

A Rock Dove (Columba rock) is perched on a dark, textured tree branch. The bird has a grey head and neck, a reddish-brown beak, and a pinkish-red eye. Its body is covered in grey feathers with darker, iridescent patches on the wings and back. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a forest setting. The text 'Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2019' is overlaid in white at the bottom of the image.

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2019



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1.0 Introduction

Four surveys were completed at Queen's Wood, London from February to May 2019 to identify which species of birds were breeding on the site. Specific attention was paid to species of high conservation value. An additional survey was completed in August 2019 especially for Eurasian Hobby. All surveys were completed by David Darrell-Lambert.

2.0 Summary

Twenty seven species of birds were recorded breeding on the site with a population range of 166 to 291 pairs. One of these species are on the Red list** of conservation importance and four are on the Amber list***.

The initial comparison with the previous breeding bird surveys in 2008 and 2013 indicate an increase in the population from 2008 to 2013 followed by a decrease from 2013 to 2019. This may reflect a natural drop after a large peak or may reflect a population downturn.

The wood still holds a high density of breeding birds for an urban site.

3.0 Method

The site was surveyed from February to May 2019, with four visits (approximately every four weeks) starting one hour before sunrise and completed within three hours. All birds were recorded on maps with their behaviour noted. Particular attention was paid to breeding birds or those that showed signs of breeding. The route taken was varied and surveys were completed in optimum field conditions (little or no wind or rain). An experienced surveyor was used. An additional survey was completed at dusk in August to locate any breeding Eurasian Hobbys.

The bird population was calculated on territorial birds singing or displaying from the same location on two or more visits. These were considered to be breeding pairs. Any birds singing or displaying on just one occasion were considered only to be possibly breeding. Where possible these were matched with other birds showing territorial behaviour nearby. These were expected to be wondering unpaired birds. 20 to 25 pairs represents 20 pairs through to be breeding and an additional 5 possible pairs.

4.0 Constraints

There were no constraints that affected the surveys at the site. All surveys were completed in ideal weather conditions (Appendix 1).

5.0 Results - nesting birds

During the surveys, 27 species of bird were recorded breeding with 166 to 291 pairs in total. One Schedule 1* listed, one is on the Red List**, four on Amber list***, 21 on the Green list**** and one is an introduced species*****. These are listed on the following page.



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- * Schedule 1 list = species that are prone to disturbance whilst breeding and it is illegal to disturb them whilst they are breeding intentionally or recklessly.
- ** Red list = Globally threatened, historical UK decline from 1800-1995, severe contraction and or the numbers of the UK breeding population have reduced (50% at least) over the last 25 years or longer-term period
- *** Amber list = Unfavourable conservation status in Europe, moderate rate of decline for both range and population size (breeding and non-breeding) in the UK
- **** Green list = A species that occurs regularly in the UK but does not qualify under the above two categories
- ***** Introduced = non-native species with a self-sustaining population in the UK with no conservation status.

Species	Number	Conservation status	Habitat Requirements
Eurasian Hobby	1 pair	Schedule 1	Most habitat and needs mature trees to breed in
Song Thrush	8 to 11 pairs	UK Red list	Scrubland/hedgerows/woodland
Stock Dove	7 to 19 pairs	UK Amber list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Eurasian Green Woodpecker	1 to 3 pairs	UK Amber list	Mixture of trees and short vegetated areas
Mistle Thrush	1 pair	UK Amber list	Small trees for nesting and open areas for feeding
Dunnock	3 pairs	UK Amber list	Trees/bushes, scrubland and grassland
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1 pair	UK Green list	Mature trees & bushes
Woodpigeon	14 to 26 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites to woodland
Tawny Owl	1 pair	UK Green list	Mature trees
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4 to 6 pairs	UK Green list	Mature trees
Eurasian Jay	2 to 5 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland and scrubland
Common Magpie	2 to 4 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes, scrubland and grassland
Carrion Crow	2 to 4 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites to woodland



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Species	Number	Conservation status	Habitat Requirements
Coal Tit	2 to 4 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Blue Tit	16 to 18 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Great Tit	18 to 29 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Long-tailed Tit	1 to 2 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Common Chiffchaff	2 to 3 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland and scrubland
Blackcap	6 to 15 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Goldcrest	2 to 5 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
British Wren	23 to 43 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Eurasian Nuthatch	5 to 8 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland
Eurasian Treecreeper	2 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland
Eurasian Blackbird	16 to 25 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
European Robin	24 to 47 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Chaffinch	1 pair	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Ring-necked Parakeet	2 to 4 pairs	UK introduced	Parks, gardens and woodland

6.0 Population change

Since three breeding bird surveys have been completed in 2008, 2012 and 2019 we are able to look at the population changes. The table below showing the totals over the last eleven years.

