23rd) but visible finch passage had basically stopped. **Firecrests** were wintering at five sites with at least seven birds involved and amongst a few scattered **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs**, a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was

seen at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 25th. The sites also hosted a **Yellow-browed Warbler** on the 19th and it or another daily from the 27th while another was up the Lee Valley at Cornmill Meadows on the 14th. Another **Sibe Chiffy** was at Dagenham Chase on the 20th. **Black Redstarts** were noted again at The Wetlands (24th) and KGV (4th) and the reservoir also held a good array of wildfowl with **Scaup** (11th and 24th), **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** and **Slavonian Grebe** (7th), **Scoter** (8th), peaks of 18 **Goldeneye** and seven **Goosander**, **Black-necked Grebe** (24th), **Short-eared Owls** through on the 9th and 10th, **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** on three dates and a very notable **Corn Bunting** (9th). Just up Valley two **Short-eared Owls** took up residency at Gunpowder Park from the 2nd and proved popular although some of the visitor behaviour was less than commendable. Hall Marsh had a **Great White Egret** on the 7th and a **Cattle Egret** on the 28th and the first **Bittern** was on Seventy Acres from the 4th. This complex also held up to seven **Goosanders** and the resident female **Smew** but no newcomers yet. Back at Walthamstow Wetlands the **Black-necked Grebe** stayed until the 3rd when a **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** was also seen. A **Kittiwake** on the 5th was unfortunately taken into care. A single **Yellowhammer** in the Ingrebourne on the 12th was notable where there used to be counts of nearly 200 and 12 were seen out on Orsett Fen. Two **Bearded Tits** in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 6th were also a quality local bird. Other oddities included late **Swallows** over Wanstead Flats on the 5th and 12th and a **Cattle Egret** over Grays on the 6th. A **Yellow-legged Gull** was a good find at Dagenham Chase on the 15th and a **Jack Snipe** was seen on the 20th while **Woodcock** were put up at several boggy sites including Fairlop Waters where a small flock of **Golden Plover** slowly increased to 26 on the 29th. A **Merlin** was seen hunting there on the 14th and 21st. The Thames was quiet with just three **Brent Geese** on the 20th of note at Beckton STW and the 29th saw the start of an arrival of grey geese from the east. It started with at least two **Pink-feet** yipping over Brentwood in the cloud on the 29th followed by singles at Walthamstow Wetlands and Wanstead Flats on the 30th. The adult **Caspian Gull** returned to Eagle Pond for the winter and **Ravens** were drifting around with several reports from the Lee Valley and the Brentwood ridge area with three over Tylers Common on the 18th and five over Weald Park on the 3rd. Like **Red Kites** they are now a part of the local avifauna.

October 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wildfowl and waders generally increased during the month with good numbers of **Teal** and **Wigeon** on the marsh and a few interesting waders amongst the **Lapwings**, **Redshanks** and **Black-tailed Godwits** with up to 22 **Avocets**, **Knot** on two dates and the odd **Grey Plover**, **Golden Plover** and **Turnstone** reported. **Ruff** and **Jack Snipe** were encountered while a bit of a blow on the 2nd brought four **Little Gulls** up river with a single the following day. There were still 25 **Yellow-legged Gulls** around on the 8th and **Caspian** and **Med Gulls** were also reported. A single **Barnacle Goose** was seen with the **Canadas** on several dates but the only **Brent Geese** were on the 2nd and 14th while a **Goldeneye** on the 16th will probably be the sole record for the year. A **Great White Egret** flew through on the 2nd and a **Cattle Egret** was seen on five dates up to the 22nd. A **Wheatear** stayed till at least the 14th and there were the odd **Swallow** to be seen but it was really all about visible migration of passerines with the 9th being the big day with 1,128 **Chaffinches**, 28 **Brambling**, seven **Lesser Redpoll**, 24 **Siskin**, **Tree Sparrow** and **Woodlark** all records heading west along the river wall. Finches on the move were a feature all month and there were thrushes too which included both winter species and a **Ring Ouzel** on the 29th. A **Yellowhammer** was a good find on the 15th and a

Yellow-browed Warbler on the 16th was a great find on the river wall. **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** and **Water Pipits** were back for the winter and a single **Short-eared Owl** was hunting on several dates from the 5th.

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October was about active vis mig with countless finches and thrushes pouring across the region. The 9th was a big **Chaffinch** day with 435 through Wanstead Flats being notable and this was reflected by many garden watchers who added **Lesser Redpolls** and **Siskins** to their lists throughout the month. **Brambling** were caught up with the movement and there were also **Hawfinches** reported with Connaught Water (9th) and two over Upminster (11th). **Crossbills** also featured well with 23 from seven sites, none of which stopped. **Woodlarks** were seen over Pole Hill (12th) and three over Upminster (5th) and amongst the **Redwings** and **Fieldfare** on the move there were **Ring Ouzels** over Chafford Hundred (12th) and North Ockenden (19th). **Firecrests** were noted at several sites and late **Whinchats** were on the Flats and Roding Valley Meadows till 9th and there were a few lingering hirundines including two **Swallows** over Grays on the 26th. A **Tree Pipit** was on Chingford Plain (17th) and **Redstarts** were on in Wanstead Park (6th) and the Flats (7th) while the last **Yellow Wagtail** was over Beckton on the 9th. A **Dartford Warbler** was on the Purfleet prom on the 15th and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was in Dagenham Fords (6th). This was followed by one at Dagenham Chase (9th-10th) and another in North Ockenden (19th) but the **Eastern Lesser Whitethroat** on the Flats on the 25th and 26th was the scarcest autumn waif although in a local context the **Corn Bunting** there on the 24th was equally rare. The Flats held other good stuff during the month with two **Great White Egrets** tracked over there and then Leytonstone on the 12th and another single on the 27th. Three **Jack Snipe** on the 16th was unprecedented with further singles on the 19th and 24th. A **Short-eared Owl** as seen on the 6th and 7th while others were over Pole Hill (12th), Leytonstone (16th), Gunpowder Park (from 27th) and Walthamstow Wetlands (23rd). This reservoir complex also still had two **Black-necked Grebes** all month and a **Kittiwake** and **Gannet** on the 3rd and two **Scoter** on the 17th and 19th. A **Great White Egret** flew through on the 26th and another was at Beckton STW on the 14th. Nearby there were ten **Little Egrets** in Valentines Park in Ilford on the 16th. A **Cattle Egret** was back touring the mid-Lee Valley with sightings at Cornmill and Hooks Marsh from the 8th and **Woodcock** were starting to appear along with further **Jack Snipe** at Dagenham Chase on the 1st and 30th. Two **Red-necked Grebes** were a great one day find on the KGV on the 15th and there were regular **Goosander** and **Goldeneye** sightings there along with a new **Scaup** on the 25th, **Black Redstarts** on the 18th and 26th and a smart **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** on the 26th. Another **Goosander** was good patch find on Hollow Pond from the 25th and 22 **Barnacle Geese** visited Fairlop Waters on the 22nd which was a little out of place. **Woodpigeons** started to move south late in the month with the following notable counts from the Upminster area: 8,000 (23rd), 14,353 (24th), 9,122 (25th) and 14,305 (27th).

September 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wader passage was still slow with no one big day and just a steady trickle of **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Curlew**, **Dunlin**, **Green Sandpipers** and the **Avocet** flock along with a **Curlew Sandpiper** (9th), **Knot** (19th and three 29th), three **Bar-tailed Godwits** (19th), **Turnstone** (29th), **Grey Plover** (19th), four **Ruff** and **Jack Snipe** (27th). River watching eventually produced the goods with two **Gannet** and a juvenile **Sabine's Gull** (27th) and a **Guillemot**

(20th) but there were only a few terns and no skuas seen and just a single **Brent Goose** (21st) and an early **Goldeneye** (18th). A **Great White Egret** was seen on a couple of dates and a single **Cattle Egret** dropped in on the 24th while two **Common Cranes** that flew east on the 27th were a great 'look up' moment as they were tracked across the South-East. The immature **Spoonbill** remained throughout although it occasionally wandered elsewhere. The only **Red Kite** was on the 17th and a ringtail **Hen Harrier** was quartering on the 26th and 27th with a **Merlin** also seen on the 26th while **Hobbies** continued to terrorise the dragonflies. Duck numbers slowly rose with **Wigeon**, **Teal** and **Pintail** arriving along with a **Garganey** on the 4th. **Egyptian Geese** got into double figures for the first time and a **Barnacle Goose** was also seen on the Targets. Finches were on the move all month with several groups of **Siskin** reported along with **Crossbill** (20th), **Brambling** (19th) and **Lesser Redpolls** (18th) and a late **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen on the 18th along with a juvenile **Cuckoo** and the traditional late September arrival of **Stonechats**.

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September saw continued passerine passage through the area. **Redstarts** and **Tree Pipits** again featured prominently with eight sites accounting for 19 records of the former and six sites with ten of the latter. Needless to say Wanstead Flats was in the act again and also hosted **Turtle Dove** (25th), **Woodlark** (17th), **Rock Pipit** (21st), **Short-eared Owl** (25th), **Brambling** (28th) and the two **Common Cranes** on their way to Rainham on the 27th. Unusually they also had a few waders too with **Green** and **Common Sandpiper**, **Dunlin** and **Greenshank** while a female **Pintail** on the 30th was the first on site since 1975! **Whinchats** were seen on almost any scrubby grassland patch looked at, with a site high of six on the Flats on the 5th and by the end of the month **Stonechats** were arriving with several sites noting them and again the Flats recording the most with 11 on the 28th. **Pied Flycatchers** were noted in Great Warley (8th) and Woodford Green on the 1st and 23rd where the same garden also held **Firecrest** (24th) and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** (29th). **Spotted Flycatchers** were still being seen well into the month and a **Wood Warbler** was at Belhus Woods on the 8th while the first **Redwings** arrived on the 27th over Hornchurch and the Flats. A **Ring Ouzel** was early at Walthamstow Wetlands (17th) and another **Woodlark** was at Weald Park (20th) so there was plenty of action for those who got out into the field. Finches were seriously on the move with **Siskins** predominating and later in the month **Lesser Redpolls** got in on the act too while a single **Hawfinch** over the Ingrebourne Valley (6th) and seven **Crossbills** over Weald Brook (4th) added finchy spice. Hirundines were also noted moving south with a good garden count from Brook Farm, Upminster with 639 **Sand Martins** and 273 **Swallows** on the 10th and 23 **Buzzard** were also noted going the same way. Walthamstow Wetlands again fared well with **Red-crested Pochard** (2nd), **Black-necked Grebe** (one on the 18th and two from the 25th), **Great White Egret** (7th) and a juvenile **Gannet** (27th) that hit power lines but survived and kept going north where it was then seen over the KGV. The KGV also had a male **Blue-headed Wagtail** (1st) and six **Sandwich Terns** (5th) while six **Black-necked Grebes** were on the William Girling from the 23rd with a **Curlew Sandpiper** there on the first date. **Ravens** were seen over Romford, Upminster, Warley and Kelvedon Hatch. **Ospreys** were seen over Gidea Park (1st), Upminster (8th) and Holyfield (10th) and the Rainham **Spoonbill** visited Gallions Reach on the 2nd and 12th where river watching also produced **Great White Egrets** (20th and 26th), **Kittiwake** (17th), three **Sandwich Terns**, 15 **Common Terns**, **Little Gull** and an adult **Iceland Gull** (25th). A **Kittiwake** and **Arctic Tern** were seen off the nearby sewage works the next day.

August 2020

RSPB Rainham Marshes

August was fairly slow going with few passage waders using the reserve as it was still very dry till later in the month. However, there were **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** to see and a **Wood Sandpiper** showed well on the 15th. Down on the river there were still **Avocets** and a few **Black-tailed Godwits** and a single **Bar-tailed** on the 1st. The immature **Spoonbill** was seen all month and a **Cattle Egret** arrived on the 7th and briefly became five on the 19th. A **Great White Egret** was seen on the 15th and was possibly the one summering on Dartford Marsh. The river was very quiet with very few **Common Terns** with no evidence of the huge push up past Tilbury in the first week and **Sandwich Terns** on three dates. A flock of 38 **Arctic Terns** headed powerfully through on the 25th. The odd **Yellow Wagtail**, **Wheatear** and **Whinchat** were reported and **Tree Pipit** (15th) and **Crossbill** (22nd) suggested ongoing passage. A **Garganey** was noted on the 22nd and a **Red Kite** on the 3rd along with the resident **Marsh Harriers** and **Peregrines**.

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Walthamstow Wetlands continued with its early wader passage with **Black-tailed Godwit** (4th and 9th), **Greenshank** (10th) and **Whimbrel** (13th) amongst the regular **Green** and **Common Sandpipers**. **Ospreys** headed through on the 27th and 29th with a **Marsh Harrier** on the 3rd. A **Great White Egret** flew through on the 8th and another was over the Ingrebourne the day before. Up the Lee Valley the **Scaup** remained with 2,000 **Tufted Ducks** on the KGV and **Arctic Tern** (18th) and **Black Terns** on the 29th and 31st added interest along with the usual waders. A juvenile **Kittiwake** on Seventy Acres on the 17th was a little lost and a **Little Gull** was over Upminster (15th) and **Med Gulls** including a juvenile were noted by a few observers at Dagenham Chase on the 3rd. A **Wood Sandpiper** was a great find at the Chase on the 16th-17th and a few other waders were noted on noc mig including **Green** and **Common Sandpipers**, **Oystercatchers**, **Dunlin** and **Whimbrel**. It was a great month for drift migrants especially, and several sites such as Wanstead Flats, the Ingrebourne Valley and Walthamstow Wetlands scored well. There are just too many records to list but potentially there were 27 **Pied Flycatchers** from eight sites (15 from the Flats!), 32 **Tree Pipits** from six sites (ten in Ingrebourne included three ringed and 17 from the Flats), 19 **Redstarts** from six sites (seven from the Flats and six from the Chase) and most of these sites also held **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Whinchats** as well. The highest count of the latter was seven on the Flats on the 26th. This site also had a three day **Nightingale** from the 15th and **Crossbill** (7th) and a **Short-eared Owl** on the 25th and 26th. Another **SEO** was in the Roding Valley Meadows on the 13th. Other **Crossbills** included Dagnam Park (1st), North Ockendon (2nd), four over Hornchurch (8th) and four over Harold Wood Park (16th) and a few **Siskins** were also noted on the move. A **Wood Warbler** was a star find in Dagnam Park on the 10th and a **Grasshopper Warbler** was at Gallions Reach on the 2nd. These sites hosted a few terns along the Thames with **Sandwich** on four dates including 12 on the 3rd and several **Arctic Terns** too including 12 on the 29th when **Little Gull** and **Kittiwake** were also seen. A **Merlin** was seen on the 25th and a female **Goshawk** was noted (not for the first autumn) the following day. Down river at West Thurrock marshes there was a nice collection of 11 **Turnstone**, six **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint** and nine **Knot** on the 30th as well as the roving immature **Spoonbill**. An **Osprey** was over the Ingrebourne Valley on the 24th and a party of seven **Red Kites** including juveniles was following a plough in Upminster on the 20th – how things have changed.

July 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

With the trails reopening in mid-July there were a few more sightings to be had including an eclipse male **Garganey** from the Ken Barrett Hide from the 18th and two more fly overs by a **White Stork** on the 23rd and 24th. There were a few passage waders dribbling through with **Common** and **Green Sandpipers**, **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Whimbrels** and also a **Greenshank** (18th) and **Turnstone** (19th). **Yellow-legged Gull** numbers built up slowly with a peak of 55 on the 23rd and **Caspian Gulls** were noted on the 7th and two on the 23rd along with regular **Med Gull** sightings. A single **Sandwich Tern** on the 7th was the only non **Common Tern**. A **Spoonbill** dropped in on the 15th continuing the good run this year and there were early **Whinchat** (12th) and **Wheatear** (27th) seen along the river wall as well as five passage **Siskins** on the 7th and a few **Yellow Wagtails**. **Marsh Harriers** and **Peregrines** were seen daily but the star bird though was a juvenile **Merlin** on the 31st. A juvenile **Cuckoo** performed well on several dates.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

Walthamstow Wetlands had a good early wader passage month with 12 **Common Sandpipers** and **Greenshank** (1st), **Black-tailed Godwits** (one on the 4th and eight on the 19th), **Whimbrel** (14th and 16th), **Oystercatcher** (16th), **Redshank** and **Dunlin** (19th), **Little Ringed Plover** (20th) and **Turnstone** (23rd). Not too shoddy at all for inland in July! Four **Cattle Egrets** visited the heronry on the 12th with two again on the 22nd. **Willow Warbler** and **Spotted Flycatcher** were on the move early and there was a **Whinchat** on the 18th. **Greenshank** (21st) and a good number of **Common Sandpipers** were also on the KGV and an **Arctic** and **Little Tern** were present there on the 27th with two **Littles** the following day. Elsewhere there were **Little Ringed Plovers**, **Common** and **Green Sandpipers** noted at Dagenham Chase and a **Curlew** over Romford (11th) and **Whimbrel** over Wanstead Flats (22nd) pointed at further movement. At Gallions Reach there were 17 **Black-tailed Godwits**, eight **Common Sandpipers**, **Sandwich Tern** and two **Arctic Terns** on the 19th and generally there were good numbers of **Common Sandpipers** on this whole stretch of the Thames. Different adult **Med Gulls** were seen at Dagenham Chase on three dates and two **Great White Egrets** were over Brook Farm, Upminster on the 27th with a **Quail** singing just up the road in North Ockenden on the 3rd. A **Redstart** was seen at Gilbert's Slade in Epping Forest on the 26th and the first **Whinchat** was actually on Tylers Common on the 11th. A few **Siskins** were noted on the move as were predictably **Crossbills** with five at Ardleigh Green (2nd), 13 at Wanstead Park (6th), three at Dagnam Park (17th), one at South Weald (18th) and three in Epping Forest (20th). The Kelvedon Hatch **Ravens** drifted down towards Brentwood on occasion.

June 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The breeding season was in full swing and it looks like being a very good year for **Redshank** and **Lapwing** once again. **Avocets**, **Little Ringed Plovers** and **Oystercatchers** are nesting within the electric fence too and water levels have remained good. Two broods of **Marsh Harriers** have already fledged and there have been plenty of young wildfowl and warblers around. Late wader passage included a **Sanderling** till the 4th along with ten **Ringed Plovers** and two **Dunlin** and three **Curlews** seem to be summering. Three 'limosa' **Black-tailed**

Godwits were seen on the 26th when an adult **Spoonbill** was seen once again with two adults till the 30th. A **Great White Egret** drifted through on the 29th and there was a couple of **Red Kite** sightings. Three **Barnacle Geese** were noted on the 8th and **Great Black-backed Gulls** have bred for the first time on one of the redundant Thames jetties. The first **Yellow-legged Gulls** were back by the 22nd and **Caspian** was noted the same day. A **Black Redstart** was seen again and two **Grasshopper Warblers** started reeling again for second nesting attempts.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

Walthamstow Wetlands was graced again by the adult and immature **Spoonbills** on the 1st and 20th and a late **Osprey** drifted through, also on the 1st. Wader passage began from the 23rd with the first **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** and there were 12 of the latter on the 30th. Two **Curlew** on the 27th were also noteworthy. The **Little Ringed Plovers** have bred at Dagenham Chase and **Green Sandpipers** were here and in the Ingrebourne from the 16th while a **Wood Sandpiper** called over Chafford Hundred on the 24th. **Red Kites** drifted around but there was a definite south-east push on the 2nd and 3rd with five over Hornchurch and Upminster and six over Wanstead Flats. A **Quail** was flushed in the Ingrebourne on the 14th and one was singing in rural Upminster on the 25th. **Mandarins** seem to be having a good year in Epping Forest with more broods reported and two singing **Firecrests** were found there. There was a good **Swift** push on the 30th with 2,491 south over Brook Farm during that day while **Med Gulls** and **Crossbills** were also moving about. **Meds** were seen over Chafford and Grays and nine were as far upriver as Beckton STW on the 13th. A total of 37 **Crossbills** was seen and heard from the 19th and I suspect that there will be more to come during July.

May 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

With lockdown continuing it was a sparse month of river wall sightings once again. A **Spoonbill** arrived on the 5th and stayed till the 7th before an immature arrived on the 9th. This one stayed and was joined by an adult on the 16th. They left on the 18th and were then seen over Walthamstow Wetlands an hour later. A single on the 21st was new as the WW birds were still present but they came back to visit on the 28th! A few **Arctic Terns** were noted with two on 3rd, three on 7th, six on 10th and four on 13th and there was a peak of 70 **Common Terns** and three **Blacks** on the 7th. **Med Gulls** were seen regularly and a **Little Gull** headed upriver on the 14th. Wader passage was slow in the glorious conditions and a few **Greenshank**, **Whimbrel** and **Common Sandpipers** were noted along with **Sanderlings** on the 7th and 18th and **Turnstone** on the 15th and 30th. Two **Black Redstarts** were seen on the 15th with a single on the 19th and a couple of late **Wheatears** were noted and a **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen on the 25th. **Corn Buntings** and four male **Stonechats** were holding territory and it looks like it will be a good breeding year out on the marsh with young **Avocets** already along with **Lapwings**, **Redshank** and plenty of duck. **Marsh Harriers** were still on site and there were several **Red Kite** sightings.

Metropolitan LNHS Essex

There was a little more cautious exploration taking place in the May lockdown and the Lee Valley did quite well with Walthamstow Wetlands hosting two **Spoonbills** on several dates from the 18th along with three **Arctic Terns** and **Osprey** (2nd), **Sandwich Tern** (7th), seven **Whimbrel** (10th) and **Wheatear** (18th). Two **Whinchat** were on the nearby Marshes on the

3rd and 6th and a **Quail** was put up on Sewardstone Marsh on the 4th where nine **Whimbrel** flew through on the 16th. An immature male **Scoter** was on the KGV (until the 8th) and a female **Goosander** lingered there until the 6th. There was a good selection of common waders through the reservoir including **Common Sandpipers** and **Greenshanks** but 17 **Dunlin** on the 2nd were notable. Six **Black Terns** were seen on the 6th with two late (one on the 31st) and there were three **Arctics** on the 9th and a single on the 14th. Another **Black Tern** was seen on the Girling (7th). Three **Whinchats** (5th, 7th and 15th) and a **Black Redstart** (2nd) were also seen on the KGV reservoir. A **Marsh Harrier** was a good “Valley bird” over Seventy Acres on the 12th and a **Honey Buzzard** was seen over Woodford Green on the 9th. Another **Osprey** was over Ilford on the 4th and an immature **White-tailed Eagle** circled there on the 24th. **Red Kites** were everywhere with immature birds piling back into the country along the south coast. Peak counts of these migrant birds included six over Ardleigh Green (2nd) and Upminster (18th). In addition to these, possibly ten territories have been discovered in the area which is great news. **Goshawks** were also noted in a regular spot and **Hobbies** have been frequently seen so perhaps a good raptor summer approaches. Passage **Spotted Flycatchers** were seen in Chafford Hundred (16th), Waterworks NR and on Wanstead Flats and one breeding site was occupied. Fly through garden **Turtle Doves** were seen in Upminster and South Ockendon and a purring male was back at North Weald. Five **Firecrests** were on territory at three sites with a brood seen at one and a passage bird was in the Mardyke (9th) and Upminster (30th) while two pairs of **Hawfinch** were confirmed at a traditional spot. Brook Farm, Upminster also had a **Bee-eater** over on the 16th. A male **Golden Oriole** was a great find at Grimston’s Oak in Epping Forest and it seems with so much more forest walking taking place that more **Mandarin** broods have been reported than for many years. The roving female **Smew** cropped up again at Highams Park Lake and the immature drake **Hooded Merganser** that wintered on the KGV was seen at Connaught Water a couple of times.

April 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

Needless to say an odd month for recording with the lockdown quite rightly affecting the amount of sightings from some key sites but for those with gardens, a grand view or the opportunity to still walk to their local patch, there was still a spring out there to enjoy.

