

LONDON BIRD REPORT 2014

LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



LONDON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society publishes ornithological and other natural history records for the area within 20 miles of St Paul's Cathedral. As well as Ornithology, other interests in natural history are catered for through the Society's Sections which record and study the major groups of flora and fauna, and the habitats in which they are found. Meetings organised by each Section are open to all members.

New members, beginners and experts alike, are welcome. An extensive programme of talks and field meetings, open to all, is provided throughout the year. As well as the annual *London Bird Report*, the Society publishes a journal, *The London Naturalist*, each year and its *Newsletter* every quarter. Members have access to a large lending and reference library of natural history books and can join one or more of several reading circles which circulate many natural history journals at a fraction of the cost of subscribing direct.

Yearly subscriptions range from £20 (for ordinary members) through £16 for senior members (over 65 years and who have been in continuous membership for ten years or more) to £5 for students (under 18 years of age, or receiving full-time education). Additional family members who enjoy all the benefits of membership except separate publications pay only £4 each. Cheques should be made payable to the London Natural History Society and sent to the Assistant Treasurer:

Robin Blades, 32 Ashfield Road, London, N14 7JY.

Further copies of this issue of the *London Bird Report* may be obtained (price £8.00 plus £2.00 UK postage and packing) from:

Catherine Schmitt, 4 Falkland Avenue, London, N3 1QR.

Back numbers of most recent issues are also available from the same address. Cheques should be made payable to the London Natural History Society.

London Natural History Society
c/o The Linnean Society of London
Burlington House
Piccadilly
London, W1J 0BF

<http://www.lnhs.org.uk>

Front cover: Sparrowhawk at Rickmansworth. (Andrew Moon)

LONDON BIRD REPORT

NO.79 FOR THE YEAR 2014

PRODUCED BY THE LBR EDITORIAL BOARD



London
Natural
History
Society

PUBLISHED MAY 2016

CONTENTS

Introduction and Acknowledgements - Pete Lambert	5
Rarities Committee and Recorders	7
Recording Arrangements	8
Map of the London Area	9
Mini-gazetteer of Sites	10
Review of the Year - Nick Rutter	15
Contributors to the Systematic List	19
Birds of the London Area	27
Swans to Shelduck - Alex Massey	28
Dabbling Ducks - Malcolm Kendall	34
Diving Ducks - David Bradshaw	40
Gamebirds - Bob Watts	46
Divers to Cormorant - Ian Woodward	48
Hérons - Ian Ellis	53
Raptors - Andrew Moon	58
Rails - Quentin Given	67
Oystercatcher to Jack Snipe - John Colmans and Roy Beddard	70
Common Snipe to Phalaropes - Andrew Self	81
Skuas to Gulls - Richard Bonser	89
Terns - David Campbell	100
Auks to Cuckoo - Peter Newmark	103
Owls to Woodpeckers - Paul Goodman	109
Larks to Waxwing - Tim Harris	116
Wren to Thrushes - Roy Woodward, Andrew Self, Clive Herbert, Henry Wyn-Jones and Pete Lambert	124
Warblers - Paul Whiteman	133
Crests to Treecreeper - Derek Coleman	141
Shrikes to Sparrows - Alan Lewis	149
Chaffinch to Siskin - Angela Linnell	156
Linnet to Hawfinch - Anthony Stones	159
Buntings - Bob Watts	164

Appendix I & II: Escapes and Hybrids - Pete Lambert	168
Appendix III: Non-proven & non-submitted records and records in circulation	175
First and Last Dates of Regular Migrants	178
Ringing Report - Paul Roper	179
The Breeding Bird Survey in London - Ian Woodward	186
The Peregrine Falcon in Inner London - David Johnson.....	189
Blyth's Reed Warbler at Wanstead Flats, June 29th 2014 - Nick Croft	200
Changes to the London Area List and Published Rarities - Andrew Self	203
The Bonxie Influx in London in October 2014 - Andrew Moon	208
Reminiscences of a London Birder - Andrew Moon	218
The Birds of The Warren, Bexleyheath, 1988-2014 - Andrew S. Waller	229
A Breeding Bird Survey of Barnes Common and Putney Lower Common - Jan Wilczur	232
Checklist of Birds of the London Area and Guide to Contributors of Records	239
Breeding Criteria	248
Indexes of Common and Scientific Names	250