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Species	2008	2013	2019
European Robin	36 to 40 pairs	51 to 56 pairs	24 to 47 pairs
British Wren	35 to 42 pairs	36 to 42 pairs	23 to 43 pairs
Great Tit	28 to 32 pairs	34 to 37 pairs	18 to 29 pairs
Woodpigeon	19 to 30 pairs	27 to 36 pairs	14 to 26 pairs
Eurasian Blackbird	24 to 36 pairs	29 to 36 pairs	16 to 25 pairs
Stock Dove	5 to 7 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	7 to 19 pairs
Blue Tit	30 to 38 pairs	35 to 38 pairs	16 to 18 pairs
Blackcap	9 to 11 pairs	8 pairs	6 to 14 pairs
Song Thrush	6 to 9 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	8 to 11 pairs
Eurasian Nuthatch	3 to 5 pairs	5 to 8 pairs	5 to 8 pairs
Great Spotted Woodpecker	8 to 10 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	4 to 6 pairs
Eurasian Jay	3 to 5 pairs	5 to 7 pairs	2 to 5 pairs
Goldcrest	2 to 3 pairs	1 to 2 pairs	2 to 5 pairs
Common Magpie	2 to 5 pairs	1 to 3 pairs	2 to 4 pairs
Carrion Crow	2 to 4 pairs	3 to 4 pairs	2 to 4 pairs
Coal Tit	2 to 3 pairs	3 to 5 pairs	2 to 4 pairs
Rose-ringed Parakeet	nil	nil	2 to 4 pairs
Duncock	2 pairs	5 pairs	3 pairs
Common Chiffchaff	3 to 4 pairs	0 to 1 pairs	2 to 3 pairs
Eurasian Green Woodpecker	1 to 2 pairs	1 to 5 pairs	1 to 3 pairs
Eurasian Treecreeper	2 pairs	4 to 7 pairs	2 pairs
Long-tailed Tit	2 pairs	1 to 2 pairs	1 to 2 pairs
Eurasian Hobby	nil	nil	1 pair
Mistle Thrush	nil	nil	1 pair
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1 pair	1 pair	1 pair



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Species	2008	2013	2019
Tawny Owl	1 pair	1 to 2 pairs	1 pair
Chaffinch	3 to 5 pairs	3 pairs	1 pair
European Goldfinch	nil	1 pair	nil
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1 pair	nil	nil
Eurasian Greenfinch	1 pair	nil	nil
Total pairs	231 to 301 pairs	286 to 347 pairs	166 to 291 pairs

The population shows an increase from 2008 to 2013 of approximately 50 to 100 pairs and then drops down in 2019 back to similar levels in 2008. Note that the maximum number of pairs remains very similar from 2008 to 2019.

For two species, the surveys completed in 2008 and 2013 were reviewed to see if the bird population would be assessed at the same levels with the current method.

The two species looked at were Eurasian Blackbird and Blue Tit. This showed that the populations in 2008 and 2013 were over-estimated for the minimum number of pairs using the current methodology. The results show that for both species the populations have not changed as significantly as first appeared. See the table below, where the tip figures in 2008 and 2012 show the reviewed breeding estimates.

Species	2008	2013	2019
Blue Tit	17 to 34 pairs (30 to 38 pairs)	20 to 40 pairs (35 to 38 pairs)	16 to 18 pairs
Eurasian Blackbird	12 to 35 pairs (24 to 36 pairs)	22 to 39 pairs (29 to 36 pairs)	16 to 25 pairs

If the lower end of the population was over estimated for all the majority of species in 2008 then the result in 2019 may not have changed that significantly.