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Sightings were few and far between with the reserve being closed but the river wall was still visited by those local enough. A **Spoonbill** dropped in on the 2nd and two **Great White Egrets** did the same on the 7th and breeding waders were in full flow with many **Lapwing** and **Redshank** and it looks promising for Oystercatcher, Avocet and Little Ringed Plover. Down on the river the predictable arrival of **Bar-tailed Godwits** started on the 13th with single figures on several dates and **Whimbrel** totalling 37 birds were recorded on nine dates with 12 on the 12th being the highest. Four **Greenshanks** were seen on the 20th and the last **Black-tailed Godwits** were four on the 6th. **Common Terns** became regular and the first three **Arctic Terns** went through on the 6th with an impressive 60 on the 13th and another 29 on the 18th. Single **Sandwich** and **Black Terns** (28th) were also seen as well as numerous **Med Gulls** and a **Kittiwake** on the 3rd. There were a few **Wheatears** including six ‘Greenland’ **White-fronted Goose** on the 30th and **Whinchats** on the 14th and 30th and **Ring Ouzels** on the 16th and 18th. A **Redstart** was seen on the 6th and the usual breeding warbler suspects were all back and present with the exception of **Grasshopper Warblers**. **Marsh Harriers** are settled in and there were four **Red Kite** and several **Raven** sightings. Two **Short-eared Owls** were last seen on the 1st.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Lockdown concentrated efforts to gardens and immediate local sites but the good thing about this largely urban area meant that many could take their constitutional on their patch from home. Raptors were a big thing with so many birders being at home and there were over 100 **Red Kites** reported with seven over Collier Row on the 23rd being the highest single site (a flat roof) day count. **Buzzards** were prolific and **Marsh Harriers** were added to lists in Romford (3rd), Woodford Green (5th) and Upminster (25th) along with numerous **Peregrine**, **Sparrowhawk** and **Kestrel** along with the first **Hobbies**. **Ospreys** were seen over Hornchurch (18th), Upminster and Dagenham (20th), two over Romford (25th) and Gidea Park (26th). Star raptor billing went to the **Black Kite** low over Hornchurch on the 15th and the huge immature **White-tailed Eagle** that soared over Harold Hill on the 21st. Similarly, there were eight records of lockdown **Ravens** too and a **Short-eared Owl** was over Wanstead Flats on the 8th. A **Cattle Egret** remained at Cornmill Meadows till the 17th and another was near Upminster on the 2nd while **Great White Egrets** were over Upminster (16th) and the Banbury Reservoir (24th) and a **Bittern** over Rush Green (4th) was a nice garden surprise. Several birders picked up migrating **Common Scoter** on Noc Mig equipment in the first week but others actually heard them passing too and a single was on the KGV reservoir from the 12th-18th. The Reservoir continued to hold the immature male **Hooded Merganser** till the 24th along with five **Goldeneye** and a **Goosander** (till 30th), drake **Long-tailed Duck** (23rd), two drake **Scaup** (till 21st), a pair of **Pintail** (1st) and a **Brent Goose** on the 2nd. It also hosted most of the witnessed inland tern passage with **Arctics** (ten on 13th, two on 17th and 13 on 28th), **Sandwich** (singles on 1st, 11th, 17th, 23rd and 28th), **Blacks** (11th, three on 18th, 19th and 23rd) and **Little** (singles on 17th and 19th). Sixty-six **Little Gulls** also moved through there on seven dates including 24 on 10th, 20 on 20th and 14 on 23rd. Unsurprisingly other sites in the Lee Valley also picked up a few with Walthamstow Wetlands having **Little Gull** (19th), **Arctic Tern** (ten on 28th) and **Sandwich Tern** (four on 6th). Another **Arctic** was at Hooks Marsh on the 7th with two at the Thames Barrier on the 5th where three **Sandwich Terns** were seen the same day. A drake **Garganey** was seen at Dagenham Chase on the 10th and 17th. Wader passage was concentrated on the reservoirs with 13 **Bar-tailed Godwits** through Walthamstow Wetlands and 17 through the KGV. **Greenshank**, **Turnstone**, **Oystercatcher**, **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** were all reported along with 12 **Whimbrel** through the Wetlands on the 28th and eight through the KGV on the 18th. In total 43 were reported from eight sites and they found their way onto several lockdown lists. Two **Avocet** on Cornmill Meadows (23rd) were very notable Lee Valley birds and a **Wood Sandpiper** was an early migrant near Warley on the 22nd. There were a few late **Fieldfares** and **Redwings** to pick up in the first week with the last of the former being on Wanstead Flats on the 14th. **Ring Ouzels** were here with two on the 18th and a single on the 28th and others were seen near Upminster on the 7th and 10th and at Dagenham Chase from the 10th-12th. **Wheatears** were seen at regular spots but in no great numbers and **Whinchats** were on the KGV (16th), Wetlands (22nd and 29th) and Wanstead Flats (28th – 30th). Thirteen **Nightingales** were discovered on territory and **Common Redstarts** were on KGV (7th), Walthamstow Marshes (14th), Cely Woods (21st) and Wanstead Flats (23rd) and a **Black Redstart** was seen on Sewardstone Marsh till the 6th. Sixteen male **Cuckoos** were heard but only a couple of **Grasshopper Warblers** reeled. Two different male **Firecrests** were on territory in Cranham and **Woodlarks** flew over Upminster (22nd) and the Mardyke (25th). There were not many **Yellow Wagtails** on the deck but a **Blue-headed** was seen on Walthamstow Marshes on the 27thth. The only **Tree Pipits** were over Purfleet on the 6th and Wanstead Flats on the 15th. And saving the best for last, a fine **Red-rumped Swallow** graced Sewardstone Marsh on the 13th.

March 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Winter sort of petered out with March largely continuing in the same vein as February with wet and windy weather. A juvenile **Iceland Gull** visited on the 4th, 5th and 10th and there were a couple of **Caspian** sightings and **Med Gulls** started to drift back in from the middle of the month while the first **Common Tern** was seen on the early date of the 21st and a flock of 21 **Kittiwakes** headed upriver on the windy 29th. Two **White Storks** drifted in and out on the 11th and 12th before showing very well on the 13th and two **Cattle Egrets** flew through on the 16th. With a misty morning it was not surprising to find 15 **Scoter** on the river on the 19th and couple of odd **Brent Geese** were seen. The first **Wheatear** was on the 11th with the next on the 19th and **Little Ringed Plovers** and **Sand Martins** were seen from the 15th. The first brave **Sedge Warbler** was back on the 30th. **Marsh Harriers** have been displaying well and there were a few **Red Kite** sightings too.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The trio of good birds lingered at Walthamstow Wetlands with the pair of **Bearded Tits**, **Firecrests** and **Black Redstart** all remaining and the site pulled in some other good birds too with **Avocet** (14th), **Bar-tailed Godwit** (22nd), **Black-necked Grebe** (23rd), **Scoter** (27th) and **Little Ringed Plover** (19th). **Wheatears** arrived here and at other sites in the Lee Valley from the 16th with others at Wanstead Flats too. The first **Sand Martin** was over Upminster on the 10th with the KGV not far behind on the 13th. The Reservoir also continued to hold the immature male **Hooded Merganser**, drake **Smew**, **Scaup** and up to 12 **Goosanders** and 38 **Goldeneye** all month. Thirteen **Velvet Scoter** were there on the 19th and a **Brent Goose** was seen on the 25th. Up valley nine **Goosander** and a single **Smew** were still around Seventy Acres and the two **Cattle Egrets** remained at Hall Marsh till at least the 20th while a **Great White Egret** flew over Wanstead Flats on the 25th. A flock of 33 **Brent Geese** over Woodford Green on the 24th was unusual and two Russian **White-fronted Geese** proved popular at Dagenham Chase from the 2nd to 21st but were topped there by the two **White Storks** on the 12th. A very early **Osprey** was over Upminster on the 6th with another over Leyton Flats on the 24th and **Red Kite** sightings were astonishing with some obvious passage but also the certainty that they are now firmly resident even in some of the more urbanised areas. A male **Hen Harrier** was also over Upminster on the 24th along with the first **Tree Pipit**. Thirty-two **Med Gulls** moved over Upminster on the 28th, a single **Little Gull** was over Chafford Hundred on the 27th and the juvenile **Iceland Gull** returned to Beckton till the 18th after its visit to Dungeness and then Rainham. Four **Waxwings** were seen at Thornwood Common on the 17th and **Firecrests** were still lingering in traditional wintering spots.

February 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

February is often the coldest and best winter month but not this year. The wet, westerly windy weather has prevented any immigration and duck and wader numbers remained where they were in December. A **Jack Snipe** was seen over one of the mammoth tides on the 10th and two **Ruff** were still about. Gull watching did provide us with some more **Caspian** action and a fine

adult **Iceland Gull** visited on the 11th and 12th while an adult **Med Gull** headed out with 500 **Black-heads** on the 10th. **Peregrines** were especially active along with six **Marsh Harriers** and two sightings of **Merlin** with a female on the 13th and a male on the 19th. A **Red Kite** was seen on the 3rd and three more drifted through on the 11th while two **Short-eared** continued to be problematical with just sporadic appearances. The **Firecrests** were seen now and then and **Bearded Tits** and **Stonechats** were on the trails.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

It was a month of lingerers... The **Turtle Dove** remained in Valentines Park till at least the 8th but proved tricky while the trio of **Black Redstart**, two **Bearded Tits** and **Firecrests** were at Walthamstow Wetlands all month. The juvenile **Iceland Gull** was at Creekmouth till the 9th and **Caspian** and **Med Gulls** were also seen there with **Brambling** and **Siberian Chiffchaff** in the adjacent sewage works. The adult **Caspian Gull** was seen again on Eagle Pond with a first-winter at Roding Valley Meadows on the 16th and a **Yellow-legged Gull** on Wanstead Flats on the 1st. Further **Med Gulls** were seen at the Wetlands (18th), Valentines Park (11th) and Barking Park (12th). **Red Kites** started to reappear in regular spots and the **Ravens** were seen in the mid-Lee Valley again. Back in the Lee Valley the two **Cattle Egrets** were still around Hall Marsh and a female **Smew**, seven **Goosander** and two **Bitterns** were seen with some regularity around Seventy Acres. Two **Black-necked Grebes** were on the Wm Girling and the **Hooded Merganser** was on the KGV once again on the 6th. Up to five **Goosander** were on Connaught Water and Weald Park and a **Great Northern Diver** went past Grays on the 14th. **Common Sandpipers** were on the Lee at Bow and the Wetlands and 45 **Avocets** was a good count at West Thurrock Marshes on the 4th. A **Great White Egret** flew over Woodford Green. A bizarrely unseasonal **Sandwich Tern** was over Fair Play Farm in Upminster on the 5th with a great count of 52 **Yellowhammers** there on the 13th. Two new **Firecrests** were seen in Wanstead Park on the 4th along with a **Woodcock** and a **Tree Sparrow** was a great find at Holyfield Farm on the 21st.

JANUARY 2020

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

2020 started much as 2019 left off with mild westerly weather dominating. Wildfowl numbers remained stable but there was little change. A female **Goldeneye** on the 1st was the only different duck and a juvenile Russian **White-fronted Goose** was seen amongst the **Greylags** on the 3rd, 9th and 11th while the **Bar-headed Goose** was still attracting attention! A paltry 19 **Golden Plover** on the 29th was the peak amongst 1,500 **Lapwing** and there were still two **Ruff** to be found along with occasional sightings to **Green Sandpiper** and **Jack Snipe**. A **Woodcock** was seen on the 1st. At least ten different **Caspian Gulls** were found by those dedicated to the cause along with a few **Yellow-legged Gulls**, two **Meds** and a very sporadic juvenile **Iceland Gull**. Four **Short-eared Owls** are wintering but have been very difficult to pin down and **Red Kites** were noted on the 6th and 21st while six **Marsh Harriers** continue to delight along with **Peregrine** and **Buzzard**. A female **Merlin** was seen on the 1st. Two **Firecrests** continued to tantalise in the Cordite and **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** are overwintering but **Bearded Tits** have been volatile in their appearances.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The two **Cattle Egrets** continued to winter around Hall Marsh and a pair of **Smew** and about ten **Goosanders** were between Seventy Acres and Holyfield Lakes with three **Red-crested Pochards** being seen there on the 4th. The male **Scaup** remained on the KGV with a male **Smew** and the full billed female **Hooded Merganser** there on the 19th and 21st. Down at Walthamstow Wetlands the male **Scaup** also continued his residency and the 1st saw the arrival of a male **Black Redstart** and two **Bearded Tits** which then lingered all month along with the two **Firecrests**. A dark bellied **Brent Goose** on the 6th was another excellent find. The adult **Caspian Gull** remained at Eagle Pond and the second-winter was seen on Wanstead Flats on the 19th while the juvenile **Iceland Gull** was seen with increasing regularity at Creekmouth from the 8th with the continued presence of about a dozen **Chiffchaffs**, a silvery **Siberian Chiffchaff** and a **Black Redstart** in the adjacent private sewage works. **Ravens** were seen over Holyfield, Kelvedon Hatch and Loughton and a female **Merlin** dashed through the Ingrebourne Valley on the 4th and a pair of **Smew** there on the 22nd was replaced by two pairs of **Goosander** on the 23rd! A **Goshawk** was seen over Woodford Green and there were several **Red Kite** sightings but it was the first-winter **Turtle Dove** in Valentines Park in Ilford that proved the showstopper for the month.

DECEMBER 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

A quiet final month of the year with ever increasing water levels but little change. A **Cattle Egret** was seen for a while on the 3rd and two **Ruff** were still to be found amongst the **Lapwing** flocks while **Avocets** reached a new high of 44 on the 5th. A **Little Stint** on the 12 was amazingly the first for the year and a **Jack Snipe** occasionally bobbed for the punters from the Butts Hide. There were almost no **Golden Plovers** but **Dunlin** hit a healthy 1,107 on the 5th and two **Knot** were with the **Godwits** on the 31st. **Caspian Gulls** were seen on several dates and a combined total of ten birds was seen between the 5th and 6th. The male **Goshawk** was seen again on the 5th and 18th and a juvenile female **Hen Harrier** was a real treat on the 11th when a **Merlin** was also seen. Up to five **Marsh Harriers**, **Buzzards** and **Peregrines** kept things active and a **Red Kite** was seen on the 3rd. Eight **Brent Geese** circled on the 18th with a single on the 29th and a **Goosander** was seen going upriver on the 7th. **Ravens** dropped in occasionally but **Short-eared Owl** appearances were scarce although the **Barn Owls** were superb. **Bearded Tits** were still to be found on the trails and **Water Pipits** and **Firecrests** were still to be found. The last new year bird of 2019 was a **Shag** bringing up about a total of 178 which is well down on recent years.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

In the Lee Valley, the two **Cattle Egrets** continued to loiter around Hall Marsh and the drake **Scaup** did likewise at Walthamstow Wetlands while single **Bittern** and female **Smew** were around Seventy Acres lake with up to 21 **Goosander** in the general area. Holyfield Hall Farm attracted a **Raven** (13th) and over 150 **Chaffinch** and with them were a **Brambling** and up to 26 **Yellowhammer** and winter thrush numbers slowly increased across the area. The Down Valley drake **Scaup** also remained on the KGV where a male **Merlin** (6th) and drake **Smew** (29th) were seen while back at the Wetlands there were still two **Firecrests** and the Crest hybrid to be found along with a **Common Sandpiper**. Another three **Common Sands** were at Bow Creek. The adult **Caspian Gull** at Eagle Pond was joined by a 2cy for a few days and down at Creekmouth an early 1cy **Iceland Gull** was seen on the 27th. The site also hosted at least 11 **Chiffchaff** and a smart **Siberian Chiffchaff** on the 9th and 27th along with a **Black Redstart**.

Woodcock were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley and at Warren Gorge where there was also a **Bittern** on the 3rd. **Firecrests** were seen here, in Purfleet and at Warley Place while two **Rock Pipits** on Wanstead Flats (15th) were decidedly late in the season to be inland. **Goosanders** away from the Lee Valley were seen at Connaught Water and at Hainault Forest CP where there were three on the 15th. The year finished off in style with six **Crossbills** over Romford (30th) and a ringtail **Hen Harrier** through Beckton STW on the 31st.

NOVEMBER 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Rising water levels saw an increase in wildfowl but the generally mild conditions brought little extra reward with a **Whooper Swan** on the 10th being the only incoming winter addition. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** was with the 50 **Blackwits** on the 15th and there were a couple of **Woodcock** and **Jack Snipe** sightings along with two wintering **Ruff** and a peak of 38 **Avocets**. A juvenile **Gannet** was seen on the river on the 20th and the first returning **Caspian Gulls** were noted including three on the 11th. Five **Marsh Harriers** are wintering and a **Merlin** was seen on the 16th but it was a male **Goshawk** perched for 45 minutes on the 29th that proved most popular. **Raven** sightings increased and at least two each of **Short-eared** and **Barn Owl** were often out patrolling. A **Snow Bunting** was seen briefly on the first and another entertained on Purfleet Scrape on the 19th and 20th while a **Richard's Pipit** on the edge of the landfill on the 3rd and 4th was seen by just two lucky observers. Similarly, the **Dartford Warbler** was seen briefly on the 1st but not subsequently but there were still **Blackcaps**, **Chiffchaffs** and **Goldcrests** to be found and up to four **Firecrests** were in the scrub. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** peeped on the 30th but the star bird of the month was obviously the superb **Penduline Tit** that posed for just a minute or so on the 17th. **Bearded Tits** and **Cetti's Warblers** were showy on the trails and a **Tree Sparrow** around the Centre on the 17th was most unexpected.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

In the Lee Valley, the two **Cattle Egrets** returned for the winter to Hall Marsh from the 25th and a **Bittern** was seen occasionally on Seventy Acres along with a female **Smew** and a few **Goosander**. The drake **Scaup** remained on Walthamstow Wetlands and the female **Hooded Merganser** was last seen on the 1st on the KGV where the drake **Scaup** also remained. A **Pintail** on the 24th was only the second this year and up to eight **Goosander** and 11 **Goldeneye** were recorded. A **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** was noted on the 8th. A **Goldeneye** was a good record for Wanstead Flats on the 10th and a dark bellied **Brent Goose** in the Ingrebourne on the same day was equally noteworthy along with a drake **Goosander** back on Connaught Water from the 19th. The adult **Caspian Gull** returned to Eagle Pond from the 23rd and down on the Thames there were two **Scoter** off Gallions Reach on the 8th while 17 **Little Egrets** near Upminster on the 24th was a good count for the season. **Firecrests** were noted at five sites and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was at Sewardstone Marsh on the 6th. There was a scattering of single **Siskins** and **Brambling** and a few winter thrushes, and a **Black Redstart** in Upminster on the 15th. **Ravens** were seen over Roding Valley Meadows and Thorndon CP.

OCTOBER 2019

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Spoonbills continued into October and we suspect that all were different as they headed off west with two on the 1st and one on the 3rd while a **Great White Egret** on the 18th was surprisingly the only sighting. With water appearing at last, duck and wader numbers slowly increased and **Black-tailed Godwits** peaked at 370, **Curlew** at 14 and **Lapwing** at 300. More species were seen on the river especially on the murky 24th when 32 **Knot**, three **Sanderling**, 48 **Dunlin**, 22 **Golden** and two **Grey Plover** were counted. A **Curlew Sandpiper** on the 15th was the first of the year and two **Common Sandpipers** were still along the foreshore while two **Wood Sandpipers** on the 6th were unseasonal and sitting just a few feet away from the first **Jack Snipe**. A **Woodcock** on the 12th was new in. **Scoter** were seen on the 21st, 24th and 30th when two female **Goldeneye** and three **Mergansers** made for a good duck haul. Two **Mandarin** up river on the 12th were only the fourth record and **Brent Geese** were seen on four dates. A **Little Gull** on the 8th was followed by five on the 21st when **Arctic** and **Black Terns** were also seen. **Sandwich Terns** on the 2nd and **Common** on the 18th made for a good tern month. At least five different **Caspian Gulls** were seen on various dates and there were still a few **Yellow-legged Gulls** to be found.

Late **Spotted Flycatchers** were seen on the 1st and 2nd and an even later **Common Redstart** was seen on the 23rd. The last **Sand Martin** was on the 13th and a few **Swallows** and **House Martins** dribbled through while overhead passage included an unprecedented **Jackdaw** movement between the 17th and 20th with 1,555 counted heading west. Meanwhile a few thousand **Woodpigeons** went south with good numbers of **Stock Doves** caught up with them. **pipits**, **wagtails**, the first winter **thrushes**, **Skylarks** and **finches** were also moving with 20 **Siskins** (19th), seven **Lesser Redpolls** (25th), **Bullfinch** (24th), **Brambling** (15th), five **Corn Buntings** and a **Yellowhammer** (17th) and late **Yellow Wagtails** on the 19th and 29th. **Ring Ouzels** were seen on six dates with five on the 16th and two on the 20th and **Coal Tits** of near Continental appearance were seen on five dates and even photographed for the first time. The last **Wheatear** was seen on the 19th and **Stonechat** numbers increased and it was not overly surprising that a **Dartford Warbler** was seen on the 31st. Both **Water** and **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** were back on site from the 15th and rather bizarrely **Ring-necked Parakeets** have reverted to daily flocks with 168 on the 17th being the peak! **Ravens** are once again regular and the other usual raptors and even the **Barn Owls** have been putting on a good show. Only a **Merlin** on the 25th was a new sighting and the first of the season.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

It was a month of continued quality passerine passage with **Ring Ouzel** featuring prominently with twelve birds seen across six sites along with good numbers of **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** including 225 of the former over Wanstead Flats and 270 over Walthamstow Wetlands both on the 29th^h. There were a couple each of late **Wheatear**, **Whinchat** and **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Firecrests** started to appear from mid-month with three sites holding birds while a **Yellow-browed Warbler** in Walthamstow Forest on the 10th was the first local one this autumn. A **Goldcrest x Firecrest** hybrid was trapped at Walthamstow Wetlands on the 5th. **Finches** were on the move with a few single **Brambling**, **Siskin** and **Lesser Redpoll** while two **Crossbill** were over Bonnetts Wood (28th) and a **Hawfinch** was over Woodford Green the same day. There were some good **Chaffinch** movements with Wanstead Flats recording 300 (20th) and 364 (22nd) and 400 went through the Ingrebourne (13th). Walthamstow Marsh hosted two **Black Redstarts** and a **Common Redstart** on the 25th and another was at Gallions Reach on

the 24th where **Iceland Gull** (5th), **Black Tern** and **Great White Egret** (13th), **Brent Goose** (20th) and **Goshawk** (27th) made for a good month. Two more **Great Whites** were over Chafford Hundred on the 2nd and Cornmill Meadows hosted another on the 31st as well as a **Goshawk** on the 31st. There were two additional **Goshawk** sightings from Woodford Green on the 7th and 25th and a fifth for the month over the KGV Reservoir on the 17th. A ringtail **Hen Harrier** was high over Romford on the 22nd with a **Raven** and a **Marsh Harrier** and **Red Kites** were seen over Wanstead Flats. The KGV played host to its returning female **Hooded Merganser** on the 15th through to the 23rd at least but rather bizarrely a second female type with a damaged upper mandible was seen there on the 19th. The site also hosted an **Arctic Tern** (16th), **Goosander** (17th), **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** (25th and 29th), two **Black Redstarts** (from the 22nd) and a **Sanderling** (29th). Further **Rock Pipits** were over Walthamstow Wetlands (12th) and Wanstead Flats (23rd) where **Woodlark** and **Short-eared Owl** were recorded the same day. A staggering 787 **Ring-necked Parakeets** were seen there on the 29th and 400 went through the Wetlands on the 21st with **Short-eared Owl** and 14 **Barnacle Geese** the same day. A **Jack Snipe** was seen at Waterworks (28th) and **Woodpigeons** were well on the move with 11,000 (29th) and 16,000 (20th) over Chafford Hundred being the biggest days. The **Jackdaw** movement noted at Rainham was mirrored in other areas during the same four days from the 17th with 1,248 through Walthamstow, 144 over Chafford Hundred and 250 through Collier Row. A **Bittern** was back at Seventy Acres from the 15th and another was over Chafford Hundred on the 29th.

SEPTEMBER 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Spoonbills were a theme for the month with singles on the 1st-3rd, 8th, two on the 26th and three on the 30th. Most birds were seen heading south with just a couple lingering on Aveley Pool. A **Cattle Egret** was seen from the 18th-20th with a **Great White** through on the 22nd and two on the 23rd to complete the 'interesting white birds'. **Guillemots** were seen on the 9th and 21st and were the first for some years and two **Scoter** were noted on the 18th. A juvenile **Black Tern** was briefly on the Pool on the 5th and 140 **Arctic Terns** powered through in one flock on the 5th with 18 on the 9th. Again only two **Common Terns** were seen. **Yellow-legged Gulls** were still to be found and several **Caspian Gulls** were seen. There was no notable raptor movement but an **Osprey** drifted south on the 12th.