Links to files on the LNHS website

Full and Mini Gazetteers of Sites (see page 8)

Checklist and Guide (see page 239)

On the London Bird Club webpage - scroll down to 'Bird Recording':

<http://www.lnhs.org.uk/ornithology1.htm>

Rarities

As above. Click on the 'Rarities' link.

Foreign-ringed Black-headed Gulls (see page 185)

The Peregrine Falcon in Inner London (see page 189)

On the Publications webpage:

<http://www.lnhs.org.uk/Publications.htm#LBR2014>

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER AT WANSTEAD FLATS, JUNE 29TH 2014 - THE THIRD FOR LONDON

NICK CROFT

May had started off where April hadn't quite finished, with the late arrival of our last Spring migrants; namely Whinchat, Tree Pipit, Reed and Sedge Warbler, Common Tern, Cuckoo and Spotted Flycatcher. Then the weather got nicer and the birding worse.

Just because you had a few new migrants to whet the appetite you go out thinking there could be more! The thought that there might just be one more interesting migrant can keep you going to the end of the month. Then comes June and by that time any inland patch birder is already casting envious eyes to reports coming from coastal sites, and to make matters worse, especially those just out of reach of a well-planned-out smash and grab/tick and run. Still Wanstead Park and Flats are at their glorious best at this time of year; the trees in full leaf, the air thick with scent of honeysuckle, elder and freshly mown grass. Time for one more patch tick before the dragons, damsels and butterflies become the objects of desire and the inevitable torpor of June?

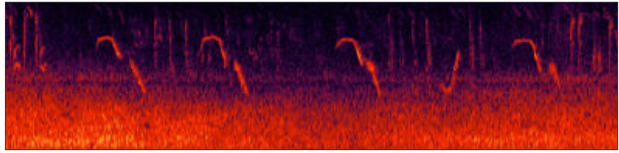
The weather had changed again by the end of the month as a tongue of low pressure had been pushing in from the near continent over the previous days, dumping good birds on the coast from Dorset, up the east coast to the western isles - Shetland of course taking the lion's share.

If only... Blyth's Reed Warbler, Acrocephalus dumetorum, singing male in good habitat, Mosina, Tartu County, Estonia. (Rein Kuresoo)

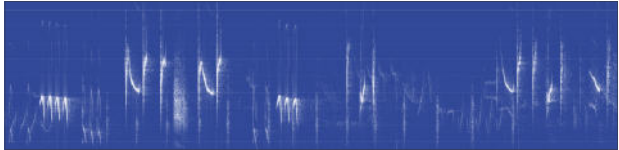


Sonograms of Blyth's Reed Warbler song:

Top: David Darrell-Lambert, London Borough of Redbridge, England (May 29th 2014).



Bottom: Stuart Fisher, Punkaharju, Savonlinna, Southern Savonia, Finland (June 29th 2014).



Oblivious to the weather patterns we just know the grottier the weather the better the birding, though we probably grumbled at one or other of our collective meetings at the end of Long Wood that we could have done with this weather earlier and no good would come of it now. Come the change in weather our luck changed too. Big time! A change of luck that will be what this May/Spring/Year will be remembered for (at least amongst Wanstead birders). And that piece of good fortune came in (I would say shape, but few if any saw anything of the elusive bird) the astonishingly beautiful song of a Blyth's Reed Warbler on the morning of the 29th. The improbability of it all reflected in the national weekly summary reports from the big two sightings services: Bird Guides 'most sensationally'; and RBA 'more remarkably still' shared the incredulity that a small brown bird with a great voice should be found in Wanstead.

