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A small bird with a yellow crest is perched on a branch. The bird has a yellow crest, a black stripe through its eye, and a brown body. It is looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus green and blue, suggesting a forest setting. The branch it is perched on is dark and has some small, reddish-brown spots.

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2023

David Darrell-Lambert, Bird Brain UK Limited
November 2023



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1.0 Introduction

Five surveys were completed at Queen's Wood, London from February to August 2023 to identify which species of birds were breeding on the site. Specific attention was paid to species of high conservation value. This is included a specific survey for Eurasian Hobby in August 2023. All surveys were completed by David Darrell-Lambert.

2.0 Summary

Twenty nine species of birds were recorded breeding on the site with a population range of 211 to 330 pairs. One of these species are on the Red list** of conservation importance and four are on the Amber list***. Two species is on this Schedule 1 list.

A comparison across the previous three surveys since 2008 indicates this falls within the natural fluctuation peaking in 2013 with 307 pairs and 228 pairs in 2019. The average for 2023 was 270 pairs.

The wood holds a high density of breeding birds for an urban site and probably reflects the nature way it is left to develop rather heavily manicured environment.

3.0 Method

The site was surveyed from February to May 2023, 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 dawn in August to locate 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. The success rate of each pair was not attempted as this would prove to impractical and possibly impossible for some species or 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, 29 species of bird were recorded breeding with 211 to 329 pairs in total. Two Schedule 1* listed, one is on the Red List**, five on Amber list*** (one of which is also a Schedule



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1 species), 22 on the Green list**** (one is also a Schedule 1 listed species) and one is an introduced species*****. These are listed on the following page.

* 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 (UK Green list)	Mature trees to nest in
Firecrest	1 to 2 pairs	Schedule 1 (UK Amber list)	Woodland
Song Thrush	4 to 7 pairs	UK Red list	Scrubland/hedgerows/woodland
Mallard	1 pair	UK Amber list	Woodland and waterbodies
Stock Dove	11 to 15 pairs	UK Amber list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Eurasian Green Woodpecker	2 to 3 pairs	UK Amber list	Mixture of trees and short vegetated areas
Mistle Thrush	2 to 4 pairs	UK Amber list	Small trees for nesting and open areas for feeding
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1 pair	UK Green list	Mature trees & bushes
Eurasian Buzzard	1 pair	UK Green list	Mature trees & bushes
Woodpigeon	16 to 29 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites to woodland
Tawny Owl	1 to 2 pairs	UK Green list	Mature trees

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Experts in the field



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Species	Number	Conservation status	Habitat Requirements
Great Spotted Woodpecker	4 to 8 pairs	UK Green list	Mature trees
Eurasian Jay	3 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland and scrubland
Common Magpie	4 to 7 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes, scrubland and grassland
Carrion Crow	5 to 6 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites to woodland
Coal Tit	4 to 7 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Blue Tit	24 to 29 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Great Tit	20 to 26 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Long-tailed Tit	2 to 4 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
Common Chiffchaff	2 to 4 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland and scrubland
Blackcap	1 to 11 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Goldcrest	4 to 7 pairs	UK Green list	Trees/bushes for nesting - various food sources
British Wren	38 to 55 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Eurasian Nuthatch	6 to 11 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland
Eurasian Treecreeper	1 pairs	UK Green list	Woodland
Eurasian Blackbird	13 to 26 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
European Robin	37 to 47 pairs	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland
Chaffinch	1 to 3 pair	UK Green list	Various from parks/brownfield sites and woodland



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Species	Number	Conservation status	Habitat Requirements
Ring-necked Parakeet	2 to 9 pairs	UK introduced	Parks, gardens and woodland

6.0 Population change

Four breeding bird surveys have been completed over the last sixteen years. The table below shows the population ranked on the average per year.

Species	2008	2013	2019	2023
European Robin	36 to 40 pairs	51 to 56 pairs	24 to 47 pairs	37 to 47 pairs
British Wren	35 to 42 pairs	36 to 42 pairs	23 to 43 pairs	38 to 55 pairs
Great Tit	28 to 32 pairs	34 to 37 pairs	18 to 29 pairs	20 to 26 pairs
Woodpigeon	19 to 30 pairs	27 to 36 pairs	14 to 26 pairs	16 to 29 pairs
Blue Tit	17 to 34 pairs (30 to 38 pairs) ¹	20 to 40 pairs (35 to 38 pairs) ¹	16 to 18 pairs	24 to 29 pairs
Eurasian Blackbird	12 to 35 pairs (24 to 36 pairs) ¹	22 to 39 pairs (29 to 36 pairs) ¹	16 to 25 pairs	13 to 26 pairs
Stock Dove	5 to 7 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	7 to 19 pairs	11 to 15 pairs
Song Thrush	6 to 9 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	8 to 11 pairs	4 to 7 pairs
Blackcap	9 to 11 pairs	8 pairs	6 to 14 pairs	1 to 11 pairs
Great Spotted Woodpecker	8 to 10 pairs	10 to 12 pairs	4 to 6 pairs	4 to 8 pairs
Eurasian Nuthatch	3 to 5 pairs	5 to 8 pairs	5 to 8 pairs	6 to 11 pairs
Eurasian Jay	3 to 5 pairs	5 to 7 pairs	2 to 5 pairs	3 pairs
Carrion Crow	2 to 4 pairs	3 to 4 pairs	2 to 4 pairs	5 to 6 pairs
Coal Tit	2 to 3 pairs	3 to 5 pairs	2 to 4 pairs	4 to 7 pairs
Goldcrest	2 to 3 pairs	1 to 2 pairs	2 to 5 pairs	4 to 7 pairs
Common Magpie	2 to 5 pairs	1 to 3 pairs	2 to 4 pairs	4 to 7 pairs
Common Chiffchaff	3 to 4 pairs	0 to 1 pairs	2 to 3 pairs	2 to 4 pairs