Warbler passage was actually quite heavy with some good counts of **Chiffchaff** (34 on the 10th), **Blackcap** and **Whitethroat** and **Willow Warblers** and **Lesser Whitethroats** were to be found almost daily. A few **Goldcrests** and two more **Coal Tits** (13th and 18th) were seen and there was a visible **Blue Tit** passage on the 19th and 20th with perhaps 50 birds heading west in small parties. **Spotted Flycatchers** were seen on several dates with two very late birds on the 30th. **Redstarts** were found on the 10th and 21st, **Tree Pipits** on 1st, 14th and three on 15th, three **Tree Sparrows** coasted on the 12th and **Whinchat** peaked at ten on the 4th and most stayed for over a week with new arrivals from the 30th. A **Turnstone** on the 6th and 9th was the only different passage wader of note which was disappointing.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Passerine passage was still good throughout the area with **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Whinchats**, **Wheatears**, **Yellow Wagtails** and general warbler species at many sites. **Pied Flycatchers** were seen at five sites with three at Wanstead Flats (1st, 21st, 22nd), Gallions Reach (1st), Fairlop Waters (1st), Woodford Green (2nd) and two at Dagnam Park (13th). **Redstarts** were seen on the Flats on five dates with six on the 1st with others seen at Dagenham Chase (5th), Chingford Plain (8th), Ingrebourne Valley (8th), Fairlop Waters (15th) and Walthamstow Wetlands (8th & 13th). An **Ortolan Bunting** was recorded on Noc Mig over Chafford Hundred (9th) with six **Tree Pipits** (6th) and the first **Redwing** (20th). Five **Tree Pipits** were also seen on the Flats and a late **Wood Warbler** was in the Mar Dyke on the 5th with a daylight **Redwing** in Upminster on the 26th. A single **Crossbill** was seen in Thorndon CP on the 14th in a poor season for the species locally and Woodlarks were seen at Gallions Reach (21st) and on Chingford Plain (30th). Two **Garganey** were on Walthamstow Wetlands from the 3rd and a **Little Stint** was there on the 8th with another the same day on the KGV Reservoir where there were three **Black Terns** on the 21st. An immature **Hooded Merganser** there on the 15th was potentially the most significant record of the month. A **Black-necked Grebe** was on the Wm Girling on the 22nd. Eyes to the skies produced regular **Raven** sightings between Brentwood, Warley and Kelvedon Hatch with others over Ardleigh Green (15th) and Romford (two on the 1st). **Ospreys** were seen over Gallions Reach (8th), Woodford Green (12th) and the Flats (28th) and a female **Goshawk** was encountered near Hainault Forest on the 23rd. A **Great White Egret** was in the Ingrebourne Valley (21st) and the following day two were tracked over Walthamstow Wetlands and then the KGV. A flock of 75 **Swifts** at the Wetlands on the 3rd was late for so many and the last nine were seen there on the 12th.

AUGUST 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

A juvenile **Cattle Egret** got the month off to a grand start and stayed until the 12th when an adult was also seen and another was seen on the 23rd and 24th. A **Great White Egret** flew through on the 10th and another lingered from the 25th to 27th with two more briefly on the 31st. Four **Spoonbills** were seen early on the 14th but were gone all too soon. Wader passage was stymied by poor water levels but a **Wood Sandpiper** (12th) was seen amongst the more regular tringas and a **Golden Plover** on the 25th became the first of the season. **Avocet** and **Black-tailed Godwit** numbers rose and **Whimbrel** and **Curlew** were seen. Tern passage was rather odd with almost no **Common Terns** at all, but with no favourable conditions on the 24th there were suddenly 13 **Sandwich Terns** and an unprecedented flock of 14 juvenile **Little Terns**. Three more **Sandwich Terns** were seen on the 26th when a flock of 16 **Arctic Terns** headed high up river. Two more **Arctics** were seen on the 30th. There was a little flurry of **Med** and **Caspian Gulls** including a couple of immaculate juveniles of each and **Yellow-legged Gull** numbers started to drop off.

Eyes to the skies produced our usual raptor selection with a couple of **Red Kites** in addition as well as an **Osprey** on the 18th and 16 kettleling **Buzzards** on the 23rd. Frustratingly Culver the young **White-tailed Eagle** from the Isle of Wight re-introduction was satellite tracked across the west end of the reserve on the 31st on his maiden circuit of the south-east but was not seen by anyone at all during his entire Essex journey! Hopefully this is a taste of things to come. A **Raven** on the same day was the first for some time.

The first **Whinchats** arrived on the 22nd and were seen most days thereafter with five on the 25th when four **Wheatears** were also seen. **Spotted Flycatchers** were found on the 19th and 26th and **Pied Flycatcher** and **Redstart** were both seen on the 25th and 26th with another of the latter on the 19th and 31st. There were good numbers of **Yellow Wagtails** with the cattle and an **Ortolan Bunting** flew over calling but remained invisible. There were lots of commoner warblers on the move with **Whitethroats** being especially common including an impressive 53 on the 26th. Fourteen **Willow Warblers** on the same day were equally noteworthy.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

It was mostly about passerine passage with the magnet that is Wanstead Flats dragging in a wealth of drift migrants. So, to summarise: **Pied Flycatcher**: recorded on ten dates with a high of six (24th); **Whinchat**: recorded on 15 dates with highs of seven (24th), six (29th) and ten (27th); **Wheatear**: a high of 12 (28th); **Tree Pipit**: recorded on an amazing 14 dates with highs of five (14th), four (17th) and six (21st); **Redstart**: recorded on ten dates with highs of seven (29th), four (30th) and six (31st). Add to this a **Wood Warbler** (7th), a smattering of **Spot Flies**, **Red Kite** and a **Great White Egret** (28th), the site had a great month. Most of these species cropped up at several other sites. **Pied Flies** were noted in the Ingrebourne Valley, KGV Reservoir, Bonnetts Wood, Thorndon CP, Alexander Lake, Hall Marsh, Walthamstow Wetlands and Dagnam Park on three dates. **Redstarts** were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley, Woodford Green, Thorndon CP and Dagnam Park on three dates while **Tree Pipits** were noted there and at Gallions Reach. **Whinchats** and **Spot Flies** were seen at many sites and a **Wood Warbler** was at Dagnam Park on the 20th. Three **Wrynecks** made brief appearances in the Ingrebourne Valley (24th), Bonnetts Wood (27th) and Walthamstow Wetlands (28th). The Wetlands also scored with two **Garganey** from the 15th and an **Osprey** on the 19th. A **Marsh Harrier** was a good record for Chingford Plain (2nd) and a **Honey Buzzard** drifted over Holyfield on the 5th while a **Short-eared Owl** was quite early over Beckton STW on the 21st. **Arctic Terns** were seen at Gallions Reach with six (1st) and 21 (25th) when two **Sandwich** and 17 **Common** were seen. Eleven **Sandwich** were off Beckton on the 24th. **Wood Sandpipers** were in the Ingrebourne on the 3rd and 10th with **Greenshank** at Dagenham Chase (9th) and **Turnstone** on the KGV (4th) being the pick of passage waders. The Chase also hosted its first ever **Cattle Egrets** with two on the 20th.

JULY 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wader passage trickled on with **Wood Sandpipers** on the 11th, 29th and 31st along with several **Ruff**, a good flock of **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Greenshank** and the odd **Snipe**, **Dunlin**, **Whimbrel** and **Ringed Plover**. **Common Sandpipers** were on the pools and foreshore and an impressive count of 40 was made on the 30th. **Garganey** were seen on the 28th and 30th and a single **Pintail** on the 30th was an early arrival. An adult **Cattle Egret** was seen on the 14th but did not linger and a **Spoonbill** arrived the same day and stayed until the 20th. Two **Great White Egrets** dropped in on the 19th and singles were then seen on the 21st and 27th. Our young **Marsh Harriers** are now independent of their parents but it seems unlikely that the second pair was successful this year. Young **Red Kites** were seen on several dates and one

even landed – two were seen together on the 29th while a **Hooded Crow X Carrion Crow** hybrid was a first on the 11th. **Hobbies** and **Peregrines** have been regular. A few **Yellow Wagtails** started to drift over but there were no other early passerine movements bar a few hirundines and **Swifts**. Down on the Thames the expected arrival of **Yellow-legged Gulls** was slow to get going but there were 67 by the 22nd and possibly as many as 180 by the 30th with several **Caspian Gulls** lurking amongst them. A few **Med Gull** sightings included a colour ringed German juvenile that had flown 550 miles at least to get here. Three **Sandwich Terns** were now expected July visitors on the 29th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

There were a few more waders moving through the area during the month and the Lee Valley attracted **Whimbrel** (7th and 14th), **Sanderling** (28th) and a few **Dunlin** and **Common Sandpipers** to the KGV Reservoir while Walthamstow Wetlands attracted plenty of the latter and a **Black-tailed Godwit**. A **Treecreeper** there on the 28th was the first for many years and a **Sandwich Tern** flew through the same day. Up to six **Green Sandpipers** and a **Little Ringed Plover** were at Dagenham Chase and **Wood** and **Common Sandpiper** and **Greenshank** on the 31st added to the tringa fest. More **Green Sands** were in the Ingrebourne Valley and a **Greenshank** was also here on the 14th. A **Wheatear** was good and early in Loughton on the 28th and a young **Cuckoo** flew over an Ardleigh Green garden on the 29th. A **Med Gull** was anting there on the 25th and there was a scattering of **Yellow-egged Gulls** along the Inner Thames with others on Wanstead Flats on several dates. A **Quail** was reported from Bedfords Park on the 10th.

JUNE 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Our final count of nesting waders for the reserve reached new highs of 82 pairs of both **Lapwing** and **Redshank**. When you add six pairs of **Oystercatcher** for our stretch of the Thames, two pairs of **Little Ringed Plovers** with broods and our very first successful pair of **Avocets** between two attempting pairs, a total of 92 pairs of waders in and around the reserve is a magnificent achievement. Our **Cattle Egret** left on the 3rd and an immature **Spoonbill** was seen on the 7th and 8th and one of the drake **Garganey** was seen again on the 3rd and 5th. **Med Gulls** were still being seen now and then and at least three **Marsh Harrier** chicks had fledged by mid month. Young **Peregrines** practiced and a **Red Kite** (13th) and occasional **Hobbies** were noted. **Bearded Tits** have had a great breeding season. Return wader passage was already underway by the 15th with **Green Sandpiper** predictably the first species back while three **Ringed Plovers** (19th), **Spotted Redshank** (20th and 24th), **Greenshank**, **Snipe** and a flurry of **Black-tailed Godwits** that included eight *limosa* on the 26th and 27th and 12 *icelandica* from the 30th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

June often throws up a surprise or two and a drake **Ring-necked Duck** at Seventy Acres from the 2nd to 15th was just that while the **Stone Curlew** on the KGV Reservoir on the 28th and 29th was equally unseasonal. The reservoir also held a drake **Scaup** from the 22nd, **Goldeneye** from the 29th and a late female **Greenland Wheatear** on the 1st. A few **Green Sandpipers** were noted from mid month with a first for Dagnam Park on the 27th and others in the Ingrebourne Valley where a female **Blue-headed Wagtail** was seen on the 19th. A **Curlew**

over Walthamstow Wetlands on the 25th was a typical summer passage bird but the **Kittiwake** at Beckton STW on the 10th was certainly not that. **Med Gulls** were seen here and at Blackshots and a **Great White Egret** was over the Mardyke on the 2nd.

MAY 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wader passage carried on in much the same vein as April with small numbers of **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Knot** (eight on 8th and 16th), **Whimbrel**, **Sanderling** (including nine on 17th and seven on 31st), **Grey Plover**, **Dunlin** and **Ringed Plover** (43 on 17th) moving through with odd **Greenshank**, **Turnstone** and peaks on the 17th of 12 **Common Sandpipers** and 13 **Ruff**. Two **Temminck's Stints** were seen for a short while on the 12th and the odd **Snipe** and **Green Sandpiper** were reported. A **Roseate Tern** on the river was our first spring bird ever and among the small numbers of **Common Terns** there were some good **Arctic Tern** days with 24 (8th), 38 (16th) and 28 (17th) being the highest counts. A **Little Tern** was seen on the 17th and there were eight **Blacks** on the 8th and singles on the 15th and 16th. A **White Stork** was seen over on the 23rd and a **Cattle Egret** that was picked up on the 2nd stayed all month with two present on the 20th. A breeding plumaged **Great White Egret** on the 2nd and 3rd was replaced by a winter one on the 6th while **Spoonbills** briefly dropped in on the 6th and 22nd. **Hobbies** peaked at 12 on the 7th before predictably dispersing and four **Red Kites** through on the 21st were notable and coincided with a mass movement through Kent. **Peregrine** sightings were mostly of immatures and the quartet of other expected raptors was seen every day. A **Short-eared Owl** was still around on the 14th and at least five male **Cuckoos** were using the site. A **Pink-footed Goose** was found with the **Greylags** on the 2nd and stayed until the 18th and the drake **Garganey** reappeared on the 17th and became two on the 20th. Two **Whinchats** were seen on the 7th and there were a few late **Wheatears** and two **Spotted Flycatchers** (12th and 17th) while a pair of foraging **Bullfinches** along the river wall on the 6th suggests that they are breeding again somewhere nearby.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

There were some good records of passage terns through the Lee Valley with two **Arctic** (5th) and three **Black** (7th) through Walthamstow Wetlands and four more **Blacks** through the KGV the same day with a single and two **Arctics** on the 9th. A single was at Seventy Acres Lake on the day in-between. The KGV Reservoir also had two **Turnstones** on the 15th and a **Whinchat** on the 22nd. While back at the Wetlands the drake **Garganey** reappeared on the 14th. Other **Whinchats** were noted in North Ockendon (two on 2nd), Fairlop Waters (6th), Waterworks NR (two on 7th), Ingrebourne Valley (7th and 9th) and Wanstead Park (three on 7th) while **Spotted Flycatchers** were back in two churchyards and migrants were noted on Wanstead Flats and in Harold Wood. Two singing **Wood Warblers** were picked up with males in Romford (10th) and South Woodford (26th).

Down on the Thames there was an **Osprey** over Gallions Reach (2nd) with **Great White Egret** and five **Arctic Terns** (18th) and three **Kittiwakes** (26th). Down river at Creekmouth there were two **Little** and two **Med Gulls**, two **Arctic Terns**, **Black Tern** and a **Whimbrel** on the 17th! Another **Great White Egret** was seen in the Mar Dyke (21st) and a **Spoonbill** flew over the Ingrebourne Valley (5th). **Red Kites** were very regular around Epping Forest from top to bottom with others in the north-east corner and at other semi-urban sites. A **Honey Buzzard**

was over Bedfords Park on the 18th. Three **Crossbills** were the first of the year over Ardleigh Green on the 24th and two **Quail** were put up from a path in Upminster on the 27th.

APRIL 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Spring was a little slow off the mark and to be honest, most of the attention was focused on the river rather than the marsh where the first **Common Tern** was seen on the 4th. **Sandwich Terns** were not far behind and the first two **Arctics** on the 10th were followed by several singles and then four on the 2nd and six on the 28th with a single **Black Tern** on the 19th. **Med Gulls** were an almost daily feature but the 87 seen on the 10th were completely unprecedented. Smaller numbers followed but 24 on the 19th and 20 on the 21st would both have previously been site records! Poor weather at the start of the month predictably brought down **Little Gulls** on their way north with 14 on the 8th and a superb 43 the next day. **Scoter** were also noted at the same time with a high of 22 on the 9th and four **Mergansers** and two early **Arctic Skuas** were seen the same day along with a scattering of early passage waders including three **Sanderling**, three **Grey Plover** and the first **Whimbrel**. **Knot** (13th) and **Greenshank** (15th) were additions followed by **Wood Sandpiper**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and **Spotted Redshank** in the last week. The last **Jack Snipe** was seen on the 9th and **Water Pipit** (13th) and **Pink-footed Goose** (from 29th) were reminders of past seasons.

A **White Stork** was much appreciated on the 12th and returned for further circuits but no touchdowns on the 16th and 20th and a **Cattle Egret** was rather bizarrely seen on the same two latter dates. Scarcer migrants were just that with **Redstarts** on the 9th, 11th and 18th, **Ring Ouzels** on the 18th and 25th. There were very few **Yellow Wagtails** or **Wheatears** but most of the commoner warblers were in good numbers including two **Grasshopper Warblers**; three male **Cuckoos** were in by the 18th with **Swifts** not far behind from the 24th. **Red Kites** drifted through on the 1st, 10th and 20th and a female **Merlin** was seen on several dates while the first **Hobby** was nice and early on the 7th. **Marsh Harriers** were well settled and the local **Ravens** became more regular as they fed growing young. One **Short-eared Owl** was still present on the 30th. All the dabblers were still present till late in the month and **Garganey** were seen on the 6th and a pair on the 17th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The Lee Valley was an expected focus for migration through the area and the KGV Reservoir was a regular draw (for permit holders). Five **Little Gulls** on the 1st were the forerunner for the 8th when 51 were counted with smaller numbers through to the 11th. The 8th also saw **Water Pipit**, **Black-necked Grebe** and a **Ring Ouzel** with eight **Scoter**, **Arctic Tern** and **Avocet** the next day. Six more **Scoter** were seen on the 10th when three more **Arctics** dropped in and two more were seen on the 28th. Five **Black Terns** were seen on the 19th and a single was seen on the 22nd and a **Little Tern** on the 24th! The drake **Smew** stayed till the 10th and **Goosander** and **Goldeneye** lingered but two **Mergansers** on the 10th were new arrivals. **Yellow** and **White Wagtails** were seen and a **Common Redstart** was found on the 16th. The Down Valley male **Scaup** remained at Walthamstow Wetlands and the site had a good run of birds with a drake **Garganey** on and off from the 16th, **Little Gulls** on five dates including 27 on the 8th, both **Black-tailed** and **Bar-tailed Godwits**, three **Sandwich Terns** (5th), a colour

ringed **Osprey** (8th), two **Black-necked Grebes** (24th) and a cracking male **Blue-headed Wagtail** with 19 **Yellows** on the 8th. Nine more **Little Gulls** were at **Holyfield Lake** (8th) and one of the two **Cattle Egrets** was seen at Hall Marsh on the 19th.

Great White Egrets were seen over Cely Woods (14th) and Wennington (20th) and the Rainham **White Stork** was over Wanstead Flats (16th). The Flats had daily **Redstart** sightings from the 2nd but there were three on the 10th and another the next day. **Ring Ouzels** were seen on the 11th and 21st with a **Whinchat** on the latter date. A singing **Wood Warbler** on the 29th was a great find. Other **Redstarts** were seen on both Walthamstow Marsh (3rd) and Wetlands (12th-13th), Nazeing (5th), Hainault Forest (13th), Fairlop Waters (14th) and Lakeside (15th) making it a notable spring for the species. A male **Black Redstart** sang in Brentwood (2nd-4th) and others were at Three Mills (5th) and Walthamstow Marsh (two on 14th). Further **Ring Ouzels** were noted at Great Warley (16th) and Sewardstone (23rd) with another in Beckton STW (7th-13th) and one at nearby Gallions Reach (14th). There were 22 **Scoter** off here on the 9th, **Jack Snipe** (7th), two **Arctic Terns** (14th), four **Brent Geese**, **Sandwich Tern** and eight **Med Gulls** (19th). The 10th saw 19 **Med Gulls** over Barking Bay as part of the huge influx into the South-East. An **Avocet** was a great find in the Ingrebourne (4th) and **Jack Snipe** (5th), two **Med Gulls** (10th) and a **Whinchat** (27th) added to a good month. There were over 20 **Red Kite** sightings, an **Osprey** over Gidea Park (29th) and local **Buzzards**, **Peregrines** and **Ravens** seemed to be faring well.

MARCH 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was seen until the 9th and then two were seen on the 27th so they may have even been new birds. **Med Gulls** and the odd **Caspian** were reported. At least eight **Marsh Harriers** were on site and putting on a great show and **Red Kites** were seen on the 2nd and 17th but the single **Short-eared Owl** only put in sporadic appearances. **Peregrines** were active with some great hunting action. There was some wader passage with the wintering **Ruff** being joined by four others and a little flurry of **Black-tailed Godwits** on their way to Iceland that reached 73 on the 12th. Several **Jack Snipe** and the first **Spotted Redshank** (17th) of the year were noted and a freshly arrived **Little Ringed Plover** on the 20th soon became two. Two **Spoonbill** paid an elusive visit on the 20th but there were no other rare herons. The first **Sand Martin** zipped through with **Wheatears** from the 16th, **Swallow** and **Yellow Wagtail** on the 30th and a **Sedge Warbler** from the 22nd which is our earliest ever. **Chiffchaffs**, **Blackcaps** and **Cetti's Warblers** were on territory by mid-month. Two **Black Redstarts** on the 23rd were part of this migrant arrival. **Lapwings** were already on the nest by the 22nd and the marsh is alive with them and noisy **Redshanks** while up on the landfill the first jangling **Corn Bunting** had returned.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Red Kites were literally everywhere and there were nearly 80 sightings across the area often of multiple birds, especially in the mid-Lee Valley and around the Hornchurch/Upminster area where 14 were counted moving through on the 23rd alone. Raptors were on form at Copped Hall at the top of Epping Forest where at least 15 **Kites** and 25 **Buzzards** were noted on the

25th along with **Merlin**, **Peregrine** and the eventual pinning down of a female **Hen Harrier** that had been eluding scrutiny all winter. **Ravens** were also seen here and over various Lee Valley sites. There was a real mix on seasons in March with the KGV Reservoir amply showcasing this with up to four **Black-necked Grebes** and a drake **Smew** all month along with two **Scaup** through to the 3rd and small numbers of **Goosander** and a peak of 55 **Goldeneye**. A **Rough-legged Buzzard** on the 17th was a top-notch patch find. **Common Scoter** (30th) and **Little Gulls** (three on 28th and four on 30th) dropped in and there was a good smattering of migrants with an almost Feb **Sand Martin** on the 1st, **Wheatear** (17th), **Yellow Wagtail** and **Sedge Warbler** (24th), **Black Redstart** and **Little Ringed Plover** (25th) and **Swallows** and **House Martin** (31st). At Walthamstow Wetlands the male **Scaup** remained all month and a **Little Ringed Plover** (19th) and four **Little Gulls** (31st) were seen. A **Cattle Egret** heading through on the 8th was the best find and undoubtedly one of the duo that had wintered in Cheshunt before heading over into Essex and onto Hall Marsh from the 4th. They roamed a little and one was also seen at Cornmill Meadows while another was seen over Romford on the 24th. Early **Hobbies** were seen over Wanstead Flats (29th) and Sewardstone (30th) and the Flats also hosted **Wheatear** (17th), **House Martin** (23rd) and a cracking drake **Garganey** (31st). A **White-fronted Goose** there on the 25th may have been one of the Holyfield Hall Farm trio that were still around on the 13th at least. There were further signs of winter with a few **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** heading north and **Brambling** suddenly appeared with a few singles and two nice groups of at least 30 in Ongar Park Wood and Hooks Marsh. Migrants were thinly scattered but there were some further early arrivals with **Willow Warbler** at Belhus Woods (8th), **Whitethroat** at Upminster (27th), **Common Tern** at Gallions Reach (23rd), **Ring Ouzel** at the Olympic Park (23rd) and **Swallow** at Copped Hall (25th). Gallions also nabbed a flying **Hoopoe** (24th) and a **Nordic Jackdaw** was a great garden bird in Hornchurch (22nd) while a **Woodlark** north over Upminster (30th) and a **Shag** over South Woodford were also rewards for garden skywatching.

FEBRUARY 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Gulls continued to be a firm feature throughout February with a **Kittiwake** and two **Little Gulls** on the 1st to get things started. The juvenile **Glaucous Gull** from the 26th January turned out to be a new bird and it stayed into March while a hulking second-winter bird was also present from the 12th-22nd. Five **Caspian Gulls** on the 6th was the peak count and several **Med Gulls** were reported. A **Great Egret** was seen briefly on the 17th with four more south on the 22nd and **Little Egret** numbers slowly increased too. **Avocets** remained in the mid thirties and up to four **Ruff** were seen along with the first returning **Oystercatchers**. A **Woodcock** was seen on the 6th. Four **White-fronted Geese** flew through late on the 7th and a drake **Goldeneye** on the 11th was the only new winter arrival. A **Merlin** was seen occasionally and **Red Kites** were seen on the 22nd and two on the 27th while at least six **Marsh Harriers** were noted along with several good **Buzzard** days but the remaining **Short-eared Owl** was only seen twice. **Bearded Tits** started to become tricky as the month drew on and the **Blackcaps** were still gorging on apples near the centre while **Water** and **Rock Pipit** numbers had started to drop off.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The KGV Reservoir **Scaup** flock became four and stayed into February with at least two staying all month. The male **Smew** was seen again on the 13th and **Goldeneye** peaked at 44 on the 23rd and **Goosander** at 24 on the 25th. Three **Black-necked Grebes** were found on the 21st and stayed into March while a **Med Gull** on the 10th was NFY along with a male **Marsh Harrier** through on the 25th. The drake **Scaup** stayed at Walthamstow Wetlands with six **Goosander** (11th) and a **Black-tailed Godwit** (14th) being notable there. There was a good spread of other **Goosanders** around with at least 22 between Seventy Acres Lake and Holyfield Lake, three pairs at Roding Valley Meadows, four in Weald Park, four at Connaught Water, five at Mollands Lane and three in Highams Park Lake. Conversely the only other **Smew** was a female at Seventy Acres. A drake **Ferruginous Duck** was popular on Holyfield Lake from the 6th-9th and a drake **Red-crested Pochard** was also seen at this time while three **Russian White-fronts** at the nearby Holyfield Hall Farm from the 15th were a good find. A single **Bittern** was seen at Seventy Acres with another in Warren Gorge and two in the Ingrebourne Valley while a **Great Egret** over the first site continues the upward trend in recent records. Likewise, **Ravens** were noted over Ardleigh Green and Orsett and **Buzzard** and **Red Kite** sightings predictably increased. A very early **Osprey** was over Upminster on the 23rd and local **Peregrines** were becoming active. Gulling produced a **Caspian** and four **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Thames Barrier Park (15th) and four more **Casps** and two **Med Gulls** at Ockendon Tip on the 17th. Two **Black Redstarts** were noted within Beckton STW and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was just outside at Creekside NR on the 22nd with another at Mollands Lane on the 11th. **Firecrests** were seen in Warley and Warren Gorge and **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were in Weald and Thorndon CPs.