What is not clear from the surveys is why the population has dropped from 2012. Is this the maximum population the wood can support? Would there be a decrease in following years as the food resources have to replenish themselves? Or is this is long-term trend of bird populations dipping and the 2012 results are what we should expect? More studies on the habitat, the success rate of pairs and comparing this to national trends could give some answers. Also looking at the effects of human disturbance within the wood would also be important.

The growing numbers of Ring-necked Parakeets is a concern. In April 2019 one pair were seen using a hole to nest in which in the previous two years was used by Eurasian Nuthatches.



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Currently there appears to be no change in the Eurasian Nuthatches population but their success rate had not been studied, previously or currently.

7.0 Recommendations

Whilst the bird population appears to be stable over the long term, it is important to try to improve the site. These recommendations are designed to benefit the birds directly and indirectly by exposing more people to the wonderful wood.

- **Keep and increase the areas of holly and ivy covered trees across the site.** These provide dense areas for birds to roost in and provide berries during the autumn and winter. This is important for the Tawny Owls as it generates cover for roosting during the day. Planting more holly would benefit the bird population as this would also provide more insect during the winter month. Being an evergreen plant they are warming during the winter and therefore attract more insects, an important food source for birds.
- **Erecting of nest boxes.** This will provide secure nesting areas for various species and increase the success rates. To reduce the risk of vandalism and disturbance nest boxes should be placed as high as possible. Since there are woodpeckers and Grey Squirrels in the wood, which can break into wooden nest boxes (to eat eggs and or the young) then Schwegler nest boxes, made of woodcrete, should be used (available from www.nhbs.com). These should stop these predators. The table below shows the quantities and types suggested for the wood. These should be cleaned out every during the winter to reduce the spread of diseases and ticks.

Nest box type	What species is it for?	Location	Quantities
Small hole	Blue, Coal and Great Tits	Throughout	40
Medium hole	Starling	Throughout	5
Large hole	Stock Dove	Throughout	10
Large open fronted	Tawny Owl	Opposite ends of the wood	2



- **Create a feeding station.** The wood will generate large amounts of food to support the bird population, creating a feeding station would benefit the site. It would provide a constant food source attracting more species to the wood. Some foods would then become available throughout the year and encourage species such as European Goldfinch to breed nearby. Viewing the birds present would also be easier. Seeing birds in woodlands is difficult since they can be high up in the canopy and a feeding station would bring them lower down. To create a feeding station several bird feeders should be placed close together. To reduced disturbance to them, some of the gardens that border the wood could be encouraged to have their own feeding station. The following should be taken into account
 - Ensuring a variety of food is available including: mixed seed, peanuts, sunflower heart and fat balls, throughout the year
 - Feeders are squirrel proof (Brome Squirrel Buster are a good brand)
 - Feeders are placed high up or in a secure area to reduce disturbance from people
 - They should be cleaned out every three to six months with disinfectant and dried fully to reduce the spread of any diseases.
- **Community based events.** These events would provide various benefits, not only educational but also increase membership and publicity for the site. Almost any activity from litter picking to guided walks for various different taxon will benefit the site. Activities could include the following:-
 - Nest box building - a children and adult activity
 - Listening to birds - using microphones to hear the different birds present - children and adult activity
 - Making your own bird feeders - covering pine cones in fat and then rolling them in mixed seed, these can be hung up in the wood or in participants gardens - children and adult activity
 - Drawing birds - once the bird feeders are up then people could watch and draw the birds
 - Photography sessions - this could cover landscape to all sorts of wildlife present
 - Bird ringing - once nest boxes are being used, local bird ringers could be asked to come in and ring the young birds, showing people the birds in the hand and possibly providing information about where these birds travel to, from recoveries of birds if they are caught again at other sites
 - Cleaning out nest boxes - during autumn (August) the nest boxes should have all nesting material cleared out. Any owl boxes could also be checked for owl pellets which if analysed would identify what the Tawny Owls are feeding on. Owl boxes should be checked by trained individuals only.
- **Bird surveys.** Future bird surveys should be undertaken to see what happens to the population in later years

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Dated 19 January 2020



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Appendix 1 Survey times and weather conditions

