Popularised by 'The Urban Birder', David Lindo. See the Park section of this article on his website.

The following information was compiled by Andrew Haynes:

Wormwood Scrubs known locally just as “The Scrubs”, is an open space in the north-eastern corner of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Its 75 hectares (180 acres) comprise playing fields, small areas of woodland and a fairly large section of grassland, making up one of the largest areas of common land in London. The area is recognised by Natural England as an important site of national significance. And in 2002 seven areas of woodland and coarse grassland (13.7 hectares in total) were designated as a Local Nature Reserve because of the variety of plants and animals they support.

Separated by Scrubs Lane (A219) and the West London railway line is an eastern section known as Little Wormwood Scrubs (as opposed to the “Big Scrubs”). Although also within the boundary of the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, Little Wormwood Scrubs has since April 2008 been managed by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea as one of its parks, since most of those who use the park are residents of that borough.

The future of Wormwood Scrubs is under threat due to the planned development to the north of the site to accommodate a terminus for HS2, a new underground station proposed by Transport for London which will include proposals for a viaduct cutting into the northwest corner of the site. There are new housing projects planned including high-rise apartments along the length of the northern edge. Sadly, there was an indication that there were plans to also make the rest of the site into a 'metropolitan area' with manicured grass and tree-lined avenues leading people from the train stations to the connecting stations to the east and west of The Scrubs. Please sign our petition to help save the integrity of Wormwood Scrubs http://www.saveourscrubs.org.uk/

In 1879, the War Office bought 135 acres of land known as Wormwood Scrubs to “create a metropolitan exercising ground in pursuance of the Military Forces Localisation Act 1872”. Although military ownership has continued to this day, the Wormwood Scrubs Act 1879 laid down conditions under which the area was to be owned by the Army, placing the land in the care of the Metropolitan Board of Works to ensure that, alongside military training, the land could be given over to “the perpetual use thereof by the inhabitants of the metropolis for exercise and recreation”. The Act gave the Board of Works and its successors the ability to maintain and improve the land, subject to the consent of the War Office or its successors for approval (with an adjudication process laid down for cases where approval could not be

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agreed). The Act also prevented the Army from building any “permanent erections” other than rifle butts and “their related appurtenances”. The Act allowed the Army to prohibit entry by civilians during periods of military training. It also banned military training on public holidays.

History

The Act remains in force today. The successor body to the Metropolitan Board of Works as civilian trustee is the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the Ministry of Defence has replaced the War Office. In 2005, the government made clear that the Act is still adhered to by all parties, and that the military may still use the area for training.

Habitat

Wormwood Scrubs is mainly given over to grassland, much of which is marked out as playing fields. The seven wilder areas that have been designated as a Local Nature Reserve are: (1) Central Copse, the central woodland copse; (2) Martin Bell’s Wood, on the south eastern corner close to Scrubs Lane; (3) Scrubs Lane Wood, a strip of woodland running along the eastern edge of the site and round onto the northern edge; (4) Chats Paddock, an area of thick scrub on the northern edge; (5) Lester’s Embankment, an area of scrub, brambles, hogweed and gorse marking the north-western border; (6) North West Corner, a small area of woodland on the western edge of the site; and (7) Braybrook Woods, a woodland strip running along the southern edge bordering the prison through to the western edge adjacent to Braybrook Street.

East of Scrubs Lane, is Little Wormwood Scrubs which consists of similar habit to Wormwood Scrubs, on a much smaller scale. On the Western side of the park, there is a children's play area, adventure playground and an outdoor gym, the remainder consists of a large area of cut-grass which could be used as a playing field and a sizeable area of rough grasslands and brambles, popular with finches, tits, thrushes and other small passerines. Notable birds have included a Grasshopper Warbler and Whinchat. Around the edge of the park, there are many large mature trees, with a smaller area of less mature woodland along the northern edge which backs on to the old Eurostar railway sheds. To the north of this is the Regents canal and beyond that Kensal Green Cemetery.

Species

Birds

Almost 100 species of bird are seen on (or often over) Wormwood Scrubs each year. The areas of scrub provide nesting habitat for birds, including at least four species of warbler: Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Aside from the usual summer warblers, the site also boasts a small breeding population of Meadow Pipit (probably the closest to central London). It enjoys a healthy annual passage of migrants, usually including Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Yellow Wagtail, Nightingale, Whinchat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel, Common Redstart, Spotted and Pied Flycatcher. Rarities have included Honey Buzzard, Quail, Great Grey Shrike, 3 Richard’s Pipit, Ortolan Bunting, Wryneck and Little Bunting . The site is a nightly roost for up to 5,000 Rose-ringed Parakeet in the non-breeding season.

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Mammals, reptiles and amphibians

Mammals found on the site include an occasional solitary Rabbit (“Bugsy”), Grey Squirrel, Hedgehog, Field Vole and Red Fox. Weasels are a rarely seen resident and there have been two recent Badger sightings. A bat survey has found common and Soprano Pipistrelle. Reptiles and amphibians include a population of Common Lizard (look for them in Chat’s Paddock on sunny days), along with Slow Worm, Common Frog and Common Toad.

Invertebrates

Butterflies include Small Skipper. Large Skipper, Essex Skipper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Red Admiral, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell. Among other insects are several Bumble bee species, Harlequin and Stag Beetle.

Practicalities

Directions

The nearest London Underground stations are East Acton (Central Line), south-west of the Scrubs on Erconwald Street, and White City (Central Line), south-east of the site on Wood Lane. Buses 7, 70, 72, 272, 283 stop on Du Cane Road, and bus 220 stops on Scrubs Lane. Pay and display parking is available in a car park off Scrubs Lane and also behind Hammersmith Hospital, accessed via Artillery Lane (off Du Cane Road)

Access

The park and nature reserve are open all year round and are free.

Facilities

There are no on-site facilities.

Location

Location map here.

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