A little survey to try and find out how many **Blackcaps** have been wintering in the area since Christmas has revealed a total of 48 males and 25 females so far from 48 different urban sites. I wonder how many more were out there this winter?

JANUARY 2019

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

There was little change in variety across the marsh in January other than the steady rise in water levels and a corresponding increase in wildfowl. **Wigeon** doubled to nearly 1,200 and **Pintail** broke the fifty mark which is unusual for the site. **Lapwing** remained at about 2,000 with occasional **Ruff** and **Golden Plover** sightings amongst them, **Avocet** reached a new site high of 70 on the 22nd and **Grey Plover**, **Green** and **Common Sandpiper**, **Turnstone** and **Jack Snipe** were all noted. Our **Short-eared Owls** were somewhat sporadic in their appearances while up to six **Marsh Harriers** continue to winter including the Norfolk tagged ZR immature. The same number of **Peregrines** are using the marsh along with **Buzzards** and occasional sightings of both male and female **Merlin**. A **Red Kite** on the 9th was the first for the year.

There was some good gulling to be had with several counts of four or five **Caspians**, adult **Med Gulls**, **Yellow-legs** and a hulking juvenile **Glaucous** from the 16th. The Erith **Bonaparte's Gull** did the decent thing and allowed itself to be seen from Coldharbour Point

on several dates from the 21st. A **Great Egret** flew through on the 24th but the **Ravens** have been only rarely seen. A solitary **Brent** was noted on a few dates and **Pink-foot** and **Egyptian** were also seen. A **Firecrest** was noted several times in the woodland and **Blackcaps** have been seen around the centre while the **Bearded Tits** have been showing very well on the trails.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The KGV Reservoir **Scaup** flock became four and a drake **Smew** was seen again from the 18th and up to three **Red Kites** were noted over towards Epping Forest while four **Ravens** visited on the 6th. Up to ten **Black-necked Grebes** have been on the adjacent Wm Girling and the drake **Scaup** remained on Walthamstow Wetlands all month. Up the Lee Valley there was still a pair of **Smew** and at least 16 **Goosanders** around the Seventy Acres complex and a drake **Red-crested Pochard** was found on Holyfield Lake on the 24th. **Goosander** sightings came from several other sites with up to five on Connaught Water, nine in Weald Park and a couple in the Roding Valley. The near adult **Caspian Gull** remained at Eagle Pond and two first-winters were seen on Wanstead Flats (from 19th) with others at Creekmouth and Fairlop Waters. A **Goldeneye** at the latter site on the 2nd was a good record. **Bitterns** were seen at Seventy Acres Lake, Warren Gorge and in the Ingrebourne Valley but were showy nowhere. The Ing Val had regular **Woodcock** and occasional **Brambling** sightings along with a **Red Kite** (9th). Other **Kites** were seen regularly in the north Epping Forest area. **Black Redstarts** were discovered wintering at Beckton and Upminster sewage works – both private sites but wintering **Firecrests** were thin on the ground with just singles in Wanstead Park and Warley but it was good to report that **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were noted at Highams Park Lake, Weald Park, Wanstead Park and Thorndon. A **Marsh Tit** in Valentines Park on the 26th was unexpected and will probably be the only area record this year...

Down on the Thames there were at least 370 **Black-tailed Godwits** wintering between Grays and Rainham along with five **Turnstones** and the shared **Avocet** flock. The Kent **Ravens** were seen over Grays on a couple of dates. **Ravens** were once again prospecting in the top of our recording area.

DECEMBER 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Water levels rose slowly and with them the numbers of **Wigeon**, **Teal**, **Snipe** and **Lapwing** in particular. A single **Barnacle Goose** and **Brent** were seen on and off but with such mild weather there was nothing incoming from the east. A minimum of 140 **Snipe** were counted and bobbing **Jack Snipe** were found on the 6th and 27th. Singles of **Ruff**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, **Green** and **Common Sandpiper** were noted and **Avocets** headed towards the 30 mark while the **Black-tailed Godwit** flock was spending more time up river although it did sometimes reach about 500. No more than three **Little Egrets** are on the Marsh and a **Great Egret** flew through on the 12th.

Caspian Gulls were still a feature with at least ten individuals seen including eight on the 11th and a **Med Gull** on the 2nd was the only other species of note. At least six **Marsh Harriers** are wintering including the green-tagged ZR male bred in Norfolk in 2018. **Buzzards** and

Peregrines have been daily and a **Merlin** made a couple of dashes through. Three each of **Short-eared** and **Barn Owl** have been seen but the **Ravens** have been rarely reported on our side of the Thames. **Bearded Tits**, **Cetti's Warblers** and **Chiffchaffs** were out on the trails with several **Blackcaps** around the centre.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The KGV Reservoir continued to hold some of the best winter wildfowl with two **Great Northern Divers** till the 2nd and **Slavonian Grebe** till the 16th. The pair of **Scaup** was joined by an immature on the 16th and a male **Smew** joined **Goosanders** on the 30th. At least six more **Goosanders** were regularly at Connaught Water with a couple at Walthamstow Reservoirs and up to 18 at Weald Park (26th). Eight were seen in the Seventy Acres complex of pits with an adult male and immature male **Smew** throughout. The male **Scaup** returned to Walthamstow for the winter and the site also had a very late **Reed Warbler** on the 10th and 11th. A **Bittern** was seen on Seventy Acres on the 12th. **Ravens** were seen over the KGV, Holyfield and Harold Hill and the Rainham **Marsh Harriers** strayed up into the Ingrebourne Valley. The only **Red Kite** was reported as over Theydon Garnon on the 9th. **Caspian Gulls** were seen at Thames Barrier Park (9th), Creekmouth (23rd), 1w Wanstead Flats (27th) and the Eagle Pond sub-adult on and off all month. A **Jack Snipe** was at West Thurrock Marshes (24th) and a few **Woodcock** were unearthed. **Firecrests** were seen in Highams Park and Wanstead Park and the **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was noted again at the latter site on the 3rd.

NOVEMBER 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The duo of **Cattle Egrets** stayed until the 4th and another single flew straight through on the 12th. I suspect there may be more winter sightings. Likewise the **Bittern** became almost regular in front of the Ken Barrett Hide and two immature **Grey Herons** fought just outside until one was drowned on the 22nd! The last **Spoonbills** of the year flew over on the 18th and a trio of **Great Egrets** headed low and west on the 20th. The Thames was fairly quiet but wader numbers did increase with over 1,000 and 500 **Black-tailed Godwit** by month end and a couple of **Jack Snipe** sightings. **Mergansers** were seen on the 15th, 17th, 20th and 28th with a **Scoter** (17th) also being noted. A **Shag** on the 27th and 28th was the first since 2012. **Caspian Gulls** arrived en masse after several early month sightings and at least 25 different individuals were painstakingly identified between the 27th and 29th. Four **Little Gulls** were noted on the 20th. There was a small influx of geese on the 23rd with a **Barnacle** and five **White-fronts**. The **Barnacle** stayed into December and a single juvenile **Brent Goose** was seen most days of the last week while three **Pinkfeet** were noted on the 25th. There were a few winter thrushes to be seen and at least ten **Water Pipits** were seen, outnumbering the **Rock Pipits**. A **Firecrest** was seen on two dates and a **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** along the river wall on the 10th was a remarkable record while the **Ravens** have only made sporadic appearances.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

A **Hoopoe** videoed in an Aveley garden on the 11th was a superb find but did not linger while late **Ouzels** were noted over Connaught Water (3rd) and on the KGV (1st). The reservoir hosted at least two **Great Northern Divers** for most of the month along with a pair of **Scaup**. A female **Smew** was seen on the 18th and a **Black-necked Grebe** on the 27th. South down the Lee Valley there were three **Scandinavian Rock Pipits** seen on Walthamstow Reservoirs on the 1st with **Scoter** (6th), **Slavonian Grebe** (10th), two **Mergansers** (17th) and **Avocet** (19th) being the precursor for the superb **Black-throated Diver** on the 24th-26th. Another female **Smew** was seen on Seventy Acres on the 19th and the **Bittern** was seen there occasionally. A **Great Egret** dropped in to Fairlop Waters (17th) and one was over Upminster on the 24th. A first winter **Caspian Gull** was seen on Wanstead Flats from the 4th and the fourth winter returned to Eagle Pond from the 25th with another first winter also in Leyton on the 26th. Further birds were seen at Thames Barrier Park and Creekmouth with the former of these two sites also hosting a juvenile **Eider** on the 23rd which had been seen earlier heading that way from Beckton. Both **Med Gull** and **Kittiwake** were also noted at Creekmouth on the 19th. **Brent** and **Pink-footed Geese** were logged at Gallions Reach on the 18th with three more **Brent** there on the 25th. The Rainham **White-fronts** flew over Upminster on the 23rd. Two **Cattle Egrets** flew over Wanstead Flats on the 4th while the Rainham birds were still present and two **Raven** were seen in Epping forest along with a couple of **Hawfinch** sightings. **Firecrests** were seen at several sites and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was in the Mardyke on the 2nd while **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were seen at Thorndon CP and Wanstead Park.

OCTOBER 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

October got off to a good start with a **Cattle Egret** arriving on the 4th which was joined by a second from the 20th. A **Spoonbill** was seen on the 11th and the **Bittern** returned for the winter on the 20th but was typically elusive. With predominately westerly winds, it was quite hard work for finding diurnal migrants but a few **Redwing**, **Fieldfare**, **Starlings**, **Skylarks** and finches were noted as the month wore on. **Lesser** and **Mealy Redpolls** were seen on the 20th with **Woodlark** the same day but the only **Ring Ouzel** was on the 18th while **Tree Sparrows** coasted with two on 24th and three on 26th. **Rock** and **Water Pipits** returned for the winter with at least seven of the latter from the 7th and a single **Black Redstart** was seen briefly on the 12th. **Jackdaws** were moving the next day with 306 west – a passage noted across London and the **Ravens** made occasional visits. The Thames had some movement at last with late terns on the 6th when 46 **Arctic**, five **Common** and two **Black** were seen and 11 **Sandwich** were seen the following day. A very late **Arctic** was noted on the 29th. A **Bonxie** was seen on the 7th and several **Caspian Gulls** were seen along with a **Little Gull** on the 28th. This was a good day to be keeping an eye on the river with five **Goosander**, **Goldeneye** and a **Great Northern Diver** all seen. Two **Mergansers** on the 11th and **Scoters** on the 7th, 15th and 17th added interest along with a **Gannet** (10th) and the first three **Brents** (19th). However, it was raptors that stole the month from the **Cattle Egrets** with a **Rough-legged Buzzard** across the river on Dartford Marsh on the 30th being visible from the Centre and resulting in two juvenile **Hen Harriers** being watched moving across to our side. The following day the Kent **Rough-leg** eventually moved off north over the Reserve but not before a second bird had also gone through along with the two ringtails and a male **Hen Harrier**. Add to that eight different **Marsh**

Harriers, eight **Buzzard**, two **Peregrine**, a **Merlin**, five **Kestrel**, three **Sparrowhawks**, **Short-eared** and **Barn Owls**; it was a raptor day to remember for the site.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Wanstead Flats once again came up trumps with a **Rustic Bunting** found on the 16th. It stayed until the 21st and drew a crowd being only the third LNHS record and the second for Essex after a gap of 52 years. A **Barn Owl** there on the 20th was almost as popular, being the first for 24 years! **Ring Ouzels** were seen on the 5th, 11th, 13th and 27th with late **Spotted Flycatcher** (1st), **Redstart** (7th) and **Whinchat** (16th) adding interest. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found on the 16th too along with the first of two **Short-eared Owls** while **Water Pipit** (21st), **Jack Snipe** (23rd), **Great Egret** (9th and 24th) and 836 **Fieldfare** (27th) rounded off a superb month. Other **Short-eared Owls** were seen at Sewardstone (3rd) and Fairlop Waters CP (27th), while garden sky-watching produced two more over Woodford Green on the 18th and 26th with an **Osprey** over on the 7th. A **Black** and **Red Kite** double at Dagnam Park on the 10th was a great patch day especially with the **Yellow-browed Warbler** also seen there and another **YBW** was heard at Fairlop Waters on the 15th. **Black Redstarts** were seen in West Thurrock and on the KGV Reservoir where two birds put on a show and eight **Goosanders**, two **House Martin**, **Ring Ouzel** and **Kittiwake** made for an exceptional late autumn day there on the 28th. The only **Bittern** reported was from Seventy Acres Lake while a **Great Egret** was seen going west over the Ingrebourne Valley (9th) and took just 22 minutes to get to Wanstead. Others were seen at Blackshots (5th) and coming out of Warren Gorge (19th) with both the Rainham **Cattle** and **Little Egrets**. A **Richard's Pipit** headed over there during the same vis mig watch. **Ravens** were seen around Kelevdon Hatch with some regularity and another pair were at Netherhall on the 13th. A few **Brambling**, **Siskin** and **Chaffinch** were noted along with good numbers of early **Fieldfare** and **Redwings** and **Hawfinches** were seen over Upminster (three on 29th) and Woodford Green (19th). Down on the Thames there were two **Caspian Gulls** at the Thames Barrier Park on the 21st and Gallions Reach had some good bird days with **Bonxie** (7th), **Little Gull** (15th) and five **Goosander**, **Goldeneye**, **Merganser** and **Arctic Tern** on the 28th.

SEPTEMBER 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

September was mostly about the Thames with the marsh itself still being incredibly dry. Amongst the tern species **Arctic** was surprisingly the most numerous with at least 145 up river including high counts of 43 (21st) and 36 (22nd). **Common Terns** were actually quite scarce and a handful of **Sandwich** and singles of **Black** (4th) and **Roseate** (23rd) made for some good days. There were several **Med** and **Caspian Gull** sightings and a **Little Gull** was seen on the 21st. An **Arctic Skua** was seen on the 5th and four lumbering **Bonxies** loafed on the river on the 23rd. The following day four juvenile **Gannets** made their way up towards the City following the A13! **Great Egrets** were seen on the 6th, 11th and 28th and another immature **Spoonbill** was seen on the 25th.

Waders were largely confined to the Thames with two **Knot** (12th), **Little Stint** (14th-17th) being the highlights although the **Pectoral Sandpiper** found with two **Ruff** on the 23rd on the freshly wet Tringa Pool was popular until the 30th. Wildfowl were scarce with a couple of

Pintail and **Wigeon** arriving but six **Pinkfeet** high and west on the 23rd were a surprise. A young male **Merlin** was seen on the 8th with a female on the 17th and 18th. Juvenile **Hobbies** were seen till mid-month and likewise young **Peregrine** were making more frequent visits. At least four **Marsh Harriers** were floating around including a Norfolk wing-tagged youngster and an **Osprey** was seen on the 22nd. **Buzzard** passage was noted on four days with 11 (1st), 10 (6th), 16 (15th) and 26 (29th). The **Ravens** started to visit again and the first **Short-eared Owl** was seen on the 25th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The Wanstead Flats **Red-backed Shrike** lingered until the 7th but it was generally quiet with **Redstarts** on the 5th, 6th and two on the 7th, **Tree Pipit** (8th) and 265 **Meadow Pipits** (22nd) being the highlights amongst a smattering of warblers, **Whinchats** and **Spotted Flycatchers**. The quartet of Rainham **Gannets** on the 24th flew over the City of London Cemetery and a **Yellow-browed Warbler** (29th) was an excellent early season find. **Pied Flycatchers** were seen on Walthamstow Marsh (two on 3rd) and in the Ingrebourne Valley (1st) where **Tree Pipit** (16th) and **Red Kite** (19th) were also noted. A **Redstart** was seen at Dagenham Chase (2nd) and Warren Gorge did well with **Wryneck** (7th) and **Ring Ouzel** (25th). **Firecrests** were seen in Dagnam Park, Highams Park and Warley and there were **Whinchats** and **Spotted Flycatchers** reported from a good number of sites. Early **Redwings** were noted over the Mardyke on the 10th where a **Great Egret** continued to make sporadic appearances with sightings on the 3rd and 10th and two on the 7th. Another was touring the Lee Valley and was noted over Walthamstow Reservoirs (4th) and Wm Girling Reservoir (30th) while there were also two records from Gallions Reach in Beckton on the 2nd and 6th. Some notable tern movements were had at the latter site with 30 **Black** and three **Littles** on the 1st, regular small numbers of **Sandwich Terns** and good counts of 20 **Arctic** on the 12th and 27 on the 16th. A **Little Gull** was also seen (2nd) and a juvenile **Gannet** headed up river (24th) while **Ospreys** were noted on the 23rd and 30th. A Black-necked Grebe was on the KGV all month and a **Garganey** took up residence in the relief channel from the 15th. Four **Wood Sandpipers** through Walthamstow reservoirs on the 6th were noteworthy.

AUGUST 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Waders were, as expected, an August mainstay although passage was light in the generally settled conditions. **Wood Sandpipers** were seen on the 1st and 31st and twos of **Little Stint** (27th) and **Curlew Sandpiper** (29th) and a single **Knot** (3rd) amongst a smattering of **Dunlin**, **Ruff**, **Greenshank** and **Ringed Plover**. **Black-tailed Godwits** peaked at 84 on the 30th. It was quiet for terns on the Thames with very few **Commons** but several **Sandwich** including five on the 25th and a high of 21 **Arctics** in two groups on the 15th. A single **Black** was seen on the 20th and the first autumn **Little Gull** on the 25th. **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked at 79 (9th) and four **Caspian Gulls** were seen on the 13th with singles on several other dates while juvenile **Med Gulls** were seen almost daily from mid month. With the marsh largely dry, our juvenile **Marsh Harriers** dispersed but the adults lingered and an **Osprey** was seen on the 31st. Duck numbers were low with just a single **Garganey** (13th), of note. A **Glossy Ibis** was seen briefly on the 9th and a **Great Egret** dropped in on the 12th. The first **Whinchats** were seen on the

3rd but passerine passage was slow with just a couple of **Wheatears** and a few **Yellow Wagtails** moving, a couple of **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Pied Flycatchers** on the 3rd and 7th. **Tree Pipits** were seen on the 17th with two on the 18th and a few migrant **Willow Warblers** were noted.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Pied Flycatcher was the passage passerine of the month with at least 16 recorded in the area with 12 sites getting lucky. **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Whinchats** were well spread but there were only a couple of **Redstarts** seen at Wanstead Flats (13th) and Fairlop (24th). The Flats had **Tree Pipits** on the 4th and nearby Leyton on the 6th and 14th. **Wood Warbler** is a very scarce passage bird nowadays so to have four was exceptional. The first and last were in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 1st and 26th and Bedfords Park (6th) and Dagnam Park (8th) scored the other two. A **Wryneck** was seen at Warren Gorge (31st) but it was the **Red-backed Shrike** on the Flats from the 28th that drew the crowds. An **Alpine Swift** with three **Commons** on the 2nd over Gidea Park was a bonus for some garden time and a **Nuthatch** was out of place on Walthamstow Marsh on the 7th. **Great Egrets** were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley on 12th and on the KGV on 10th where the **Black-necked Grebes** reached three by the 18th. A **Scoter** and two **Turnstones** were seen there on the 16th. A **Spoonbill** over Harold Park was a surprise on the 22nd and a perched **Raven** in Dagnam Park on the 24th was equally appreciated. Inland wader passage was slow but **Green Sandpipers** were in usual haunts and a **Black-tailed Godwit** on the Flats on 4th was somewhat incongruous. Down on the Thames an **Osprey** was seen at Gallions Reach on 25th and the next few days saw a good passage of tern that was not mirrored down river with 42 **Arctics**, 400 **Commons**, 44 **Blacks**, 19 **Sandwich** and three **Little**s noted!

JULY 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The adult and immature **Spoonbill** from late June lingered into July with both birds until the 3rd and just the youngster till the 6th. Amazingly a new immature arrived on the 12th for two days. **Little Egrets** peaked at 46 and a melanistic juvenile **Grey Heron** turned a few heads. Wader passage was confined to Aveley Pool as the rest of the reserve was now dry and **Black-tailed Godwits** steadily rose towards 60 along with two families of **Little Ringed Plover**, three **Ruff** and a few *tringas* that included a **Wood Sandpiper** on the 22nd and 23rd and rarity of the year on the 27th when a juvenile **Marsh Sandpiper** was found. It lingered until early on the 29th before heading downriver to RSPB Cliffe Pools. This was the first on the site for 55 years... The **Grasshopper Warblers** went quiet again by the end of the first week and an early **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen on the 5th. I am pleased to report that once again a pair of **Marsh Warblers** was present during the breeding season (in an area with no public access) and both pairs of **Marsh Harriers** brought off three young apiece. A single **Red Kite** was seen on the 14th and a **Raven** was back on the 21st. Several different **Caspian Gulls** were noted along the Thames including the first 2018 juveniles anywhere in the UK while **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked at 42 on the 18th along with several sightings of juvenile **Med Gulls**.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

An immature **Spoonbill** in the Ingrebourne valley on the 10th and 11th was a great patch first and a **Whimbrel** through there on the 29th was equally notable. The KGV Reservoir continued its good run with two male **Scaup** (from the 6th), five **Scoter** (8th), a high of 21 **Common Sandpipers** (20th), **Turnstones** (21st and 27th) and a **Little Stint** (31st). Five **Black Terns** were seen on the 26th with singles on the 27th and 31st while juvenile **Med Gulls** were noted on several dates. Down the Lee Valley there were 21 **Black-tailed Godwits** on Walthamstow Reservoirs on the 20th and a **Wood Sandpiper** spent three days from the 16th on the relief channel of the Wm Girling. A **Sandwich Tern** overflowed there on the first date. Down on the Thames the **Bonaparte's Gull** was at Creekmouth on the 1st and there was a steady increase of **Yellow-legged Gulls** at Thames Barrier Park with up to a dozen by the 16th including many immaculate juveniles. Several **Med Gulls** and a 3cy **Caspian Gull** were also seen there. Fifteen **Common Sandpipers** were seen at Gallions Reach (13th) and others were up the Lee at Bow Creek. Another juvenile **Med Gull** was on Wanstead Flats on the 7th and the nearby Park held a record 18 **Little Egrets** on the 22nd. The Warren Gorge colony contained 61 birds at roost.

JUNE 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

June is family time on the reserve and it looks like we have had another record-breaking breeding year for **Lapwing** and **Redshank** and duck broods have also been phenomenal. There was some late 'spring' wader passage with **Curlew Sandpiper** (1st), **Grey Plover** (5th) and **Turnstone** and four **Dunlin** (8th) and by the 22nd the first **Snipe**, **Green Sandpiper** and **Black-tailed Godwit** were already on their way back. **Marsh Harriers** are doing well and there were several **Red Kite** sightings along with a couple of 1st summer **Hobbies**. The **Barn Owls** came out to hunt on the Late Night Openings and two **Short-eared Owls** on the 22nd were odd with no sightings prior or since. The odd **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen on the river with an adult **Med** on the 18th and a pair of **Common Terns** seems to be nesting. An adult **Spoonbill** dropped in on the 14th before another full adult arrived on the 24th being joined from the 27th into July by an immature. A **Bee-eater** was heard on the 28th but unsurprisingly not seen.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The now resident female **Smew** lingered on Seventy Acres till at least the 5th and further down the Lee Valley a pair of superb **Long-tailed Ducks** at Walthamstow Reservoirs (21st) drew admirers. The Crossness **Bonaparte's Gull** got to the Essex side on the 25th and **Med Gulls** were noted over Grays and Beckton. Sixteen pairs of **Little Egret** nested successfully in Warren Gorge and **Grey Partridges** were encouragingly seen in the Ingrebourne Valley, Aveley and near Upminster. **Red Kites** were recorded almost daily.