Date	Time	Weather Conditions	Survey Conditions
24 February 2019	06:11 to 08:24 hrs	2 to 4c, 0% cloud cover and no wind	Excellent
27 March 2019	04:48 to 07:15 hrs	6 to 8c, 0 to 100 % cloud cover and no wind	Excellent
26 April 2019	04:35 to 07:22 hrs	7 to 11c, 0% cloud cover and no wind	Excellent
23 May 2019	04:08 to 06:12 hrs	10 to 12c, 0 to 25% cloud cover and southwest wind 10kph	Very good
20 August 2019	19:43 to 20:51 hrs	19c, 25% cloud cover and no wind	Excellent

Equipment

Binoculars Zeiss 10 x 42 Victory SF. Cameras Nikon D850 with 300mm Nikkor lens and Sony NX100 MKII . Sound recording equipment Telinga Pro8 MKII with Sound Devices Mixpre3 recorder.

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British Trust for Ornithology www.bto.org.uk

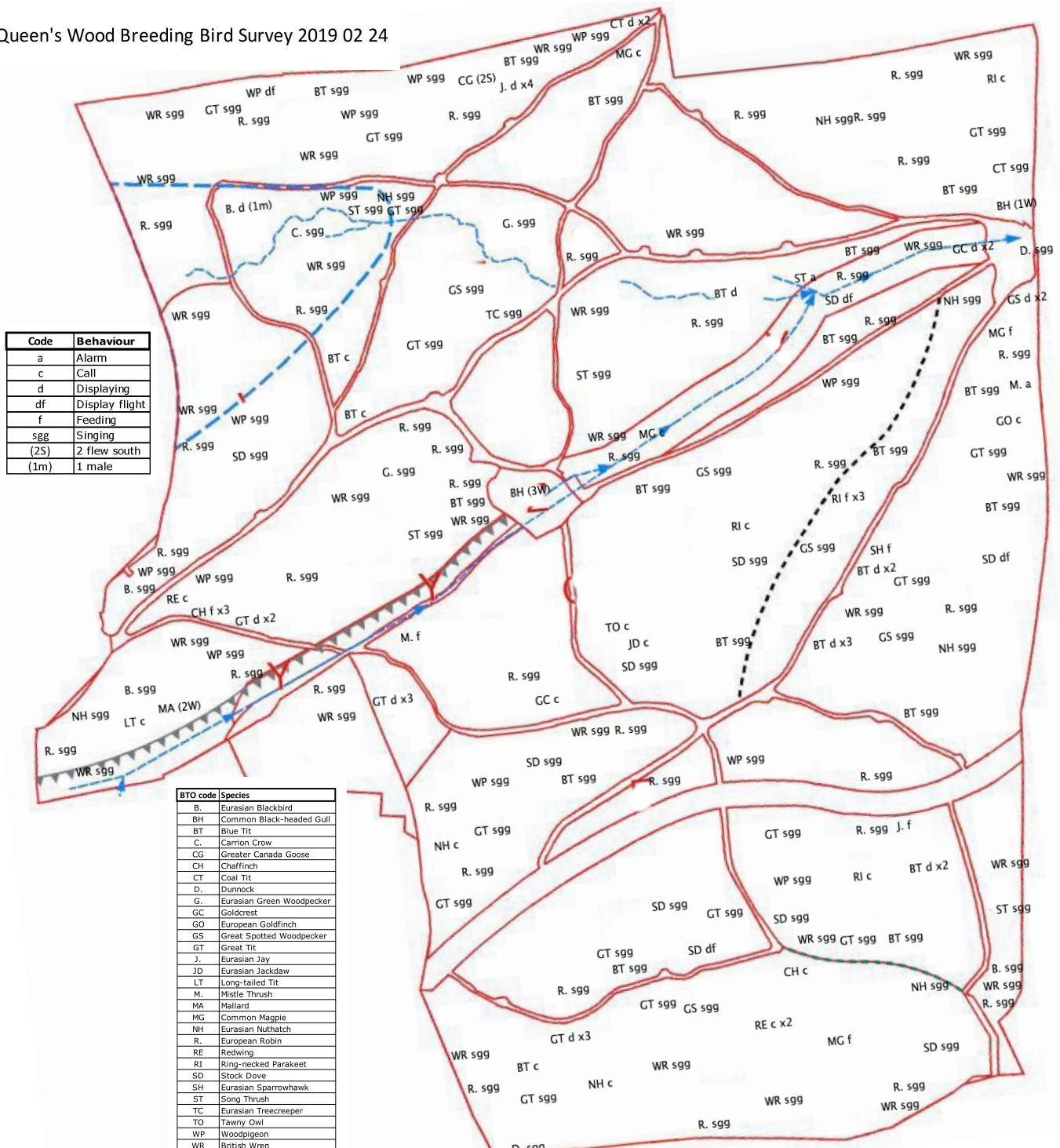
Castell. R., Ferguson-Lees. J. and Leech. D. 2011 A Field Guide To Monitoring Nest