... and true enough it was most sensationally and more remarkably lucky. If I hadn't thought I had heard a Willow Warbler I would not have gone via the fairground copse to Jubilee Pond and then on to Cat & Dog Pond. If there I hadn't heard the singing Reed Bunting I would have not been out of position on my return to the SSSI, and if it hadn't been for the lack of decent birds I would have probably not have gone to check the heather patch and heard our unlikely visitor. But I did and it did.

Luckily for me, I had heard the Warham Greens bird in full song in Norfolk a couple of years back, and luckily for me, as it happened I had just found a singing, local, Marsh Warbler a few days earlier with which to compare. I was left with BRW - the clincher for me the 'high low' phrase (see Dave Darrell-Lambert's sonogram above) - but I hadn't had any conclusive views.

"Anybody about today? May have an interesting warbler!"
"Has elements of Blyth's Reed Warbler."

The bird was just a few feet from me, yet had been completely invisible. Being situated near the busy Central Road didn't help much, the sound of traffic masking some of the delicate phrases emanating from the thicket. Yes, I played a lure, and as quick as you like it appeared at the top of the bramble, and as quick as it had come it vanished again into the thick vegetation.

Things hadn't improved when Dan Hennessy turned up (luckily on holiday), or later Bob Vaughan (day-off), or Marco Johnson (semi-retired) though we did get to see it was an acro with a greyer tinge to the back than you'd expect on a Reed Warbler; none of

them had heard a singing Blyth's before. Luck was again on hand when Stuart Fisher, his interest roused by the flurry of excited texts, made a slight detour on his way between jobs. His broad grin confirmed our deliberations. The news could be released.

My phone went into melt-down as we trooped around the broom and bramble hiding-place of our illustrious singer; a notorious one-day wonder and major blocker for many London listers; and, as only the third record for London, I imagine a good number turned up after I had to leave for work. Someone (who shall remain nameless), a lone dissenter, tried to say it was a Marsh Warbler; luckily many a better birder than I put him straight.

I can only imagine the profanity that erupted from Tim Harris, having left his phone at home, on reading my texts on his return from work. Happily the bird was still singing, though more intermittently as night fell, when of course it did a bunk. That didn't stop a small and optimistic crowd from turning up at day break. Funny thing birding: I felt I'd let these people down in some way; and as for the euphoria of finding such a good bird? It was good, but not as good as spotting my first Rook on the patch. Lucky it was a spring bird, and singing any other time of the year it would have been just another Reed Warbler, not that I've anything against Reed Warblers...

Previous London records

In early October 2001, an unstreaked *Acrocephalus* was discovered at Canary Wharf, in the Docklands area of Greater London. Andy Middleton and Ken Murray were fairly certain that it was a Blyth's Reed Warbler and Andy took extensive video footage of the bird. Unfortunately, coming just after the September 11th terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York, and because Canary Wharf itself had already been mooted as a potential target for a terrorist attack, they were not allowed to release the news. The grabs from the video confirm that they had indeed found a Blyth's Reed Warbler.

On June 16th 2003 at Fishers Green, a singing male was recorded, but it was only after its departure that its identity was confirmed from the 11 minutes of recorded song.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to David Darrell-Lambert for allowing me the use of his recordings which can be heard on the Wanstead birding blog, Xeno Canto and David's own website:

<http://wansteadbirding.blogspot.co.uk/p/stus-sounds-of-wanstead.html>

<http://www.xeno-canto.org/180043>

http://birdbrainuk.com/BBUK/Blog/Entries/2014/5/30_Another_good_London_Bird.html

Thanks also to Rein Kuresoo of NaTourEst Wildlife Tours, Estonia (<http://natourest.ee>) for permission to reproduce his photo.

Nick Croft, Flat 2, Romford Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 9HY