MAY 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Unsurprisingly passage waders were a big feature of May with a smattering of **Sanderling**, **Grey Plovers**, **Whimbrels**, **Greenshank** and **Ruff** in the early days before the first of six **Wood Sandpipers** on the 10th and a smart **Curlew Sandpiper** on the 18th. However, things got going from the 24th into early June when there was a late surge in northbound birds. An amazing 187 **Ringed Plover**, 42 **Dunlin**, 34 **Sanderling**, 37 **Grey Plover**, nine **Turnstone**, two **Bar-tailed Godwit**, two **Ruff** and another **Curlew Sandpiper** were counted. An immature **Spoonbill** lingered from the 11th till 20th and an adult arrived on the 27th and stayed till 30th. The Thames was fairly quiet with the **Iceland** and two **Caspian Gulls** till 6th and a **Common Scoter** on the 11th. A **Black Tern** was seen on the 2nd and three **Littles** were noted on the 7th but it was the 21st that was memorable with 29 **Black** and two **White-winged Blacks** moving north. Three more **Blacks** were seen on the 27th and two **Sandwich** and the odd **Arctic** were seen. **Marsh Harriers** were looking settled and there was a peak of 18 **Hobbies** along with a couple of **Kite** sightings and a **Honey Buzzard** on the 22nd. The last **Whinchat** was noted on the 4th and single **Wheatears** were seen throughout the month and a **Spotted Flycatcher** on the 25th was the last hoped for arrival. **Bearded Tit** broods were out and it feels like another good breeding season for **Lapwing**, **Redshank** and wildfowl. Drakes of **Pintail**, **Wigeon** and **Teal** were noted but it was the **Mandarin** on the 28th which took the rarity podium being only the third record! A fly-through **Turtle Dove** on the 31st was only the second this spring.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

May was relatively quiet with the continued increase in **Red Kites** often dominating daily sightings. A late **Osprey** was seen over Ongar Park Wood on the 28th. There were still a few passage waders and terns to be seen with a late flurry of **Sanderlings**, **Turnstones** and **Black Terns** through the Lee Valley Reservoirs with ten of the latter on the 24th being notable. Six more were off Grays the next day and seven **Arctic** and two **Littles** were seen at Gallions Reach on 7th. The KGV also had another **Little Tern** on the 6th and two more **Scoter** on the 10th before relocating to the Wm Girling on the 13th. **Whinchats** were noted at Gallions Reach (1st) and on Wanstead Flats (2nd) and the latter site had **Redstart** (1st), **Tree Pipit** (3rd) and the first local **Spotted Flycatcher** of the year. A couple of pairs were soon back at traditional locations. Similarly, scarce birds included **Turtle Doves** in the Mardyke and at North Weald Common, a **Quail** out on Orsett Fen (20th) and **Grasshopper Warblers** reeling at four sites. The now resident female **Smew** was loitering with the intent to summer on Friday Lake!

APRIL 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The **Great Egret** from late March continued into April and strutted around until the 15th and was a great accompaniment to the first proper spring arrivals. A **Black-necked Grebe** spent six days from the 12th on the pools and was the first to stay more than a day while **Ring Ouzels** put on a great showing with 11 seen over four dates including a record five on the 19th. The 14th saw the arrival of the first of four **Grasshopper Warblers** as well as **Hobby** and a **Hawfinch** and the two **Tree Pipits** that day followed two on the 12th and another on the 26th. **Yellow Wagtails** were in short supply and **Wheatears** dribbled through apart from the 28th when 19 were seen. **Whinchats** were caught up in the end move with five from the 24th. A **Redstart** was seen on the 17th and a **Red-rumped Swallow** briefly on the 26th was a most welcome addition to three site lists and was part of the first proper hirundine push of the year.

The first **Swift** arrived the day before. **Arctic** and **Sandwich Terns** were seen on several dates with the usual numbers of **Common Terns** and **Med Gulls** that were moving back into the Thames with regular sightings of adults in pairs loafing up and down. Three **Iceland Gulls** on the 14th included the 2cy bird seen all winter and it was still around as we headed into May. Two **Arctic Skuas** on the 8th were the first for several years. **Caspian** and **Little Gull** (7th) and several **Kittiwakes** (including ten on the gloomy 9th) were noted and the latter date also saw a record 42 **Scoter** on the river along with a pair of **Goosander**. Seven more **Scoter** were noted on the 14th. There was a good assortment of waders to be seen with **Jack Snipe** till the 15th, up to 12 **Ruff**, **Spotted Redshank**, **Whimbrel** from the 6th with 19 on the 28th and seven **Bar-tailed Godwit** and 21 **Grey Plover** (11th). **Redshank** and **Lapwing** numbers already suggest an increase in breeding pairs. Double **Red Kites** were seen on the 21st and 25th and two pairs of **Marsh Harriers** are looking settled. There was the traditional spring **Buzzard** movement with a peak count of 35 north on the 14th. After basically no **Short-eared Owls** all winter it was odd to still have them all month and into May. A **Turtle Dove** was seen on the 29th and at least four male **Cuckoos** are patrolling the marsh.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The **Little Bunting** at Walthamstow Reservoirs stayed until the 5th and was singing over its last few days but the site was not yet done with visitors and a **Hoopoe** on the 6th and 7th set the pulses racing once again. Other notable records were an **Osprey** (2nd), two **Scoter** (8th-9th), **Sandwich Tern** (9th), **Ring Ouzel** and six **Brambling** (11th-13th), **Brent Goose** (11th), **Whinchat** (20th) and another superb find in the shape of a **Black Kite** (24th). A few **Arctic Terns** were also noted here and this was reflected elsewhere in the Lee Valley with the KGV holding them on several dates from the 4th. Six **Sandwich Terns** were there on the 6th with two more **Scoter** on the 8th and 12th and ten on the 10th. A **Red-throated Diver** was a great find on the 10th but it did not linger long. The male **Smew** stayed until the 18th and the male **Scaup** till the 13th. The 19th was a four tern day with a **Little Tern** new in. Two were present the following day. A **Garganey** was seen on the 22nd and **Little Gulls** were present on seven dates including 14 on the 14th. Away from water birds there were two **Black Redstart** sightings and one of **Common Redstart** (22nd), another flyover **Hawfinch** (15th) the same day as an early **Turtle Dove**, multiple **Wheatears** and **White Wagtails** and **Whinchats** on the 13th and 18th. A **Red-rumped Swallow** was a superb find amongst the throng of other species at Nazeing from the 28th-30th. The female **Smew** remained at Friday Lake throughout and **Ospreys** were over Sewardstone (5th) and the Olympic Park (10th) with another over West Horndon (18th). The Olympic Park also hosted **Black Redstart**, **Whinchat** and **Ring Ouzel** (22nd). The **Pink-footed Goose** was at Holyfield Marsh all month with another at Mayesbrook Park on overlapping dates. Wanstead Flats was **Ouzel** "Central" with six days and possibly 11 birds involved. A supporting cast of **Redstart** (5th), **Black Kite** (6th), four **Red Kite** (23rd) amongst other singles, **Brambling** (11th), **Tree Pipit** (13th), **Caspian Gull** (17th) and two **Whimbrel** (27th) make for good patch birding. A piebald **Ring Ouzel** was seen on the 19th at North Weald where a **Purple Heron** was noted briefly on the 20th. Another **Ring Ouzel** was at Orsett Fen (8th) and two were recorded at night over Chafford Hundred on the 13th. A **Hawfinch** was seen in Leyton (2nd) and the single reappeared in the Ingrebourne Valley (6th) where **Tree Pipit** (12th), **Redstart** (17th), **Garganey** (21st) and an impressive passage of nine **Red Kites** were noted (21st). Nearby Dagenham Chase had a **Tree Pipit** (11th), reeling **Grasshopper Warbler**, **Med Gull** (12th) and the first two **Little Gulls** for many years (15th). The first **Nightingale** was at The Warren in Epping Forest on the 11th with the Lee Valley sites following quickly on and another was at Belhus Woods CP on the 19th when **Redstart** and **Woodlark** were also recorded. A **Tree Pipit** was over Upminster on the 14th and a **Black Redstart** was in a garden in Woodford Green on the 13th with the first local **Swifts** in Loughton

on the 20th. Another **Black Redstart** was at Gallions Reach (3rd) and the site held **Ring Ouzel** and one of the local Iceland Gulls on the 17th and eight **Med Gulls** the following day. An **Arctic Tern** was at Roding Valley Meadows NR (6th) with another at Fairlop Waters CP on the 11th. **Red Kites** were a daily feature with some eastern area sites recording multiple birds on several days. This is nothing but encouraging but just how many are involved is anyone's guess.

MARCH 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

With two cold spells in March it was not surprising that the birds had a more wintery feel with the intense cold of the 2nd pushing waders up river resulting in unseasonal **Knot** and **Bar-tailed Godwits** along with at least eight **Jack Snipe** and a smattering of **Golden** and **Grey Plovers**. Similar weather on the 18th gave the same count of **Jacks** and other singles were seen during the month. A **Spotted Redshank** arrived on the 23rd and the first **Whimbrel** was seen on the 30th while **Lapwings** were trying to incubate! Single **Brent** (4th) and **Pink-footed Geese** were seen (5th) and three **White-fronts** on the 18th were followed by 25 heading high and east on the 26th. Four **Scoter** on the 25th were the first of the year and the adult **Spoonbill** on the 12th tried to kid us that it was spring. The **Bittern** was seen on five widely separated dates and a **Great Egret** took up residence from the 28th. There was plenty of gull action with ten **Little Gulls** on the 5th and six more on the 17th along with several **Meds** and three sightings of a juvenile **Iceland**. There were a couple of **Caspian** sightings but it was the unprecedented passage east of 128 **Kittiwakes** on the 13th that surprised everybody. Thirty more were seen on the 16th and a single on the 25th. To cap off all this larid action an adult **Ring-billed Gull** was seen briefly on the 23rd. Two **Sandwich Terns** were early (and in a snow storm) on the 17th with a single on the 26th. There were still plenty of wintering duck around including an interesting female **Wigeon** and a female **Garganey** was seen on the 30th. **Marsh Harriers** were putting on a great show and **Red Kites** were noted on five days. A female **Merlin** was seen on the 3rd and an **Osprey** west on the 29th was a pleasant surprise. A **Short-eared Owl** reappeared on the 13th and up to three made occasional visits into April. Migrants were hard to come by and after two **Wheatears** on the 16th we had to wait till the 25th for another. A **Little Ringed Plover** was heard on the 16th and seen on the 24th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The **Little Bunting** continued to oblige at Walthamstow Reservoirs all month and the **Serin** reappeared from the 6th-8th while the male **Scaup** remained. With many displaced waders around the sites added **Knot** and **Bar-tailed Godwit** and got a **Little Ringed Plover** on the 15th. The first **Sand Martins** here were on the 13th with a **Wheatear** on the 16th and a **Woodlark** the following day but it was the male **White-spotted Bluethroat** on the 23rd that drew yet another crowd! Up Valley the KGV continued to host both the male **Scaup** and **Smew** along with up to 21 **Goosanders** while a male **Merganser** from the 6th-11th proved popular. A new **Slavonian Grebe** arrived on the 16th and the **Scaup** was joined by two females on the 4th with one till the 11th. **Dunlin**, **Ruff**, and **Avocet** were all noted here and two **Little Gulls** danced on the 18th while the first **Wheatear** was seen on the 30th. **Oystercatchers**, **Curlew**, **Grey Plover** and several **Woodcock** were noted in the valley during the displacement and single **Pink-feet** were noted at Sewardstone (9th) and Holyfield (from the 23rd) and a **White-front** was at Netherhall on the 16th. The female **Smew** remained on Friday Lake throughout. The **Glaucous Gull** was seen again at Leyton tip on the 1st and 19th and the

Caspian Gull was on nearby Leyton Flats till the 16th. A **Marsh Tit** at Holyfield on the 5th was the first mid-Valley record in several years. Away from the Lee Valley, Fairlop Waters joined in with the **Pink-foot** action with a single from the 10th-12th and had a great day on the 3rd with **Great Northern Diver** and **Caspian Gull**. There was more good gull action down on the Thames where two of the latter were noted at West Thurrock Marshes (17th), with three at Creekside LNR (18th). The latter site also regularly hosted up to two juvenile **Iceland Gulls** and four **Yellow-legged Gulls**. What was presumably the Leyton **Glauc** was over the Olympic Park on the 18th along with a **Sandwich Tern**! Another **Sani** was noted at Gallions Reach the same day while **Med Gulls** were seen on Wanstead Flats, Ardleigh Green and at Roding Valley Meadows NR. Three **Knot** at West Thurrock Marshes were notable on the 17th but the **Purple Sandpiper** on the Grays foreshore on the 18th-21st was a superb find. Hard weather pushed **Jack Snipe** out and they were noted at Fairlop, the Ingrebourne Valley, Dagenham Chase, Upminster and four were on Orsett Fen on the 3rd. There was also a good scattering of **Woodcock** too and an **Oystercatcher** and **Brent Goose** over Ardleigh Green on the 17th in the snow were remarkable. The 15th saw several local birders picking up migrating **Coot** for a couple of hours after dark. **Hawfinches** were now down to mainly singles with Woodford Green, Creekside LNR, Dagenham Chase and Wanstead Park recording them while two were still in Thorndon CP on the 6th. A **Great Egret** was seen over Wanstead Flats on the 24th and three **Wheatears** here on the 16th followed the first local one in Upminster on the 14th. The same site also scored the first **Sand Martins** on the 10th as well as the Rainham **Spoonbill** as it departed up the Mardyke Valley on the 12th. A **Cuckoo** was heard at Dagenham Chase on the 22nd and 24th and **Firecrests** persisted at four sites. **Red Kites** were reported almost daily with 13 sites noting birds and the Rainham **Osprey** of the 29th was seen over Romford just a few minutes later.

FEBRUARY 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

February carried on where January left off and it was a quiet month with little incoming in the predominate westerly airflow. **Black-tailed Godwits** peaked at 312 and **Avocet** at a new high of 37. The first **Oystercatchers** were back piping on the 20th and three **Turnstone** were roosting on the Barges on the 25th. **Snipe** numbers were low but single **Jacks** were noted on the 14th and 28th. Gulling produced a few **Yellow-legs**, **Med** (17th) and **Caspians** on the 12th, 26th and 27th while the juvenile **Iceland** was noted again on the 10th and 12th. A male **Goldeneye** (7th) was the only notable winter duck. At least five **Marsh Harriers** were on site and the **Merlin** was seen again on the 16th while our third **Red Kite** of the year was seen on the 22nd as it cruised over the car park. The **Bullfinches** and **Firecrest** remained in the woodland and there were sporadic **Bearded Tit** sightings. A **Black Redstart** was seen briefly on the 12th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The **Little Bunting** remained a draw at Walthamstow Reservoirs all month with a male **Serin** reported there on the 10th and 17th. The male **Scaup** remained there throughout and four **Red-crested Pochards** were seen on the 13th. The male **Scaup** and **Smew** also remained on the KGV with up to 18 **Goosanders** and the two **Slavonian Grebes** – one of which stayed till the 9th. Two **Smew** were still in the mid-Lee Valley and a **Bittern** was seen again at Seventy Acres

after a month's absence. Four more **Goosander** were at Weald Park (4th) and three were on the Roding Valley Meadows NR on the 21st. The 3w **Caspian Gull** remained at Eagle Pond with new birds at Creekmouth (adult on 10th) and at Thames Barrier Park (1w on 12th). The latter site also hosted a cracking adult **Ring-billed Gull** for 20 minutes on the 11th. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was around the Walthamstow Filterbeds from the 23rd- 26th before relocating back to the Orient Way Tip for the next two days while juvenile **Icelands** were seen at roost at Nazeing on the 3rd and 4th and at Creekmouth on the 24th. Adult **Med Gulls** were seen at Dagenham Chase, Mayesbrook Park, the Filterbeds and Gallions Reach where two **Kittiwakes** were also seen on the 28th. When the weather changed on the 24th there was a noticeable influx of **Lapwings** and **Fieldfares** heading west including 860 of the former over Wanstead Flats on the 28th alone. A flock of 22 **Scaup** was noted off Gallions Reach on the 28th with **Jack Snipe** and **Sanderling** the same day. A flock of 46 **Avocet** was at West Thurrock Marshes on the 24th and another **Jack Snipe** was seen on Wanstead Flats on the 27th while two **Woodcock** were at Fairlop Waters (10th). **Red Kites** were seen over Upminster (7th) and several sites in Epping Forest and the Lee Valley including three over Seventy Acres on the 12th. And the two **Long-eared Owls** continued to winter out of harm's way. A **Great Egret** was seen leaving Warren Gorge on the 1st. A superb 220 **Siskin** were counted at Hooks Marsh (19th) and 212 **Goldfinch** roosted in a Romford garden on the 2nd. **Hawfinches** still to be found at Thorndon CP with up to 12 being seen while seven were still in Ongar Park Wood (15th). Several Epping Forest sites held birds and three were in a churchyard in Nazeing on the 21st. A solitary bird took up residence in Wanstead Park from the 27th. **Firecrests** were noted at four sites and **Siberian Chiffchaffs** were identified at Cornmill Meadows (5th and 18th) and at Creekmouth (11th-12th) while a **Dartford Warbler** was seen with four **Stonechats** on some waste ground in Theydon Bois on the 15th.

JANUARY 2018

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

2018 started off fairly well with a steady increase in **Wigeon** and **Lapwing**. There was a huge movement of **Black-headed Gulls** on the 3rd with at least 10,000 up river but there was nothing caught up with them. Several **Caspian** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** were noted during the month with a first winter **Iceland Gull** on the 4th and 26th and **Med Gulls** on the 20th and 26th. **Avocet** reached a peak of 32 and five **Ruff** are wintering but there were only two **Jack Snipe** records and singles of **Turnstone**, **Woodcock**, **Common** and **Green Sandpiper**. Up to 300 **Black-tailed Godwits** have been seen over high tide and four **Sanderling** on the 17th were a surprise. The only new geese were a single **Brent** on the 1st, 14th and 18th and a **Barnacle** on the 4th and 9th. Six each of **Marsh Harrier** and **Peregrine** are haunting the reserve and a **Merlin** was seen twice but a single **Short-eared Owl** was only seen on the 1st and 2nd. **Red Kites** were noted on the 17th and 25th and the **Raven** dropped in occasionally. Up to five **Bullfinches** and two **Firecrests** continued to attract visitors to the woodland and four **Water Pipits** could be found amongst the commoner **Rocks** and **Meadows** while a **Hawfinch** with **Redwings** on the 2nd was a nice early year bonus.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Hawfinches were again prominent with Thorndon CP attracting the most attention with at least 25 being regularly seen (along with **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** too!). Three were still in

Ongar Park Wood (5th) and five were found in Hainault Forest (10th) with singles over Fairlop Waters (1st), Havering-atte-Bower (7th), Bedfords Park (4th), Roding Valley Meadows (20th) and Wanstead Park (21st) while Epping Forest at last started to produce some sightings with seven on Ludgate Plain (14th), five on White House Plain (23rd) and singles at Black Bush and Warren Pond (both on 22nd). A **Yellow-browed Warbler** at Fairlop Waters on the first went well with the **Hawfinch** and two **Great Egrets** and one of the latter stayed till the 3rd when it was then seen at Mayesbrook Park (6th) and then in Wanstead Park on the 8th, 16th and 17th. The **Caspian Gull** remained at Eagle Pond until the 15th and amazingly 'Valentino' the ancient **Med Gull** returned to Valentines Park after being absent last year. Two **Grey Partridge** were a good find in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 3rd with two **Bewick's Swans** on the 6th being popular. The Valley also had a **Kite** on the 1st with four others reported across the area during January. The male **Scaup** remained on the KGV throughout with a **Slavonian Grebe** there from the 3rd being joined by a 2nd (and a male **Smew**) on the 13th with all three birds staying into February. Three **Black-necked Grebes** were on the Wm Girling and the other male **Scaup** remained on Walthamstow Reservoirs where an elusive **Little Bunting** took centre stage from the 19th. A pair of **Smew** was knocking around Friday Lake and two **Bitterns** and six **Goosander** were on Seventy Acres with another six occasionally at Connaught Water. Down the Lee Valley there were five **Common Sandpipers** wintering at Bow Creek and just a bit down the Thames there was a male **Bearded Tit** at Gallions Reach. A juvenile **Glaucous Gull** was at Leyton Tip on the 28th. **Firecrests** were wintering at four sites and another **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was seen in a garden adjacent to Dagenham Chase on the 26th which is encouraging. Similarly 21 **Yellowhammers** on Orsett Fen and 12 in the Ingrebourne were pleasing and 213 **Pied Wagtails** were counted coming in to roost in Epping High Street on the 10th. Last but not least two **Long-eared Owls** are still wintering at a private site – a rare find in recent years.

DECEMBER 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

It remained pretty dry and westerly during December but rain in the last week encouraged duck and Lapwing numbers to increase. Up to 180 **Golden Plover** were seen and 26 **Avocet** and 1,435 **Dunlin** were good peak counts. Three wintering **Ruff** obliged and 220 **Black-tailed Godwit** moved between the reserve and Barking Bay. **Woodcock** were noted three times but no **Jacks** were seen amongst the **Common Snipe**. The Thames was quiet with just a single male **Goldeneye** (1st), two **Brent Geese** (10th) and two **Merganser** (27th) of note along with seven **Kittiwakes** and three **Little Gulls** on the 11th. Another **Little Gull** was seen on the 29th and at least three **Caspian Gulls** and up to 12 **Yellow-legged Gulls** were noted. **Egyptian Geese** were seen on several dates and three **Ruddy Shelduck** flying through on the 18th were a surprise. A **Bittern** was first seen during the snow on the 10th and made four more appearances before month end. A **Short-eared Owl** was seen on the 16th with two on the 28th and a single on the 30th. Six **Marsh Harriers** are wintering along with at least four **Peregrines** and occasional **Merlin** sightings while the last **Red Kite** of the year was seen on the 13th. Two **Ravens** have started to become regular once again. The woodland has been productive with two **Firecrest** and up to three **Bullfinch** testing the patience of observers.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The lion's share of the county's **Hawfinches** seems to have become wedged in the south-west corner with 13 sites hosting at least 84 birds! Thorndon CP with 30 and Ongar Park Wood with 20 were the only double figure sites and **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were seen at both these. Many of these locations are historical Hawfinch woods. **Firecrests** were seen at nine spots with four together at the Waterworks NR being the most together, while a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was with 12 'normal' ones at Creekmouth on the 30th. The **Great Egret** at Fairlop Waters CP was joined by another from the 18th and a **Great Northern Diver** dropped in for a day. Another **GND** was on the KGV Reservoir from the 13th and **Goosanders** peaked at 12 and the male **Scaup** remained throughout. A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen on the 15th and **Med Gull** and two **Caspians** were reported. Up the Lee Valley there were up to 13 **Goosander** and a single **Smew** in the Seventy Acres area and two **Bitterns** were seen at the Watchpoint and a **Black-necked Grebe** was on Holyfield (17th). An adult **Whooper Swan** dropped into Walthamstow on the 1st and both **Scaup** and **Merganser** arrived there on the 3rd. Another **Smew** was seen on the Wm Girling (13th) and a drake was on Connaught Water (4th) with eight **Goosanders**. **Goosander** and **Goldeneye** were seen at Roding valley Meadows NR on the 1st and the **Red-necked Grebe** returned from the 9th-16th. Six **Bewick's Swans** overflowed Wanstead Flats on the 16th and **Jack Snipe** were seen at Sewardstone (19th) and Beckton (24th). There were several **Woodcock** flushed in the cold spell and a single **Black-tailed Godwit** was seen sporadically at Dagenham Chase where the **Treecreeper** remained. **Caspian Gulls** were seen at Beckton and Creekmouth and a 3rd winter proved very popular on Leyton Flats from the 14th. **Ravens** were seen over Pygo Park, Epping Forest and Weald Park with a **Red Kite** over the latter on the 31st.