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Species	2008	2013	2019	2023
Eurasian Treecreeper	2 pairs	4 to 7 pairs	2 pairs	1 pairs
Dunnock	2 pairs	5 pairs	3 pairs	nil
Eurasian Green Woodpecker	1 to 2 pairs	1 to 5 pairs	1 to 3 pairs	2 to 3 pairs
Long-tailed Tit	2 pairs	1 to 2 pairs	1 to 2 pairs	2 to 4 pairs
Chaffinch	3 to 5 pairs	3 pairs	1 pair	1 to 3 pair
Rose-ringed Parakeet	nil	nil	2 to 4 pairs	2 to 9 pairs
Tawny Owl	1 pair	1 to 2 pairs	1 pair	1 to 2 pairs
Mistle Thrush	nil	nil	1 pair	2 to 4 pairs
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1 pair	1 pair	1 pair	1 pair
Eurasian Hobby	nil	nil	1 pair	1 pair
Firecrest	nil	nil	nil	1 to 2 pairs
Eurasian Buzzard	nil	nil	nil	1 pair
European Goldfinch	nil	1 pair	nil	nil
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1 pair	nil	nil	nil
Eurasian Greenfinch	1 pair	nil	nil	nil
Total pairs	206 to 296 pairs	263 to 350 pairs	167 to 290 pairs	211 to 330 pairs

With four sets of data to review there appears to be population rises and falls across the timeframe. The year 2019 shows the lowest population and by 2023 showing the population rising again.

¹ The bird population assessment has varied since the first two surveys. For Blue Tit and Eurasian Blackbird these have been adjusted to reflect the current methodology. The bracketed figures show the previous assessment of the population

The two species with largest variation across this period are British Wren and Great Tit which are the 2nd & 3rd commonest species. The decrease in the Great Tit population may indicate a lack of suitable nesting sites, without studying the success rates we can not confirm this. Similarly the increase in British Wren may illustrate increased food and or nesting locations, further studies would be required specifically focusing the success rate to clarify these theories.



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Species	2008	2013	2019	2023	Average
British Wren	35 to 42 pairs (38.5 pairs)	36 to 42 pairs (39 pairs)	23 to 43 pairs (33 pairs)	38 to 55 pairs (46.5 pairs)	39.3 (+7.25)
Great Tit	28 to 32 pairs (30 pairs)	34 to 37 pairs (35.5 pairs)	18 to 29 pairs (23.5 pairs)	20 to 26 pairs (23 pairs)	28 (-5)

There are three species of bird which no longer breed in Queen's Wood. European Goldfinch one pair was breeding in 2013, this species prefers less dense canopy and therefore the habitat is no suitable for them. Eurasian Greenfinch one pair was breeding in 2008 and like European Goldfinch has a preference to gardens, scrub and more open habitat and unlikely to breed within a woodland environment. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker were breeding in the 2008 survey but not since, it has suffered from a 91% decline across the UK from 1967-2020. Since the 1990 numbers have plummeted in the London Area and the majority of site no longer hold this species

Five new species have started to breed in the woods. These are Rose-ringed Parakeet, Mistle Thrush, Eurasian Hobby, Firecrest and Eurasian Buzzard.

The occurrence of Rose-ringed Parakeets breeding may lead to future problems. Being a non-native species their presence is likely to affect the ecosystem, previous studies have show some links to population decreases with Eurasian Nuthatch, Stock Dove and Great Spotted Woodpecker. It may be possible with the spread of urban Eurasian Buzzard and possible colonisation of Eurasian Goshawk, these predators pray on the parakeet and thus help to control their population.

Mistle Thrush has been breeding for the last two surveys, one pair in 2023 produced one brood and attempted a second, the outcome of this was not known. This is an interesting occurrence as this species likes to feed in open areas but clearly the breeding habitat is perfect here.