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Appendix 2 Survey map - 24 February 2019

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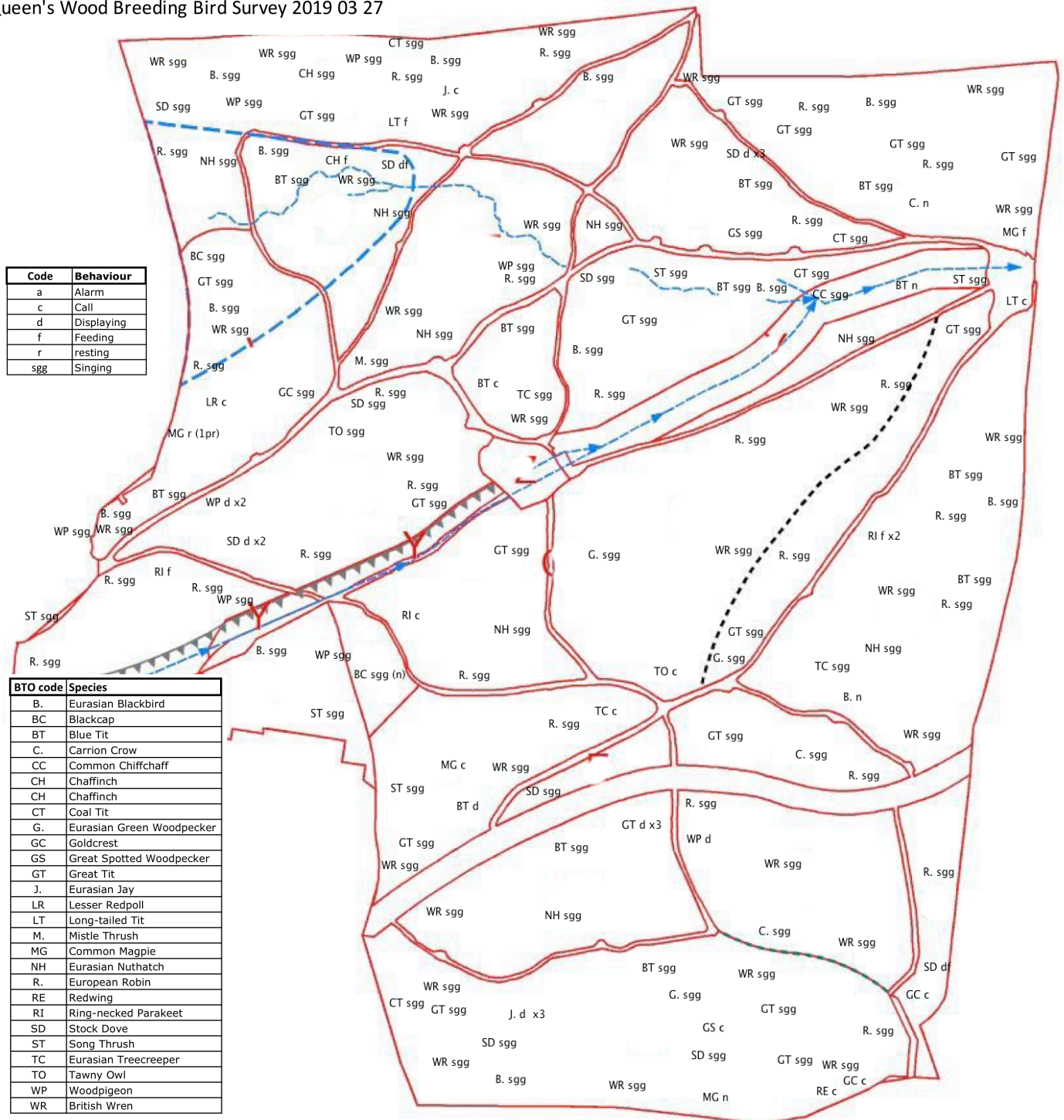