NOVEMBER 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The finch passage of late October continued apace into mid-November with **Chaffinches** once again predominating along with very good numbers of **Lesser Redpolls**, **Siskins** and a few non-local **Goldfinch**. **Brambling** were seen on the 3rd, 4th and 26th, a **Mealy Redpoll** on the 9th and at least three **Bullfinches** took up residence in the woodland. **Hawfinches** were still on the move nationally and six were seen on the 3rd followed by singles on the 5th, 6th and 8th. Both **Lapland** (3rd) and **Snow Bunting** (24th) were seen albeit briefly and at least three **Firecrest** began winter circuits. A late **Whinchat** was seen on the 10th and 16th and was in the company of a **Black Redstart** on the latter date which then stayed until the 23rd. A second **Black Red** was seen at the Barges on the 12th. A few **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** were to be found and an elusive **Yellow-browed Warbler** was encountered on the 13th, 15th and 16th. There were even three late **Swallow** sightings with singles on the 2nd, 9th and the 24th. At least five **Water Pipits** were to be found regularly outside the hides and were often in the company of some of the five **Ruff** wintering. **Woodcock** were flushed on three dates and a single **Bar-tailed Godwit** on the 15th was found roosting with the **Black-tailed Godwits**. **Golden Plover** and **Lapwing** built up and a **Turnstone** was seen on the 19th. A **Hen Harrier** on the 1st was the first for the year and at least six **Marsh Harriers** seem to be wintering while a **Red Kite** on the 27th keep up the monthly trend. The Thames was quiet with just 12 each of **Brent** (17th) and **Scoter** (20th) of note but two redhead **Goosanders** on Aveley Pool on the 19th proved popular. A **Cattle Egret** spent the 2nd moving between herds and the first and so

far only **Short-eared Owl** was seen on the 13th while the **Ravens** are now back into an almost daily routine.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Hawfinches were once again the target of many local birders and 13 sites scored with a minimum of 38 birds involved. Ongar Park Wood and the Thorndon CP Woods seem to be reliable at the moment with at least 13 in the latter in late November. There was a scattering of **Bramblings** and **Lesser Redpolls** too but no proper flocks amongst the large numbers of **Chaffinches** on the move. **Firecrests** were equally well spread with 12 sites hosting nearly 20 birds this winter so far and given the autumn influx I suspect there will be more found. The **Red-necked Grebe** on the Roding Valley Meadows NR disappeared in early November but then reappeared on the 13th, now in full first winter plumage and lingered into December. Wanstead Flats attracted yet another **Woodlark** on the 2nd and a smart second winter **Med Gull** on the 12th. The KGV Reservoir hosted a juvenile **Spoonbill** on the 1st with a **Merlin** through there the next day. **Goosanders** remained at five and the **Black-necked Grebe** was still around. An immature male **Scaup** arrived on the 11th and a **Great Northern Diver** was found on the 25th. The same day a **Leach's Petrel** was across the road on the Girling but it did not last long. Two **Bitterns** were seen on Seventy Acres Lake and the first **Smew**, a female, was on Friday Lake on the 30th. A second **Black-necked Grebe** was noted on Walthamstow Reservoirs on the 1st along with a **Short-eared Owl**. A second **Shortie** was noted over Sewardstone on the 26th and **Woodcock** were seen here and in the Ingrebourne Valley where there were also four **Grey Partridge** on the 15th. A small group of **Black-tailed Godwits** commuted between here and Dagenham Chase where a **Treecreeper** from the 11th was only the second site record. For the second winter a **Yellow-browed Warbler** was found in a garden in Gidea Park and 110 **Magpies** roosted at Dagenham Park on the 12th. **Red Kites** were seen on five days and a pair of **Ravens** was over Weald Park on the 17th. Down on the Thames a new 1st winter **Caspian Gull** arrived at Thames Barrier Park on the 19th and Gallions Reach had a **Short-eared Owl** (3rd) and juvenile **Sabine's Gull** was a great find on the 12th.

OCTOBER 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

With very low water levels it was not waders and wildfowl that stole the limelight but what would turn out to be one of the best Octobers for visible diurnal migration. The month started quietly but got going with a flyover **Red-throated Pipit** and **Firecrest** on the 9th with other **FCs** seen on the 19th and 20th. A **Woodlark** was noted on the 14th and a male **Dartford Warbler** showed well the same day along with a **Merganser** on the river and a **Tree Sparrow** caught up with the **Chaffinches** moving through. A juvenile **Dartford Warbler** was then seen on the 18th with four more **Tree Sparrows** coming in from Kent on the 19th.

Finches were on the move every day regardless of the wind direction with hundreds of **Chaffinches** counted including 780 on the 15th and 240 on the 28th. Good numbers of **Siskins** and **Lesser Redpolls** were caught up with these along with a few **Brambling** and two definite **Mealy Redpolls**. Four out of place **Bullfinches** were also noted with **Chaffinch** flocks and we

were not left out of the **Hawfinch** bonanza with twos on the 19th and 28th. There were plenty of **Starlings**, **Skylarks**, pipits and thrushes on the move too and included two **Ring Ouzels** on the 23rd. **Rock Pipits** were back by the end of the first week and the first **Water Pipit** was seen on the 25th while a **Tree Pipit** on the 15th was a good late date. **Whinchats** and **Wheatears** were still being seen with the last of the latter, a fine Greenland bird on the 25th and two **Yellowhammers** lingered all month.

A late **Willow Warbler** was seen on the 25th and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was a year first the day before. The reserve was part of the annual **Woodpigeon** migration being funnelled across the Thames between the mega pylons and power station chimney with 3,250 (23rd) and 2,100 (27th) through our section. Three **Caspian Gulls** were noted on the landfill (23rd) and a late **Common Tern** was seen on the 21st but the Thames was quiet with odd sightings of **Curlew Sandpiper** and up to four **Little Stints** amongst the **Dunlin** and occasionally over 100 **Black-tailed Godwits**. A **Gannet** on the 19th was not even over the river but heading east over the woodland while the same memorable day saw a flock of 14 **Great Egrets** flop westwards followed by eight **Grey Herons**. Single **Great Egrets** then followed on the 27th and 31st.

A juvenile **Spoonbill** on the 16th stayed until the 25th and became our 12th this year. Up to five **Marsh Harriers** are on site and there were five **Merlin** and regular **Peregrine** sightings while **Red Kites** were seen on the 3rd (two), 15th and 27th (three). The **Ravens** are back for the winter but there are no **Short-eared Owls** yet although a **Tawny Owl** on the 24th was notable. Three tired adult **Whooper Swans** enlivened the 29th.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The **Red-necked Grebe** from September at the Roding Valley Meadows NR stayed put until the 30th and continued to draw a crowd while the similarly long-staying **Spotted Crake** in the Ingrebourne Valley made it to the 2nd. The Lee Valley saw a **Short-eared Owl** through Walthamstow Reservoir on the 15th along with **Scaup** (18th), two **Red-crested Pochards** (19th), four **Black-necked Grebes**, a **Ring Ouzel** (20th) and a late **Wheatear** (25th). Up to 14 **Black-necks** were also on the Wm Girling (22nd) with another on the KGV along with the first **Goosanders** and **Goldeneye**. A **Great Egret** was seen there on the 25th and a Norwegian ringed **Rock Pipit** was one of several seen and proves their Scandinavian origins. **Red Kites** were seen over Netherhall and Sewardstone while a **Marsh Harrier** over Holyfield (19th) was still a good valley bird. At least one **Bittern** was at Seventy Acres Lake throughout and a **Med Gull** and a high count of 24 **Little Egrets** was made there on the 20th. A late juvenile **Cuckoo** was at Nazeing (8th) and another **Ring Ouzel** was at the Waterworks NR on the 30th. **Hawfinches** were the highlight for many local birders with 37 noted between the 9th and 30th from 11 sites with nine over Wanstead Flats on the 28th being the single highest count. Two **Hawfinches** were part of a recorded nocturnal movement over Chafford Hundred with 2,104 **Redwing**, 988 **Song Thrush** and 12 Robin calls also picked up!

Masses of other finches were also reported across the area. **Firecrests** were seen at nine sites and **Yellow-browed Warblers** were seen at Belhus Woods CP (17th) and in Hornchurch (24th). Two **Yellow-browed Warblers** at Rammey Marsh on the 29th did the decent thing and spent most of their time in the Essex sector of Neville's Hertfordshire patch... Finches aside, Wanstead Flats also produced two **Woodlark** and two **Short-eared Owls** (15th), **Ring Ouzel** (21st), **Corncrake** (22nd) and was part of the **Woodpigeon** movement with 6,000 on the 27th and 2,700 on the 28th. Thrush movement on the 28th included 230 **Fieldfare**. Other **Ring Ouzels** were seen on Chingford Plain on the 14th and 21st and Fairlop Waters on the 28th & 29th. A **Red Kite** was seen over Wanstead Flats (3rd) and a satellite tagged **Hen Harrier** spent

two nights on Orsett Fen (3rd-4th) while a **Great Egret** at Dagenham Chase on the 14th was a first for the site I think! Down on the Thames at least three different **Caspian Gulls** were noted at Thames Barrier Park and nearby Gallions Reach had a good month with a late **Arctic Tern** (3rd), **Honey Buzzard** and the first **Rock Pipit** (8th), **Snow Bunting** (15th), Lapland Bunting (25th) and two **Great Egrets** (29th). Two **Dartford Warblers** were seen at Barking Bay (23rd) along with a good count of 242 **Black-tailed Godwits**. A **Jack Snipe** over Ardleigh Green on the 9th was unusual and the only county October record. The **Woodpigeon** passage south over Chafford Hundred was superb with 4,262 (23rd), 47,800 (27th), 7,184 (28th) and 23,272 (30th) and such concerted vismiggung also produced **Ring Ouzel** (23rd), **Great Egret** (24th), six very high **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** (27th) and **Snow Bunting** (30th) for the ever vigilant Ruth Barnes.

SEPTEMBER 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

An **Osprey** on the 1st got the month off to a great start as it even went fishing in Aveley Pool. It was seen on the following two mornings before heading south. Another drifted through on the 15th with a single **Kite** seen on the 21st. The 1st also saw the arrival of **Redstart**, **Pied Flycatcher** and **Tree Pipit** and there was a smattering of **Whinchats** and **Wheatears** during the month. The first Scandinavian **Rock Pipit** was reported on the 15th with an equally early returning **Bullfinch** on the 17th and a late juvenile **Cuckoo** till the 25th. The first autumn **Firecrest** was seen on the 20th and a **Woodlark** headed over on the 21st. Wader-wise, it was fairly quiet although **Little Stints** rose to three (26th) and a **Curlew Sandpiper** was seen from the 22nd with the **Dunlin** flock. Two **Spotted Redshanks** lingered from the 3rd with three on the 14th and another single on the 26th while **Garganey** included singles on the 5th, 10th and 25th. The river was fairly quiet with 11 **Arctic Terns** (8th), 11 **Sandwich Terns** (25th) and a very obliging **Black Tern** on the pools from the 13th-17th. Two juvenile **Spoonbills** on the 18th took the year total up to 11.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

Two birds stole the show in September with a **Spotted Crane** in the Ingrebourne Valley from the 16th drawing the biggest crowds ever to the site and resulted in a bonus **Osprey** on the 19th, 20th and 21st! The second was no less showy as the juvenile **Red-necked Grebe** in the Roding Valley Meadows NR lapped up the attention from the 22nd. Once again the KGV Reservoir was on form with a **Grey Phalarope** found on the 13th also resulting in the finding of the second **Manx Shearwater** for the site for 2017! The phalarope stayed till the 17th before being relocated on the Girling on the 19th where 26 **Black-necked Grebes** were also present. A **Little Gull** was also seen there on the 25th while back on the KGV both **Woodlark** and **Black Tern** were seen on the 24th with a **Little Stint** there on the 27th. Another **Woodlark** was over Bedfords Park on the 17th when **Firecrest** and **Redstart** were also seen while a **Pied Flycatcher** was noted there on the 19th. Another **Redstart** was seen at Dagenham Park on the 7th with three on Wanstead Flats on the 15th and a single on the 25th. The Flats also had **Tree Pipits** on the 3rd and two on the 29th, **Ring Ouzel** (26th) and 49 **Egyptian Geese** on the 28th!! Two **Tree Sparrows** were a welcome addition to the Olympic Park list on the 2nd. The two **Spotted Redshanks** from August remained at Walthamstow Reservoirs till the 15th and a

Glossy Ibis flew through there on 16th and two **Black Terns** briefly stopped on the 20th. The first **Bittern** was back at the Seventy Acres Lake from the 28th and two **Raven** flew over there on the same date. Down on the Thames 11 **Sandwich Terns** were seen at Gallions Reach (1st) with ten more (24th) and a further six along with two **Little Gull** and two **Arctic Terns** on the 25th. A **Great Egret** was also noted there on the 24th. Two **Caspian Gulls** were found at Thames Barrier Park (2nd) with another on the KGV on the 26th. A **Red Kite** was over Sewardstone (23rd) and **Honey Buzzards** were seen over Creekmouth (10th) and Gidea Park (22nd).

AUGUST 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The Thames was the focus of attention for most of the month with a good selection of waders to be seen along the foreshore including up to eight **Whimbrel**, **Sanderling**, **Knot** and **Little Stint**. **Common Scoters** were seen on the 9th and 10th with ten on the 22nd and a last single on the 30th while a **Guillemot** on the 29th was new for the year and **Yellow-legged Gulls** reached a paltry 38 on the 14th. A juvenile **Kittiwake** was found loafing on Aveley Pool on the 10th before the first good tern day of the season on the 17th when 121 **Arctic**, 57 **Common** and an adult **Roseate Tern** were seen along with a juvenile **Med Gull**. A **Roseate** was seen again the following day along with 24 **Common** and another 23 **Arctics**. The 19th saw a further 62 **Arctics** head up river with a single **Black** and four **Sandwich Terns** on the 22nd. The 30th was the big one with a staggering 325 **Arctic**, 275 **Common**, 11 **Black**, four **Sandwich** and a single **Little Tern** logged over six hours in terrible weather. A passage of 500 **House Martins** occurred just before dusk too... Passerine passage was slow with a handful of **Wheatear** and **Whinchat** and a few **Yellow Wagtails**. The first **Tree Pipit** and **Spot Fly** of the year were both seen on the 20th with **Redstart** and a juvenile **Turtle Dove** on the 24th. Two broods of **Marsh Harrier** gave up ten birds on the reserves and **Red Kite** (21st), female **Goshawk** (25th) and **Honey Buzzard** (28th) kept eyes trained upwards which is how the five **Spoonbills** on the 31st were found.

Metropolitan Essex (LNHS area)

The KGV continued its good run with two **Temminck's Stints** and **Turnstone** (8th), the first returning **Goldeneye** (25th) and **Black-necked Grebe** and **Med Gull** (28th) while nine **Black-tailed Godwits** over Sewardstone on the 12th and two long-staying **Spotted Redshanks** at Walthamstow Reservoirs from the 26th were noteworthy. There was a good scattering of **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** and a **Wood Sandpiper** was noted at Dagenham Chase on the 19th. A **Garganey** there the same day stayed till the 28th. Drift passerines started to appear from about the 13th with **Whinchats** and **Spotted Flycatchers** being found at many sites including 12 of the latter on Wanstead Flats on the 24th. **Redstarts** were recorded on six dates there with two two-bird days. Other **Redstarts** were noted at Dagenham Park, Walthamstow Reservoir, Waterworks NR and Fairlop Waters with **Pied Flycatchers** on Wanstead Flats (28th), Ingrebourne Valley (25th) and Dagenham Park (20th) with a **Wood Warbler** at the latter site on the 10th too. **Tree Pipits** were noted over Grays (20th), Leyton (two on 21st), Walthamstow Reservoir (two on 22nd) and Wanstead Flats (28th). **Marsh Tits** were superb finds in both Wanstead and Gidea Park. It would be great to know where they have dispersed

from as they are seemingly absent from south Essex now. **Firecrests** were noted at Great Warley and Leyton and 29 Egyptian Geese at Fairlop were proof of a good breeding season. A **Greylag** there had been neck-collared at the BTO in Thetford in 2014 which is an unusually long distance movement for a feral **Greylag** in the UK. **Ravens** were seen over Kelvedon Hatch and Hornchurch and there were other good skywatching records that included **Goshawks** over Romford and Leyton, **Ospreys** over Hornchurch (5th) and Brentwood (10th), **Red Kites** over Chafford (13th) and three over Buckhurst Hill (28th) and a single **Honey Buzzard** over Fairlop (29th). Star raptor though was the male **Red-footed Falcon** seen over Bedfords Park on the 27th. Down on the Thames there were good movements of **Arctic Terns** past Gallions Reach with six (22nd) along with a **Little Gull** 75 (17th) and 53 (21st). Another 41 were noted through Creekmouth (23rd) along with a single **Black Tern**.

JULY 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wader passage trickled onwards with the first **Wood Sandpiper** from the 4th-6th, two from 19th-23rd and another two on the 29th. Two **Ruff** (19th) and two **Bar-tailed Godwit** (13th) added interest amongst the **Blackwits**, **Greenshank**, **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** but it was Max Hellicar's **Pectoral Sandpiper** on the 29th and 30th that attracted a few people. A juvenile **Garganey** was seen from the 29th and the lone **Egyptian Goose** persisted. The Thames was fairly quiet with a peak of 40 **Yellow-legged Gulls** along with several **Meds** including nice scaly juveniles and two **Caspians**. **Sandwich Terns** were seen on the 13th, 19th and 20th and the first three **Arctics** were noted on the 19th. A female **Common Scoter** was seen on the 10th and 14th and two imposing **Great Egrets** loafed around on the 15th and **Bearded Tits** were most obliging. An early **Whinchat** was seen the same day and a few **Yellow Wagtails** were moving through while up in the skies both broods of **Marsh Harrier** were on the wing.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

The KGV Reservoir was the place to be (with a permit) and a very good selection of waders was noted on the concrete rim including up to 45 **Common Sandpipers**, **Sanderling**, **Greenshank** and **Turnstone**. A **Goldeneye** and **Black-necked Grebe** were amongst 1100 newly arrived **Tufted Ducks** on the 16th and two **Scoter** dropped in on the 23rd with another six on the 25th. A single **Little Tern** was seen with **Common Terns** on the 27th but it was the **Manx Shearwater** that paddled around on the 21st and 22nd that was most appreciated. Elsewhere there were good numbers of **Common Sands** with 21 on the Walthamstow complex (23rd) and at least ten at Creekmouth while **Green Sandpipers** were seen at many muddy spots but the only **Wood Sandpipers** were one in the William Girling relief channel from the 25th to 31st and another at Fairlop Waters CP on the 30th. The Rainham **Great Egrets** were predictably seen in the Mardyke Valley on the 16th after leaving their roost with the **Little Egrets** in Warren Gorge but were not seen subsequently and a **Cattle Egret** was seen circling Ingrebourne Hill on the 22nd. At least 13 **Yellow-legged Gulls** were noted at Thames Barrier Park with others on Wanstead Flats and in Grays where a **Bar-tailed Godwit** was seen on the 8th. There were still two **Red-crested Pochards** in the Ingrebourne Valley and a juvenile **Bearded Tit** was seen in Rainham Creek suggesting that they may have bred in the

Ingrebourne. The only early passage migrant was a **Redstart** on Wanstead Flats on the 2nd and **Red Kites** continued to pop up across the region.

JUNE 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

A time for breeding with little beyond seven curiously high-flying southbound **Barnacle Geese** on the 1st until the start of return wader passage with a **Knot** on the 20th and the first **Green Sandpiper** on the 24th. This was shortly followed by **Whimbrel**, **Ruff**, both races of **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Greenshank** and **Common Sandpiper**. A **Quail** was heard again on the landfill and **Med Gulls** became almost a daily spectacle with a day peak of five on the 20th. The **Marsh Harriers** and **Bearded Tits** seemed to be faring well and a brood of three **Garganey** was seen on the 30th.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

Red Kites were seen daily in the first ten days before going quiet until the 17th when four were seen over the Ingrebourne Valley. **Caspian**, **Yellow-legged** and even an **Iceland Gull** (4th) were seen between Barking Bay and Thames Barrier Park and an immature **Gannet** went north over Leyton on the 6th. A **Sandwich Tern** on the KGV Reservoir was unseasonal on the 4th with an adult **Med Gull** there on the 18th. A brood of **Red-crested Pochard** was discovered in the Ingrebourne Valley.

MAY 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The wader passage from April continued well into May with **Temminck's Stint** basically being the only 'missing' species. Both **Curlew Sandpiper** and **Little Stint** were seen in the first week and three **Wood Sandpipers** on the 3rd quickly became five with one staying until the 10th. **Bar-tailed Godwit** peaked at 40 (4th), **Grey Plover** at 22 (5th) and **Whimbrel** at 16 (5th) with **Sanderling** and **Turnstone** reported the same day. A pair of **Black-winged Stilts** dropped in on the 10th but did not stay the night and there was even a late **Jack Snipe** on the 6th! The 10th also saw three very high flying **Spoonbills** heading over the reserve but at least the **Common Crane** on the 21st had the decency to come down and stay till the following morning. It was the first here in 35 years and was very well appreciated. Eclipsing even this was the adult **Laughing Gull** seen by just a few lucky people on the 9th (a first for Essex) and the **Bonaparte's Gull** from Barking did the decent thing and was seen from Ferry Lane on the 16th, 17th and 20th. **Kittiwake**, **Caspian**, **Iceland**, **Med** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** added a touch of winter gull magic to the spring! Ten adult **Little Gulls** on the 18th rounded things off nicely. There was no big tern push but **Little** (3rd and 5th), **Black** (two on 27th), **Arctic** and **Sandwich** were noted. A male **Garganey** on the 12th became a pair on the 13th and two males were seen on the 17th. **Marsh Harriers** were looking settled and several **Red Kites** were again

noted along with a superb **Black Kite** (18th) and an eye level **Osprey** (20th). Four **Turtle Dove** fly throughs was the best spring showing for ten years and there were two **Quail** from the 6th-8th and another from the 22nd-24th. Birder behaviour was impeccable despite the frustratingly close encounters with this invisible singer. A female **Ring Ouzel** lingered from the 3rd -12th and **Whinchats**, **Greenland Wheatears** and a **Black Redstart** drifted through while the last **Short-eared Owl** sighting was on the 6th after another great winter.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

A first-summer **Bonaparte's Gull** was found at Creekmouth on the 14th before spending time around Barking Bay/Crossness over the following week before returning to Creekmouth on the 23rd. Several **Med Gulls** were also noted and one **Caspian Gull** was still commuting between there and the Thames Barrier Park. Amongst the now regular **Red Kite** sightings a **Black Kite** was tracked from Gidea Park to Hainault Forest CP on the 10th while **Honey Buzzards** were noted over Romford on the next two consecutive days. Trios of **Red Kites** were seen through Romford and Buckhurst Hill on the 14th and Wanstead on the 28th – all others were of singles. **Ospreys** were seen over Gallions Reach (7th) and Walthamstow Reservoirs and Woodford Green on the 25th. The Reservoirs also held a good smattering of passage waders along with **Arctic Tern** and the first local **Spotted Flycatcher** on the 16th. Up the Lee Valley the **Kittiwake** lingered on the KGV until it succumbed on the 15th and **Black Terns** were seen in the 1st, 4th and 5th with a **Little Gull** on the 9th. A male **Garganey** took up semi-residence at Dagenham Chase from the 9th and a **Great Egret** was noted over Gallions Reach on the 11th. **Black Redstarts** seem to have several established territories in the area but **Turtle Doves** are still thin on the ground.

APRIL 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Waders held sway in April with almost every 'normal' passage species recorded with things really getting going from the 17th when the first **Bar-tailed Godwit** arrived. Others followed along with good counts of **Whimbrel**, **Ringed Plover**, **Dunlin** and **Icelandic Black-tailed Godwits**. **Curlew Sandpiper**, **Little Stint**, **Knot**, **Turnstone** and **Grey Plover** added colour. **Jack Snipe** continued to be seen up until the 15th. Other late northbound passage birds included three **Redwings** on the 3rd, a **Fieldfare** on the 6th and the last **Water Pipit** on the 9th. Chats were strongly on the move with three 20+ **Wheatear** days and a good run of **Whinchats** from the 23rd. Two **Ring Ouzels** were seen on the 9th with other singles on the 25th and 30th. There was a smattering of **Yellow Wagtails** and **Cuckoos** were back from the 20th. A **Hobby** on the third was early but a **Red-legged Partridge** the same day was probably the rarity of the month! **Red Kite** sightings continued to increase with almost daily sightings during the middle of the month and the 1st and 11th were **Buzzard** days with 32 and 20 respectively. A late **Merlin** was seen on the 21st. There was some notable tern passage but with more quality than quantity. The first **Commons** were seen on the 3rd with **Arctics** from the 15th with a high of 27 through on the 30th. **Little Terns** were seen on the 21st and 30th and two **Black Terns** were seen on the former date too with two **Sandwich Terns** on the 22nd. A couple of **Mergansers** and **Scoter** were also seen on the river.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

The Lee Valley fared well during April with low water levels on No. 5 Walthamstow Reservoir attracting a good selection of waders including **Whimbrel**, **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Dunlin** and **Grey Plover**. The **Siberian Chiffchaff** was still there on the 9th when two **Little Terns** dropped in briefly. Six **White Wagtails** were noted on the 13th and a **Pied Flycatcher** was seen on the 29th. Up valley, the KGV played host to a variety of terns and gulls with a **Sandwich Tern** and **Little Gull** getting the month off to a good start on the 2nd. More **Little Gulls** followed on the 4th and 9th – when there were seven – with another single on the 26th. Nineteen **Arctic Terns** and a single **Black** were seen on the 17th and three more **Arctic** went through on the 27th followed by a **Little Tern** on the 28th. The same day an adult **Kittiwake** arrived for a protracted stay. A **Ring Ouzel** was seen there from the 25th – 28th along with a **Blue-headed Wagtail** on the 26th. Wanstead Flats is now a customary magnet for passerines attracting **Redstarts** (10th & 21st), **Ring Ouzels** (15th & 21st), **Nightingale** and **Tree Pipit** (22nd) and **Whinchat** and **Woodlark** (23rd) – great stuff. The Ingrebourne Valley also saw three **Redstarts** along with two **Jack Snipe** till the 6th, **Red-crested Pochard** (12th) and a new patch bird with **Grey Plover** (20th). Six **Waxwings** were last seen in Hornchurch on the 6th and further **Ring Ouzels** were seen on Orsett Fen and over Gidea Park (13th) and the first local **Whinchat** was at Fairlop Waters CP on the 12th. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was on territory at Dagenham Chase and there were a couple in the Lee Valley including on Fishers Green Island where the **Nightingales** were back from the 12th. Two **Tree Pipits** sang in the Epping buffer lands and **Turtle Doves** were back at a traditional North Weald site. Down on the Thames there was still a **Caspian Gull** around Creekmouth and another was seen at Thames Barrier Park on the 6th. Thirteen **Arctic Terns** also moved through there on the 17th. Further out there were 17 **Whimbrel**, six **Med Gulls** and a **Kittiwake** off Grays Beach on the 23rd. A female **Goshawk** was seen at Gallions Reach on the 8th and a **Little Tern** and seven **Whimbrel** were noted there on the 21st with 18 **Med Gulls**, three **Arctic Terns** and a **Whinchat** the following day. Unsurprisingly there were 15 **Red Kite** sightings...