The presence of Eurasian Buzzard breeding here is an illustration of the species rapid spread across the UK since the population crash and began to recover in the 1990. This is likely to be common species throughout the capital.

Four Firecrest were recorded wintering resulting in at least one pair. This may be temporary change and could also be a reflection of milder weather from climate change. Future surveys will identify what is happening. There has been an upturn in the Goldcrest population which has a similar ecology.

Eurasian Hobby has been reported to be breeding in the area for a number of years. This secretive species has a later breeding cycle and generally harder to locate. There isn't enough room for the more than one pair in the woods.

Eight species of bird were recorded and not found to be breeding here. The majority they would only breed in non-wood habitat. These are Canada Goose, Greylag Goose, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Feral Pigeon. Redwing breeding in a more northern latitude with closest large populations in Norway. It is unlikely to breed in Queen's Wood.



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7.0 Recommendations

The bird population in Queen's Wood fluctuates from year to year, whilst this appears to stable the actions could be taken to help main the wildlife populations present which help the bird population. These recommendations are designed to benefit the birds directly and indirectly by exposing more people to the wonderful wood.

- **Dog free zones.** Managing the impacts of non-native species is import and during COVID the impact of increased numbers of domestic dog on nature reserves affected the chemical composition of the soil and therefore the plant life present. Free roaming domestic pet have a negative impact on breeding birds. Managing some areas to be dog free would assist the majority of taxons present. Friendly signage would express the issues involved and still allow dog in the wood.
- **Keep and increase the areas of holly and ivy covered trees across the site.** Now that Firecrest are present in the wood increasing and maintaining the presence of these evergreen become more important. They are warm during the winter months and therefore hold more insect which is an important food source for both Firecrest and Goldcrest, plus other species such as British Wrens. In addition they 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.** What is unknown across there site is the success rates of the majority of the breeding birds. Nestboxes would provide safe location and simple way to monitor the species of *paridae* (species of tit). To minimise the risk of vandalism and disturbance nest boxes should be placed as high as possible. With the presence of 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



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- **Create a feeding station.** Whilst the wood provides an abundant supply of food more could be provided to increase the productivity. A constant supply of wood would be available to adult birds whilst breeding. It would also be easier to view some species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker. In other countries this has been a common practice to enable the view of species which normally frequent the upper reaches of woods. 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:-
 - A variety of food is available including: mixed seed, peanuts, sunflower heart and fat balls, throughout the year to attract different species
 - 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 would provide wide reaching benefits, for both the short and long term. Interacting with present and possible future people using the wood plus illustrate the benefit of conversation including with your mental health, will cover both aspects. Almost any activity from litter picking to guided walks for taxons will benefit the site. Activities could include the following:-
 - Nest box building and installation - a children and adult activity (with appropriate risk assessment)
 - Listening to birds - using microphones to hear the different birds present to dawn chorus guided walks - 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
 - Illustrating birds - drawing and or painting the birds or other wildlife/landscape
 - Photography sessions - this could cover landscape to all sorts of wildlife present
 - Bird ringing - once nest boxes are being used, local bird ringers could come in to 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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Appendix 1 Survey times and weather conditions

Date	Time	Weather Conditions	Survey Conditions
23 February 2023	05:48 to 08:55 hrs	5 to 7c, 90 to 100% cloud cover and NE wind up to 9 kph	Very good
12 March 2023	05:29 to 06:48 hrs	8c, 20 % cloud cover and light SW wind	Very good
29 April 2023	04:29 to 07:27 hrs	5 to 8c, 90% cloud cover and no wind	Very good
14 May 2023	04:23 to 06:23 hrs	6 to 8c, 100% cloud cover and no wind	Very good
13 August 2023	07:34 to 08:15 hrs	17c, 50% cloud cover and SW wind up to 7 kph	Very good

Equipment

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

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Appendix 2 Survey map - 23 February 2023

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2023 02 23



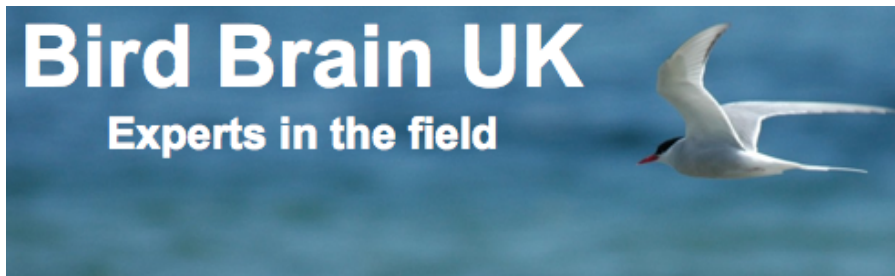


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Appendix 3 Survey map - 12 March 2023

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2023 03 12





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Appendix 4 Survey map - 29 April 2023

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2023 04 29





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Appendix 5 Survey map - 14 May 2023

Queen's Wood Breeding Bird Survey 2023 05 14