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Appendix 3 Survey map - 27 March 2019

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2019 03 27

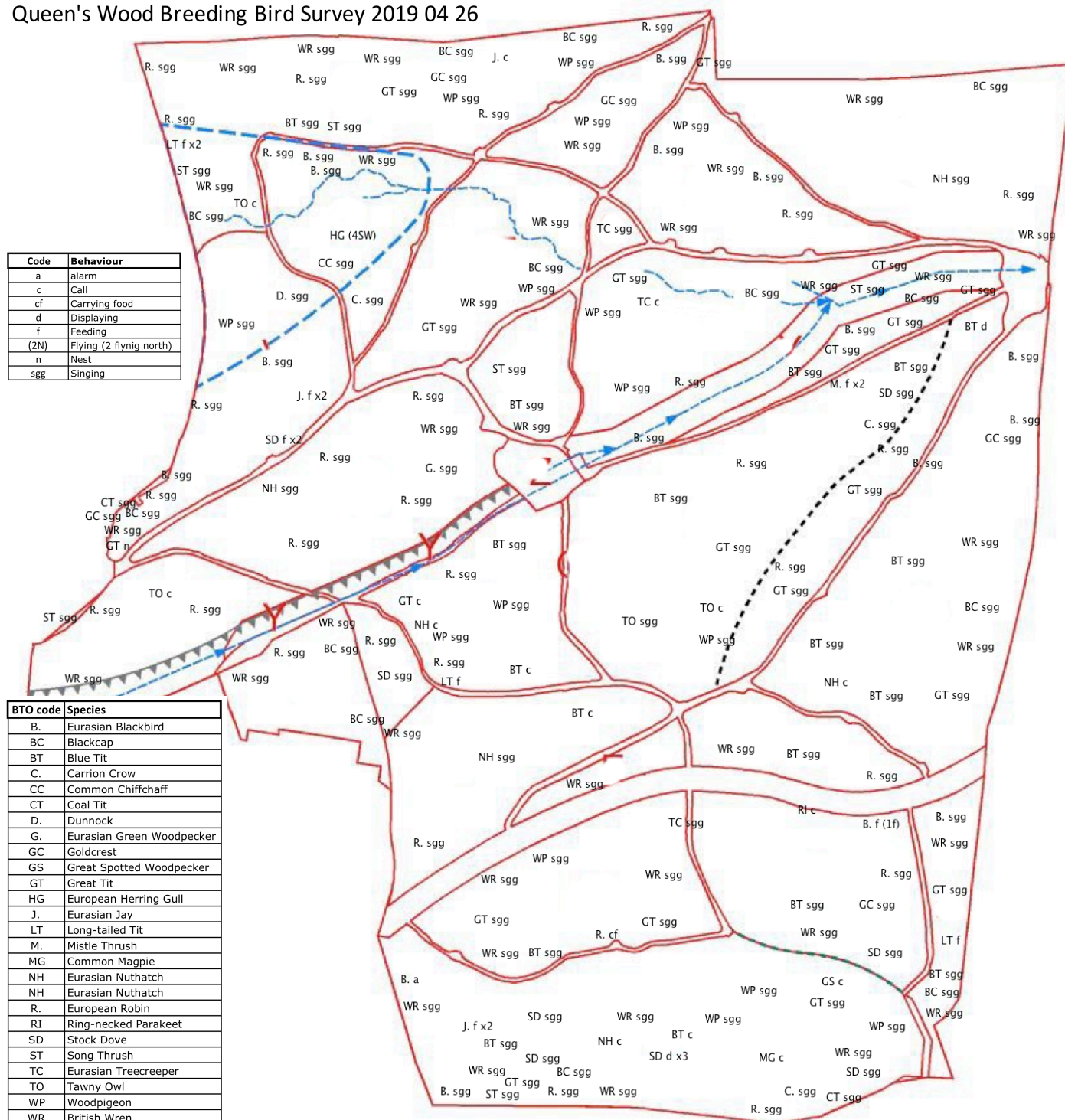




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Appendix 4 Survey map - 26 April 2019

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Appendix 5 Survey map - 23 May 2019

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