MARCH 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

March is always a crossover month between the seasons and this year was no exception with winter ducks lingering and waders such as **Black-tailed Godwits** and **Ruff** moving north with highs of 160 (1st) and 12 (11th). **Jack Snipe** suddenly become visible and at least four or five birds were seen on the scrapes throughout the month while **Lapwings** quickly settled down around them. The first **Little Ringed Plover** was back on the 21st and a single **Knot** was quite unusual. The last **Caspian Gull** was seen on the 2nd and a **Med Gull** was noted (12th) but there were no early terns this year. **Wheatear** and **Sand Martin** were both first seen on the 11th and several more of each along with the odd **Swallow** were seen. A **Ring Ouzel** on the 29th and **Yellow Wagtail** on the 31st were a little early for us but the first chattering **Sedge Warbler** on the 30th was bang on cue. Also expected were the eight **Scoters** on the 23rd with five **Mergansers** on the 27th and two more of each before month end. A **Spoonbill** flew over on the 22nd and three **Glossy Ibises** early on the 24th simply disappeared. **Corn Buntings** arrived back on territory and a single female **Yellowhammer** was seen on several dates. **Marsh**

Harrier behaviour is looking promising and **Red Kites** were noted multiple dates while at least three **Short-eared Owls** lingered all month.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

Waxwings were still to be found in the Hornchurch / Rainham area all month with a roving group of up to 29 popping up almost into April. Walthamstow Reservoir had a great month that started with a **White-front** on the 1st and **Caspian Gull** the next day. The **Scaup** stayed throughout and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** lingered and even sang while the first **Sand Martin** was seen on the 6th. The draining of reservoir no.5 drew in **Black-tailed Godwit**, **Avocet**, **Grey Plover** and **Little Ringed Plovers** along with a male **Garganey** (29th). Four **Little Gull** moved through on the 11th and two **Kittiwake** did likewise on the 22nd. The first **Sedge Warbler** was back on the 30th. Up the Lea Valley a drake **Smew** and two **Black-necked Grebes** stayed on the KGV till mid-month and a **Scandinavian Rock Pipit** was there on the 11th. A **White Wagtail** (9th) and **Ring Ouzel** (28th) were seen at Sewardstone Marsh and at the south end of the Valley there were four **Little Ringed Plovers** in the Olympic Park (25th). An **Avocet** in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 28th was an exceptional record and this site also held a good number of passage **Green Sandpipers** and a pair of **Red Crested Pochards**. Another female was noted on Wanstead park till the 1st and this site also nabbed the first local **Wheatear** on the 11th. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was seen again at Creekmouth where a **Caspian Gull** lingered and two more were still around Thames Barrier Park till the 23rd. A new first-winter was also seen on eagle Pond on the 3rd. Nearby a **Great Egret** was seen over Gallions Reach on the 12th with a **Kittiwake** there on the 23rd. A few **Sand Martins** dribbled in and a **Willow Warbler** was early at Fairlop Waters CP from the 19th. A **Merlin** was seen near Upminster (9th) and the first **Yellow Wagtail** was over the same site on the 30th. **Ravens** were seen over Warley on a couple of occasions and four **Firecrest** territories were found there with other passage birds in Wanstead Park and at Sewardstone. A few **Redwings** and **Siskins** were on the move and four **Crossbills** were over Weald Park on the 5th. An **Osprey** spent two days on Orsett Fen on the 30th-31st and **Red Kites** seem to be here to stay now with over 40 sightings across the area including groups of up to seven in the Epping area and five along the post-glacial ridge. Happy days...

FEBRUARY 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Five **Russian White-fronted Geese** got the month off to a great start on the 3rd and they were seen intermittently until the 13th. A single **Brent Goose** was seen on several dates and four more were on the river on the 15th while a little flurry of **Egyptian Geese** sightings culminated in five on the 10th. The first **Oystercatcher** of the year came back on the 3rd and the **Avocet** flock lingered till mid-month while **Black-tailed Godwits** became more visible on the marsh with up to 300 at high tide. **Jack Snipe** started to appear too and late February through March is the best time to look for bobbers. At least two **Short-eared Owls** lingered and four **Marsh Harriers**, **Peregrines**, **Buzzards** and **Ravens** were daily as usual but the only **Merlin** sighting was of a young male on the 22nd. Another **Little Gull** (9th) was seen and **Med Gulls** were noted on the 21st and 23rd and several 1st winter **Caspians** were picked out but no white wingers. Our **Waxwing** stayed until the first and three **Blackcaps** were on their apples from

the following day. **Bearded Tits** also came back from the 17th and the first **Brambling** and **Siskin** for the year were picked up while at least four **Water Pipits** were still around the pools.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

Waxwings were ever popular in February starting with 46 around Collier Row on the 1st with 30 still in Harold Hill the same day. Around 50 moved between various sites in Hornchurch for the remainder of the month clearing the remaining berries. **Bramblings** were seen in the Ingrebourne Valley, Highams Park and up to 13 were around Chindits Lane in Warley while **Firecrests** remained at Warley, Bedfords Park, Woodford Green and Warren Gorge. Two **Bitterns** at last made an appearance in the Ingrebourne Valley with another in Warren Gorge (8th) and the usual Seventy Acres bird in the Lee Valley where up to four each of **Smew** and **Goosander** were seen. The goosefields at Fishers Green attracted 14 **Russian White-fronts** on the 7th with three staying till the 18th. A **Great Egret** was seen in the Mardyke (8th) and the male **Scaup** remained throughout on Walthamstow Reservoir with **Black Redstart** (2nd), **Caspian Gull** (26th) and **Siberian Chiffchaff** (26th-27th) adding interest. The nearby KGV had a **Black-necked Grebe** on the 12th and the Girling still had seven **Black-necks** and the **Slavonian Grebe** the following day. Up to 14 **Goosanders** were seen at Weald Park and the **Red Kite** there on the 10th was one of six or so sightings locally. About ten different **Caspian Gulls** were again seen along the Thames between Creekmouth and Leamouth along with the several **Mediterranean** and **Yellow-legged Gulls**. Other **Meds** were noted in South Park, Walthamstow Reservoir and on Wanstead Flats. Two **Short-eared Owls** remained at Fairlop Waters CP and another was in the Ingrebourne on the 24th. Wintering **Common Sandpipers** were seen on the Reservoirs, Bow Creek and at Creekmouth and seven **Turnstones** were at Grays on the 3rd. **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** started to become vocal with reports from three different sites.

JANUARY 2017

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

And so another year begins but January was quite hard work on the reserve with the undoubted star of the show being the solitary **Waxwing** for 12 days from the 20th. The usual winter waders were around with the addition of a healthy flock of up to 28 **Avocets**, **Little Stint** (3rd) and occasional **Turnstone**, **Woodcock** and **Jack Snipe**. **Golden Plover** have been in very short supply though. There has been some good gulling on the Thames with 11 species seen including **Kittiwake** (7th), **Little Gull** (31st), at least three different **Caspian Gulls**, four **Meds** and two **Glaucous Gulls** (both on the 26th). **Marsh Harriers** have been superb, **Merlins** have been seen occasionally. **Brent Geese** were seen on the 1st and 30th with a single **Barnacle** on the 6th. Four **Short-eared Owls** were regular until the cold snap when they largely disappeared. Many thrushes did arrive though and two **Bullfinches** were in the woodland and up to three **Ravens** paid us a visit.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

The **Yellow-browed Warbler** on Wanstead Flats did the decent thing and stayed until the 4th while **Firecrests** were seen there and at Fairlop Waters, Bedfords Park and Grays Gorge. Up to 30 **Chiffchafs** seem to be wintering around the Beckton STW / Creekmouth area along with two **Black Redstarts** and at least one **Siberian Chiffchaff**. Another **Sibe** was seen at Fairlop

on the 6th while a third **Black Redstart** was at Walthamstow Filter Beds from the 13th. This site held the most surreal sighting of the month with a **Swallow** hawking for insects from the 25th-28th. Crazy stuff... The Reservoirs there also did quite well with the wintering male **Scaup** throughout, two **Black-necked Grebes** (4th), **Med Gull** (17th), **Red Kite** (24th) and a high of 44 roosting **Little Egrets**. A 1st winter **Glaucous Gull** present there on the 28th and 29th had previously been seen at Barking Bay (20th), Creekmouth (22nd) and then at Rainham on the 26th. A 2nd winter bird was also seen over the Olympic Park on the 21st. Further up the Lee Valley a **Bittern** continued to be seen at Seventy Acres Lake along with a pair of **Smew** and several **Goosander**. A sickly **Slavonian Grebe** was seen there on the 27th. A **Red Kite** was over Cornmill Meadows on the 10th and there were several records from the top end of Epping Forest where there were 12 **Brambling** at High Beech on the 14th. A **Slavonian Grebe** joined up to six **Black-necks** on the William Girling Reservoir from the 28th and a single **Russian White-front** was with **Greylags** at Netherhall on the 24th. The first **Bittern** of the season was seen in the Ingrebourne Valley on the 24th and a **Great Grey Shrike** gave everyone the run around there from the 5th with sightings of **Scaup** (21st) and **Merlin** (26th) making for some good birding. Another **Red Kite** was seen over Fairlop on the 15th and two **Short-eared** and **Little Owls** were seen with some regularity. Gulling on the Inner Thames continued to produce results with at least ten different **Caspian Gulls** being seen between the Thames Barrier and the mouth of the River Lee and the birds here are offering superb views. And then there were the **Waxwings**. The first was a singleton over Leyton on the 1st followed by a small but increasing flock in Harold Hill that eventually peaked at 35 on the 10th. Similarly, there were 25 in Aveley on the 22nd and at least 75 were roaming Lakeside and Chafford Hundred in several groups on the 27th. Forty-six in Collier Row from the 28th rounded things off nicely.

DECEMBER 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

It was a quite a disappointing end to the year with none of the hoped for wintery push that would have brought a bit of sparkle. There were still some notable sightings though with a **Cattle Egret** from the 16th-20th taking centre stage. Given the national influx this is just as likely to be a new bird rather than one of the October duo. A **Bonxie** was found eating a deceased **Guillemot** on the river (3rd) and a female **Goosander** (27th) was also seen but otherwise it was quiet with just a **Little Stint** (sporadically from the 13th), seven **Knot** (30th), two **Turnstone** and an ever increasing **Avocet** flock – peaking at 22 on the 31st – amongst the commoner fare. Both **Woodcock** and **Jack Snipe** were seen out on the marsh but duck numbers were still low, mirroring the water levels. At least six **Water Pipits** were regularly seen out on the pools and a male **Merlin** made a couple of sorties after thrushes and **Skylarks**. Similarly, a ringtail male **Hen Harrier** that arrived on the 5th for ten days was also seen going after small birds while up to six **Marsh Harriers**, two **Buzzards** and three **Peregrines** were daily hunters. A **Red Kite** on the 13th would prove to be the last of the year. **Short-eared Owls** became more visible with at least four over the Christmas period while five **Barn Owls** were somewhat of a surprise and unusually our birds were often active from mid-afternoon. A **Little Owl** was seen near the railway and 229 **Stock Doves** were out feeding on Wennington. Gull wise it was quiet with peaks of 14 **Yellow-legged Gulls** and two **Caspians**.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

Wanstead Flats got the month off to a great start with **Yellow-browed Warbler** from the 7th that spent into the New Year working its way around the island in Alexandra Lake. **Firecrests** were seen in the nearby Wanstead Park, Hatch Wood and Mardyke Valley while there seem to be a good number of **Chiffchaffs** wintering with up to a dozen around Beckton STW. A **Treecreeper** was a very good find at Fairlop Waters and a **Short-eared Owl** became fairly regular there from the 19th. At least one **Bittern** continued to be seen at Seventy Acres Lake along with up to 18 **Goosander** and a single **Smew**. Both species were also seen at Connaught Water with three **Goosanders** also in Weald Park from the 27th. Both the male **Scaup** and **Black-necked Grebe** remained at Walthamstow Reservoirs and a **Caspian Gull** was seen there on the 28th. Some serious gulling between the Thames Barrier Park and Lyle Park revealed at least five different **Caspian**, ten **Yellow-legged** and an adult **Med Gull**. Three **Red-crested Pochards** were on Hollow Pond (19th) and a single **Scoter** was on the Girling (14th). **Mandarin** numbers seem to have been dropping in recent years in Epping Forest so counts of 26 at Strawberry Hill Pond and 30 at Connaught Water were encouraging. Two **Waxwings** were seen in the Mardyke (9th) with another over Walthamstow (30th) and eight in Harold Hill (from 31st). Perhaps we will get a Waxwing Winter after all? A skein of 44 **White-fronts** overflow Upminster on the 2nd with two more with the **Greylags** in the Mar Dyke on the 26th. Down on the Thames at West Thurrock Marshes there were ten **Avocet**, 1400 **Dunlin**, two **Grey Plover** and two **Jack Snipe** on the 24th with another **Jack Snipe** in the Ingrebourne Valley the same day. The Rainham Marshes **Hen Harrier** went roaming on 11th and was seen at Gallions Reach and Barking Bay before returning to the reserve.

NOVEMBER 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The first week of the month carried on where October left off with some great sightings including a **Bonxie** - 1st, **Goldeneye** -female 2nd and male 3rd, 11,200 **Woodpigeons** flying south, **Woodlark**, **Tree Sparrow**, **Black Redstart**, **Woodcock** and **Snow Bunting** - all on the 3rd, the reappearance of the **Cattle Egret** - 4th, **Dartford Warbler** - 5th, another **Tree Sparrow** - 6th and **Bittern** - 7th. The 9th was a good day for watching the river with seven **Mergansers**, **Med** and an adult **Iceland Gull** along with 13 **Yellow-legs** and several **Caspian Gulls** were seen but we missed out on the mid to outer Thames sea duck and skua action. A male **Hen Harrier** was seen on the 7th and **ringtails** were reported on the 12th and 29th- our best autumn for years. The **Bittern** was seen again on the 29th and **Merlin**, **Peregrine**, **Marsh Harrier** and both **Barn** and **Short-eared Owls** made for good raptor action along with our tame male **Kestrel**. **Avocet**, **Sanderling**, **Knot** and **Jack Snipe** were the scant wader highlights and a single **Scoter** with a single **Brent Goose** spent the 24th bobbing up and down the river with the tide. A **Siberian Chiffchaff** was recorded in the reed bed on the 25th.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

Two **Bitterns** were regularly seen on Seventy Acres Lake in the Lee Valley with the first **Smew** on Friday Lake on the 10th along with a few **Goosander** and **Goldeneye**. Ten more **Goosander** were on the KGV (13th) along with two **Slavonian Grebes** (26th) and a **Rock Pipit** (2nd). Walthamstow Reservoir also recorded two **Rockits** the same day with **Little Gull** and **Black-necked Grebe** on the 22nd being the highlights. A peak count of 43 **Mandarins** was counted on Connaught Water on both the 4th and 28th with **Goosander** and **Smew** present too along

with a **Hawfinch** on the 7th. Another **Hawfinch** was seen on Woodford Green on the 12th with a **Cattle Egret** over there on the 6th. A **Goosander** at Fairlop Waters on the 12th was a good record for the site and likewise was a **Goldeneye** at Mayesbrook Park on the 4th. Three **Waxwings** were seen briefly in Collier Row on the 3rd and a **Short-eared Owl** was on Wanstead Flats the same day with **Jack Snipe** on the 10th and a **Merlin** there on the 28th. **Woodcock** were seen at several sites and a **Jack Snipe** was seen in the Ingrebourne Valley (19th) with two more at West Thurrock Marshes along with 11 **Avocet** and a **Kittiwake** on the 24th. Further up river a late **Ring Ouzel** was at Gallions Reach (6th) along with six **Scoter** (26th) and **Brent Goose** and **Merlin** (30th). Immature **Caspian Gulls** continued to be seen between the Thames Barrier Park and the mouth of the Lee and have been offering great views. The only **Red Kite** was over Coopersale on the 25th and a female **Goshawk** went through Gunpowder Park on the 18th.

OCTOBER 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The reserve at last got a proper taste of autumn with some notable birds during the month. The **Spoonbill** returned on the 5th and stayed till the 8th and the **Great Egret** was seen again on the 7th and 8th. Later in the month the 23rd became an egret day when three **Greats** flew through together and two **Cattle Egrets** were found out on Wennington with one staying till the 25th. The Thames was fairly quiet with **Sandwich Tern** (5th), 17 **Little Gull**, **Arctic Tern** and **Kittiwake** (6th) and **Arctic Skua** (8th) being notable while at least ten **Caspian Gulls** were identified along with still over 30 **Yellow-legged**. A flock of 24 **White-fronted Geese** was seen on the 6th with 25 also heading through on the 9th while two **Brent** on the 30th were the first for the autumn. An adult **Whooper Swan** spent a short while on the river and Aveley Pool on the 20th and **Spotted Redshank**, **Turnstone**, **Bar-tailed Godwit** and several **Jack Snipe** were amongst the wader highlights. The first **Short-eared Owl** was seen on the 16th with several subsequent sightings and a **Little Owl** was also seen near the entrance. Skywatching produced a male **Goshawk** on the 1st and a female on the 9th while the 22nd saw at least 29 migrant **Buzzards** and a juvenile **Hen Harrier** move through among the regular local **Buzzards** and **Marsh Harriers**. A **Red Kite** was seen on the 10th and **Peregrine** sightings increased while a couple of **Merlins** zipped through. On the passerine front there were several **Ring Ouzels** seen up to the 16th along with migrant **Song Thrushes**, **Blackbirds** and the usual wintering species. The odd **Brambling** and **Lesser Redpoll** were logged and a **Mealy Redpoll** (19th) was the first for a few years while **Tree Sparrows** were noted with six through on the 22nd and two more on the 26th. **Bearded Tits** were superb! There were several late **Whinchats** and **Wheatears** along with a **Tree Pipit** and a **Whitethroat** and even two **Yellowhammers** (17th) but it was the **Dusky Warbler** found by Shaun Harvey on the 29th that drew a crowd. Thankfully it was there the next day but there was no sign of the **Snow Bunting** seen the previous day and the month finished off nicely with the **Ravens** and a **Woodlark** on the 31st.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

One bird dominated the October reports – **Yellow-browed Warbler** – with possibly as many as 13 seen and heard in our recording area: Trueloves (2nd), Gunpowder Park (4th and 14th-19th), Snaresbrook (4th and 8th), Bedfords Park (4th), Mardyke (6th), Woodford Green (6th), Wanstead Flats (8th), Highams Park (8th), Walthamstow Marsh (9th), Brentwood (11th) and Walthamstow Forest (25th). Phenomenal patch birding. **Ring Ouzels** were widely spread with birds in the Leyton Flats, Dagenham Chase, Mardyke, Hornchurch, Wanstead Park and on Chingford Plain as well as regular sightings on Wanstead Flats including four on the 8th. Wanstead Flats also had **Woodlark** (14th and 26th), **Short-eared Owl** (15th), **Hawfinch** (19th), **Jack Snipe** (22nd) and 15 **White-fronted Geese** (8th). Star bird though was the **Great Grey Shrike** on the 29th. Nearby Wanstead Park held up to six **Firecrests** and a **Woodlark** on the 25th while Leyton Flats had a **Serin** (12th) and a **Hawfinch** (19th). Further **Short-eared Owls** were seen over Upminster (9th), Dagenham Chase (14th), Gallions Reach (27th) and Walthamstow Reservoirs (28th). **Firecrests** were also seen at Warley Place, Leyton Flats, Belhus Woods CP and in the Olympic Park and the latter also hosted a **Black Redstart**. An **Osprey** was over Woodford Green on the 2nd and at least one **Bittern** was back at Seventy Acres Lake.

SEPTEMBER 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

The weather was basically too nice during September for there to be any meaningful wader passage but there was a smattering of **Greenshanks**, two **Curlew Sandpipers**, three **Knot** and up to 15 **Ruff** seen on Aveley Pools. **Caspian Gulls** were picked up on the tide line regularly with perhaps six different birds seen and **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked at 51 on the 30th. A few **Sandwich** and **Arctic Terns** were seen among the scant **Common** numbers and **Blacks** were noted on the 17th and 18th when an **Arctic Skua** was also seen. A **Black-necked Grebe** was new for the year on the 7th but duck numbers were still low with little water to attract them but two **Garganey** were seen on the 18th. **Yellow Wagtails** were seen in good numbers and **Tree Pipits** were seen on the first three days while a few **Wheatear** and **Whinchat** were found but the only **Redstart** and **Spotted Flycatchers** were on the 11th. A **Great Egret** arrived on the 25th and stayed into October and a **Spoonbill** the following day did likewise. There was a good hirundine passage on the 21st when a **Kite** was also seen. The 18th and 21st were **Buzzard** days with 15 and 25 respectively and the **Hobbies** put on a great show for most of the month

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

There was a good spread of passage passerines across the area with **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Whinchats** and **Wheatears** in most suitable locations. **Redstarts** followed shortly behind with Wanstead Flats hosting the most with 11 ‘bird days’ with peaks of five on the 5th and six on the 11th. Another seven sites also held them with both Great Warley (7th) and Warley Place (11th) having three birds. All the **Pied Flycatcher** records were from the Flats with nine ‘bird days’ including three on both the 4th and 5th but it was the juvenile **Ortolan Bunting** on the 7th that stole the show. Six **Tree Pipits** were also seen there and another was over the Olympic Park on the 18th where **Black Redstarts** were still to be found. The first four **Redwings** were over Walthamstow Reservoir on the 19th with **Arctic Tern** (6th), **Knot** (7th), **Osprey** (10th) and three **Spoonbills** (18th) making for a good month! Another **Knot** was seen up Valley on

the KGV Reservoir on the 4th along with a **Turnstone** and **Slavonian Grebe**. The **Smew** was still around and there was a **Black-necked Grebe** (10th) and a fine count of 55 **Yellow Wagtails** (18th). A **Great Egret** and 74 **Little Egrets** were seen in the Mar Dyke (1st) and **Red Kites** were noted once again around Buckhurst Hill and Theydon Bois. Down on the Thames there was a fine German ringed juvenile **Caspian Gull** at the Thames Barrier Park (from 25th) and 39 **Sandwich** and a single **Little Tern** were seen at Gallions Reach on the 14th.

AUGUST 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

August is a time for passage but it took a while to get going with most of the action in the latter half of the month when 22 species of wader were recorded in just three days from the 21st with **Temminck's** (22nd) and **Little Stints**, **Wood** and **Curlew Sandpipers** being the pick. The stints stayed three days but of the two Woods, one stayed till the 29th. **Turnstones** were recorded on the 1st, 5th and 23rd with the **Spotted Redshank** returning on the 18th for the 'winter'. Tern passage was very poor with no count anywhere near 50 despite huge counts either side of us on the Thames. **Sandwich Terns** were perhaps more frequent than usual with good counts of 16 (18th) and ten (24th) with the 19th seeing 12 **Arctics** and another 28 along with three **Little Terns** on the 28th. An adult **Roseate Tern** on the 19th was the third August on the bounce for this species here. Juvenile **Little Gulls** were seen on the 20th and 28th along with odd **Med Gull** sightings. **Yellow-legged Gull** peaked at 46 (18th) and Dante Shepherd found yet another **Caspian Gull** (and 2nd cy bird) on the 10th which was seen again the next day. A smart eclipse male **Garganey** arrived on the 24th and six **Pintail** were on cue on the 29th and a single **Scoter** was seen on the 17th. **Little Egrets** reached a respectable 44 on the 9th and a **Glossy Ibis** was seen on the 6th and 11th. Passage passerines were generally scarce although **Yellow Wagtails** on the move were a daily feature. The first **Whinchat** was found on the 16th with **Wheatear** and two **Spotted Flycatchers** before the month end along with **Redstarts** on the 12th and 15th and **Tree Pipits** on three dates. An adult female **Cuckoo** was a surprise on the 12th and 14th and two juveniles were also noted. Eyes to the skies produced regular but probably local **Buzzards** and **Marsh Harriers** while hawking **Hobbies** reached seven and **Kestrels** 11. **Red Kites** were seen on the 16th and 23rd and **Osprey** and female **Goshawk** made for a good Bank Holiday.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

The tern passage at Gallions Reach was probably the most notable movement of the month with some great counts that were not mirrored by Barking Bay and Rainham suggesting that perhaps these birds are arriving overland. An unprecedented 200 **Sandwich Terns** were logged including counts of 60 (24th) and 110 (27th) along with good three figure counts of **Common Tern** and a smattering of **Arctics** and two **Black Terns** (19th). The site also hosted a **Red Kite** (20th) and up to 20 **Common Sandpipers**. There were similarly good counts of **Common Sands** in the Lee Valley on the draining KGV Reservoir along with a good selection of common waders including a **Sanderling** (6th) and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** (9th). **Garganey**, **Smew** and **Goldeneye** were present throughout with what appears to be the "Rainham" **Ibis** from the 16th-21st and a **Little Gull** (28th). A **Red-necked Grebe** there on the 21st was a good early season find and observers found **Redstart** and **Blue-headed Wagtail** the same day. **Turnstone** and **Oystercatcher** on Walthamstow added to the wader tally and the Ingrebourne

Valley also attracted the usual suspects of **Green** and **Common Sandpipers** while two **Ringed Plovers** at Fairlop waters on the 21st were a notable site record. Three more **Glossy Ibis** were seen over Buckhurst Hill on the 6th with two **Red Kites** there on the 28th while other skywatchers picked up three more **Kites**, an **Osprey** over Walthamstow (28th) and on the 30th a female **Goshawk** over Romford. The first **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Whinchats** were noted on the 6th and were then reported from many sites from mid-month with Wanstead Flats holding the peaks of seven and six on the 25th. The Flats also hosted **Tree Pipits** (21st and 25th), **Pied Flycatcher** (26th) and up to two **Redstarts** from the 22nd. Other **Redstarts** were seen at Bedfords Park (3rd), Ingrebourne Valley (21st), Dagnam Park (two on 24th), Fairlop Waters (two from 27th) and Weald Park on the 25th when 12 **Spotted Flycatchers**, **Pied Flycatcher** and a **Wood Warbler** were also seen. Other **Pied Flys** were at Waterworks NR (17th), Bedfords Park (25th) and Buckhurst Hill (27th) but it was probably the **Hoopoe** at Aldborough Hatch on the 18th that won the most plaudits.

JULY 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

A typically quiet July with a few waders beginning to trickle through including **Whimbrel**, **Green** and **Common Sandpipers**, **Black-tailed Godwits**, **Greenshank**, **Dunlin** and **Snipe**. A **Sanderling** (13th) was unusual for July. **Yellow-legged Gulls** peaked at 45 on the 23rd and Dante Shepherd found our first ever juvenile **Caspian Gull** (31st) while **Med Gulls** were seen fairly regularly. **Little Egrets** had reached 33 by the last day of the month and the two families of **Marsh Harriers** were still being seen. A **Turtle Dove** fly through on the 12th was the first this year and early **Redstarts** were seen on the 30th and 31st.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS area)

The 3rd saw three **Red Kite** sightings and four were made during the month of this increasing species. Waders were reported moving through traditional sites with up to 19 **Black-tailed Godwits** in the Ingrebourne Valley along with **Little Ringed Plovers** and up to 11 **Green Sandpipers**. The KGV Reservoir was similarly good with a high of 25 **Common Sandpipers** on the 30th and a smattering of other species. The **Goldeneye** was still present along with a **Common Scoter** (18th), 1100 **Tufted Duck** (19th) and 42 **Little Egrets** and a **Garganey** (30th). Gallions Reach also had good numbers of **Common Sandpipers** with 20 on the 24th along with 24 **Black-tailed Godwits** and even Wanstead Flats got in on the act with **Common Sands** on the 27th and 31st. A pair of **Red-crested Pochards** was seen at Walthamstow Reservoir on the 10th and a **Great Egret** flew over Beam Parklands (a thoroughly overlooked site) on the 8th. A **Grasshopper Warbler** was reeling (and seen!) in a Dagenham garden on the 25th. However, star bird of the month was the singing male **Common Rosefinch** that Jamie Partridge found on Walthamstow Marsh on the 3rd. It was seen daily up until the 12th and then again on the 20th.

JUNE 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

There were a few late waders to be seen in the early days of June including 20 **Tundra Ringed Plovers** but by the 18th the first **Green Sandpipers** were actually returning to the reserve and eight limosa race **Black-tailed Godwits** dropped in on the 30th! Duck broods were popping up all over the place and the drake **Garganey** was last seen on the 6th while our **Short-eared Owls** were last seen mid-month when I think the incredibly lush vegetation pushed them to perhaps a more coastal area. **Marsh Harriers** were still carrying food and a **Red Kite** on the 14th continued this year's run. The river was quiet with a couple of **Sandwich Terns** (4th) and regular **Med** and **Yellow-legged Gulls** but it was the singing male **Golden Oriole** on the 10th that stole the show for the month being new for the reserve and it was even seen by several lucky observers.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

A drake **Common Scoter** on the 2nd at Fairlop Waters CP was a good site record while a **Common Crane** over Hornchurch on the 5th managed to sneak through without anyone else picking it up – well done Russ! **Red Kites** were reported on several dates including three over Lambourne End on the 21st. **Spotted Flycatchers** were to be found in the regular churchyards around the **Tawneys** and **Yellow Wagtail** and **Yellowhammers** also seem to be doing well in the surrounding farmland. A pair of **Black-necked Grebes** was on Walthamstow Reservoir on the 17th with three on the KGV on the 26th. At least two male **Black Redstarts** were found on territory in the Olympic Park area and the first **Crossbill** of the summer was over Gidea Park on the 28th. The only **Turtle Dove** was seen in Aveley on the 27th.

MAY 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

Wader and tern passage continued during the month with a scattering of expected species but only the 10th stood out as properly noteworthy with 44 **Grey Plover**, 17 **Sanderling**, 14 each of **Dunlin** and **Ringed Plover**, nine **Whimbrel**, seven **Turnstone** and a **Knot** in gloomy conditions that also brought four **Med Gulls**, 65 **Common**, four **Arctic**, six **Black**, two **Sandwich** and two **Little Terns** into our stretch of the Thames. The day was wrapped up rather nicely by Fraser Simpson with a late evening fly through **Collared Pratincole**! A **Wood Sandpiper** was seen the following day and **Ringed Plover** were up to 33. There were several more **Arctic Tern** days with a dozen going north on both the 14th and 30th and there were two **Black Terns** on both the 12th and 14th. A **Stone Curlew** bedecked with colour rings was found on the 12th and the next day a **Glossy Ibis** spent a short while on Purfleet Scrape with another brief visit on the 28th. An immature drake **Garganey** arrived on the 11th and was joined by an adult male on the 14th and the latter was still being seen into June. Three **Barnacle Geese** were a little odd on the 19th. At least six **Grasshopper Warblers** were reeling amongst the commoner species and the **Wryneck** from 30th April made it through the 1st May. The odd **Wheatear** was seen during the month and a **Redstart** was found on the 3rd with the hoped for **Spotted Flycatcher** on the 29th. A **Great Egret** in full breeding plumage was found by Jerry Hoare on the 12th and was elusively seen till the 15th. **Red Kites** were noted on the 7th, 15th and 19th and a **Black Kite** was watched by Andy Tweed the following day with a female **Montagu's Harrier** quartering for 15 minutes on the 22nd. **Marsh Harriers** are doing well and there are still two **Short-eared Owls** around.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

There were nine **Red Kite** sightings during the month including three over Walthamstow Reservoir (14th) and four over Gallions Reach (24th) while **Honey Buzzards** were seen over Romford (2nd) and Upminster (4th). **Hobbies** were seen at traditional spots with an aggregation of 14 over Hooks Marsh (16th) being notable. Walthamstow, Girling and KGV Reservoirs enjoyed some wader and tern passage with **Turnstone**, **Sanderling**, **Whimbrel** and **Greenshank** all noted while five **Arctic Terns** were seen on the 1st and 2nd, three **Black Terns** on 6th and one on the 7th and a **Little Tern** (8th). Two **Black-necked Grebes** and a male **Garganey** were seen on Walthamstow on the 12th with a **Great Egret** through there on the 25th while a **Spotted Flycatcher** and **Short-eared Owl** on the KGV on the 7th were both excellent records. A tatty immature male **Garganey** was present in the Ingrebourne Valley intermittently (with a female) but was also seen at Rainham and Fairlop waters CP (27th). The Valley also hosted a **Wood Sandpiper** till the 7th and Dagenham Chase had a **Whinchat** on the 1st with another at Wanstead Flats (4th). A **Short-eared Owl** was seen there the day after and the nearby Park and the Roding Valley Meadows NR both had **Spotted Flycatchers** from the 4th. **Turtle Doves** were purring at both North and South Weald and the Lower Lee Valley held several singing male **Black Redstarts**. **Grasshopper Warblers** were still reeling at Walthamstow Marsh, Cornmill and the Ingrebourne.

APRIL 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

April is probably the busiest month of the year with comings and goings and this year was no exception with wildfowl lingering late and species like **Jack Snipe** (16th), **Brent Geese** (13th), **Merlin** (12th), **Siskin** (23rd), **Rock Pipit** (22nd) and **Water Pipit** (9th) recorded further into the month being normal.

A full summer plumaged **Razorbill** that was found on the path on the 9th was the biggest draw being the first twitchable one in the London recording area since the Fairlop bird of 1988. It eluded capture and unfortunately died on the 11th.

Most of the regular migrants put in an appearance with **Tree Pipits** (4th and 22nd), **Redstarts** (20th, 23rd & 30th), **Black Redstart** (3rd), at least five **Grasshopper Warblers** (from 12th), **Firecrest** and **Hobby** (from 13th), a good smattering of **Whinchats** (from 14th) and **Wheatears**, **Ring Ouzels** on five dates from 11th, a 'Channel Wagtail' with **Yellow** and **White Wagtails** (26th) and **Swifts** and **Cuckoo** (from 16th). A **Crossbill** on the 7th was a good spring record while a **Coal Tit** on the 13th was only about the 5th record. A female **Serin** was heard on the 7th before being seen again a couple of times on the 9th while a **Wryneck** on the 30th was a superb find out on Rainham West. There was a good passage of **Common Terns** and over 40 **Arctic Terns**, eight **Sandwich Terns** and a several **Little** and **Med Gulls** were seen on the river while a **Caspian Gull** was seen on the 23rd. **Common Scoters** were seen on several dates and **Red-breasted Merganser** were noted on the 23rd and 24th which tied in with the traditional late April wader passage with a record 23 **Knot**, **Sanderling**, **Turnstone** and **Bar-tailed Godwits** on the latter date. **Spotted Redshank**, **Greenshank**, **Ringed Plover** and **Green Sandpipers** were also noted but the wader highlight was undoubtedly the **Stone**

Curlew found on the 12th and seen again the next day. The **Ravens** made occasional visits and four were noted on the 26th suggesting that they already had two young in tow. A **Great Egret** headed through on the 20th and eyes to the skies reaped rewards with a male **Montagu's Harrier** and **Osprey** (17th), three **Red Kites**, female **Hen Harrier** (29th) and regular **Hobbies**, **Buzzards** and **Marsh Harrier** action. At least three **Short-eared Owls** made it to May so who knows...

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

Red Kites were once again a key feature of the region's skies with 25 sightings from various areas and things are even looking promising in one location. Migrant passage was fairly normal other than **Common Redstart** which probably experienced the best ever spring influx into the area from the 3rd with Wanstead Flats recording on nine days including eight on the 9th and four on the 12th, Beckton with a single on the 3rd and 30th and three on the 9th, five days and six birds from Dagenham Chase, four days from Sewardstone, two at Waterworks NR and on the KGV Reservoir and singles in the Ingrebourne Valley, West Thurrock Marshes, Fairlop Waters CP, North Weald giving a unprecedented total of at least 40.

Siberian Chiffchaffs were last seen in the Lee Valley at Waterworks NR (8th) and Walthamstow Marsh (10th) and the **Yellow-browed Warbler** reappeared in Gidea Park on the 12th while a **Brambling** lingered around Seventy Acres on the 13th. A male **Pied Flycatcher** was a great find at Low Hall, Walthamstow on the 19th and a **Wood Warbler** sang at the nearby reservoirs on the 27th. The latter site did quite well in April with **Arctic Tern** (15th) two **Black Terns** and the first area **Swifts** (16th) and **Whinchats** on the 18th and 22nd. The drake **Scaup** lingered till at least the 20th on the KGV and the site also held two **Sandwich Terns** (2nd), **Ring Ouzel** (13th), **Little Gull** (13th) and two **Common Scoter** (14th) while just north of there, a **Black Kite** went through Gunpowder Park on the 9th and the first **Spotted Flycatcher** was at Fishers Green Island on the 29th where six **Nightingales** had set up territory. Back down the Lee Valley there was a female **Black Redstart** at Waterworks NR (20th-23rd) and a male was found in the Olympic Park on the 30th. **Little Ringed Plovers** and **Cetti's Warblers** are breeding here now and a **Whinchat** was seen on the 24th. Other Whinchats were seen at Fairlop Waters CP (23rd and three on 29th) and a **Ring Ouzel** was seen there on the 8th. **Firecrests** lingered on Leyton Flats and Dagenham Chase LNR and the latter also notched up three **Ring Ouzels** (15th-16th), **Grasshopper Warbler** (from 27th) and an **Osprey** (27th). Three more **Grasshopper Warblers** were in the Ingrebourne Valley with two **Red-crested Pochards** also there on the 30th. **Ring Ouzels** were also seen on Wanstead Flats on the 11th and 26th with a **Whinchat** on the 30th and an early **Osprey** on the 3rd. Back down on the Thames other **Ospreys** were seen over Gallions Reach (11th and 30th) with a **Great Egret** there the day before, **Goshawk** (13th) and a **Roseate Tern** with 50 **Arctic Terns** on the 24th.

MARCH 2016

ESSEX compiled by Howard Vaughan

RSPB Rainham Marshes

March is a funny month as winter wanes and spring attempts a frontal assault but this year things took their time getting going. Our winter residents stayed put with the **Short-eared Owls** (at least five) entertaining into April while the pair of **Dartford Warblers** were last seen on the 21st by which stage the male was in song. Most of our **Stonechats** departed at about the

same time which was not really surprising. There was still some gull action to be had with **Iceland Gulls** on the 1st and 26th, **Caspian** (5th), several **Med Gulls**, a **Little Gull** that nearly succumbed to the 'interesting falcon' (26th) and three **Kittiwakes** (30th). **Brent Geese** were seen on the 28th and 30th and a female **Goldeneye** on the 18th was a good find. The same day saw the first **Common Scoter** and our traditional late March run saw another 24 birds through before month end. Several other species are regular in late March as they move through and **Merlin** sightings increased and up to three **Jack Snipe** showed very well from the 13th along with three **Ruff** (16th). **Firecrests** on the 16th and 19th were not that surprising and even the elusive **Great Egret** on the 23rd and 24th was almost expected. After one or two **Sand Martins** a few other migrants fought their way in before April including **Swallow**, **House Martin**, **Wheatear** (29th), **White Wagtail** and **Black Redstart** (both 30th), **Little Ringed Plover** (26th) and even **Common Tern** with four on the 30th. The **Spotted Redshank** was seen more often and **Oystercatchers** were back on patch while at least six **Marsh Harriers** continued to dominate the skies along with an impressive six sightings of **Red Kites**.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

Firecrests continued to be seen at Leyton, Warley, Bedfords Park and Dagenham Chase and the **Siberian Chiffchaff** reappeared at the Waterworks NR on the 23rd in song as did one of the duo that had wintered at The Chase. The **Scaup** continued its sojourn at this site until the 15th and this well-watched spot also hosted **Jack Snipe** (13th), two **Black-tailed Godwits** (15th), **Little Ringed Plover** (26th) and the first local **Willow Warbler** and **White Wagtail** (29th). Other passage **Jack Snipe** were seen at Orsett Fen (2nd) and Fairlop Waters (three on 13th). Two early **Whimbrel** flew over the Olympic Park (13th) and Walthamstow Reservoirs had a **Little Ringed Plover** (20th) and two **Ospreys** go through on the 25th. Another **Osprey** was seen over Collier Row on the 19th and two **Goshawks** were part of the notable raptor passage that took place over Easter.

Among the many **Buzzard** records moving through there were also an unprecedented number of **Red Kite** sightings with 38 reported (not including the Rainham six!). Obviously there will be some duplication but there were several instances of two or three birds over one site and eight were over North Weald Airfield on the 24th. Surely they are on the brink now of becoming a staple of a birder's day in Essex? **Hobbies** were seen on the very early dates on 28th at Seventy Acres and 30th over Gidea Park. Back into the Lee Valley, the **Slavonian Grebe** stayed on the KGV until the 6th with **Smew** till the 15th when the first **Sand Martin** went through along with a **Wheatear** on the 25th. The female **Smew** reappeared in Woodford Green on the 14th and another was still on Friday Lake on the 19th when a **Bittern** was seen on Seventy Acres Lake. The only other **Bittern** sighting was from the Ingrebourne on the 7th. A **Mealy Redpoll** was with **Lessers** at Cornmill Meadows (3rd) and **Short-eared owls** were seen at Gunpowder Park and Gallions Reach (26th). The latter site in Beckton also hosted **Kittiwake** (26th), **Scoter** (30th) and a **Sandwich Tern** (31st). Another **Kittiwake** was seen at Barking Bay (2nd) and a **Little Gull** was at Thames Barrier Park (28th). Two more **Caspian Gulls** and a **Little Stint** were seen at West Thurrock Marshes (13th) but this site does not get the coverage like it used to. The only two **White-fronted Geese** of the winter were seen at Belhus Woods CP on the 1st and this was one of three sites to hold **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** during the month. And saving the best for last... Wanstead Flats struck Patch Gold with an on the deck **Hooded Crow** on the 23rd.

FEBRUARY 2016

RSPB Rainham Marshes

February is often good for gulls and the month did not disappoint with several sightings of **Caspian Gull** involving at least five different individuals, **Yellow-legged Gulls**, the reappearance of the first winter **Iceland Gull** on the 27th, **Kittiwake** (28th) and several sightings of smart adult **Med Gulls**. **Grey Plover**, **Knot** and **Spotted Redshank** were scant wader highlights and two **Ruff** were seen on the 27th while the local **Oystercatchers** were back from the 8th. A single **Brent Goose** was seen on the 6th with 14 more upriver on the 22nd. The **Bittern** was last seen on the 4th and a **Common Scoter** was on the Thames on the 13th. This was a good day on the reserve with our first **Brambling** of the year and only the third record of a **Fulmar** which bobbed past the centre much to everyone's delight.

At least five each of **Marsh Harrier** and **Short-eared Owl** were present throughout the month and both **Tawny** (16th) and **Long-eared Owls** (25th) were seen as well as our resident **Barnies**. **Buzzards** and **Peregrines** were regular and at least one **Merlin** was seen sporadically out on Wennington while a male **Goshawk** drifted south on the 23rd. The **Ravens** became more irregular as they settled back into their own breeding routine but we shall see them again when the young need feeding.

Stonechats are still out on the circuit and the pair of **Dartford Warblers** are still in situ and the male bird has even been heard singing from his favourite clump on sunny days. This species would breed in this habitat on the continent and it is only here that they are tied to heathland and although I suspect that they will depart soon wouldn't it be great if they contemplated breaking the mould?

Chiffchaffs and **Blackcaps** have been seen in the woodland and a **Siberian Chiffchaff** was again seen on the 19th. Two **Yellowhammers** were occasionally reported and two **Corn Buntings** were similarly elusive.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

Firecrests were the dominant highlight for the month with at least six sites still holding one or two birds while a couple of **Siberian Chiffchaffs** were located at Dagenham Chase from the 2nd where the female **Scaup** lingered until at least the 27th. The male **Scaup** remained on Walthamstow Reservoirs till the 6th and an immature male was on the KGV on the 23rd along with two female **Smew**, **Great Northern Diver** and 13 **Goosander**. A **Common Scoter** was also reported here on the 6th. A female **Smew** was still on Seventy Acres on the 19th and **Bitterns** were seen there on the 14th and 28th while down on Walthamstow Marsh the **Brambling** lingered throughout and a **Jack Snipe** was seen on the 12th. Three **Red Kites** were seen in the mid-Lee Valley on the 3rd and the **Caspian Gull** reappeared on Wanstead Flats on the 2nd and Leyton Flats on the 22nd. **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were seen in Upminster and Belhus Woods CP but seem to be becoming scarcer every year.

JANUARY 2016

RSPB Rainham Marshes

January 1st saw the reserve get off to a good start with 92 species on the board. These included two of the **Dartford Warblers**, **Egyptian Goose**, two **Caspian Gulls** and a cracking **Siberian Chiffchaff**. All these species were seen again during the month and the **Dartford Warbler** on the 'Serin Mound' made it three for the site. An easterly on the 2nd produced 11 **Little Gulls** and a couple of **Kittiwakes** and the former were seen on several subsequent dates. **Med Gulls**, three more **Caspians** and an **Iceland Gull** (28th) made for a good gull month. Waders included unseasonal **Knot** and **Bar-tailed Godwit** along with a couple of **Avocet** and odd sightings of **Spotted Redshank**, **Grey Plover**, **Woodcock** and **Jack Snipe**. The river was quiet with a **Goosander** (8th) and up to six **Brent Geese** being the highlights while a **Bittern** was seen sporadically out on Wennington from the 23rd. At least six each of **Marsh Harrier** and **Short-eared Owl** were still around and both male and female **Merlins** were seen occasionally along with the usual **Buzzards**, **Peregrines** and tame **Kestrels** and two sightings of **Red Kite**. The **Ravens** were daily visitors. **Water Pipits** continued to show on the scrapes and a **Yellowhammer** was a good find but difficult to pin down while **Corn Bunting**, **Siskin** and **Lesser Redpoll** all made early showings for the year list. A female **Lesser Spotted Woodpecker** was seen on the 21st and was probably the most sought after bird of the month.

Metropolitan Essex (LHNS recording area)

The **Great Northern Diver** did the decent thing and stayed into the New Year and was last seen at Fairlop Waters on the 7th. A **Great Egret** there on the 2nd was the first site record while **Whooper Swan** and **Merlin** on the 17th were both excellent records. The female **Scaup** reappeared at Dagenham Chase on the 9th and stayed into February with regular **Firecrests**, two **Siberian Chiffchaffs** (from 16th) and **Jack Snipe** (8th) for company.

Nine **Black-necked Grebes** were still on the William Girling Reservoir on the 2nd and the adjacent KGV held **Great Northern Diver** till the 2nd, **Slavonian Grebe** till the 23rd, up to 129 **Goosander**, a male **Scaup** from the 17th, **Scoter** (23rd), two **Smew**, (6th) and **Brent Goose** (2nd). Further south in the Lee Valley the male **Scaup** remained on Walthamstow throughout and hosted **Little Gull** (6th), a **Brambling** (from the 3rd) and the reservoir's first **Caspian Gull** on the 10th and 14th. A couple of **Bitterns** and up to three **Smew** were seen around the Seventy Acres Lake area and a **Jack Snipe** was on Hall Marsh on the 9th. A **Raven** was seen over this area with another in the Mardyke on the 15th.

At least two different **Caspian Gulls** roamed between Leamouth and Thames Barrier Park and **Meds** were seen on the KGV, Wanstead Flats and in Valentines Park while a **Black Redstart** was in the Olympic Park on the 1st. West Thurrock Marshes held 35 **Avocet** on the 23rd and **Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers** were encouragingly noted in Wanstead Park and Woodford Green. Both these sites held **Firecrests** along with Wanstead and Leyton Flats, Warren Gorge and Bedfords Park. Star passerine though went to David Smith and the **Yellow-browed Warbler** that graced his Gidea Park garden on the 25th.

Would you like to contribute?

If you would like to contribute a monthly or quarterly highlight, to an area not already covered, please get in touch with Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne, Chair of the London Bird Club. See <http://www.lnhs.org.uk/index.php/about-us/contact-us>

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