

## Wick Country Park – Wildlife Sightings – 2023

### **Introduction**

Starting in 2020, it was decided to carry out a monthly wildlife walk in the Wick County Park, generally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, depending on weather, holidays etc. The aims of the walk are:

1. To enjoy the park, it's wildlife and get some fresh air.
2. To record and count the wildlife we see/hear, namely: birds, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals, and anything else of note, e.g. moths and reptiles.
3. To gain a greater understanding of what wildlife lives in and/or uses the park and monitor any changes in their populations.
4. To promote the wildlife of the park to the Friends group and general public via the Website and Facebook etc.
5. To share our wildlife recordings with all relevant groups and organisations e.g. Basildon Council, all County Recorders, Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group, etc.

### **Methodology**

We will walk roughly the same route each month, covering the most likely wildlife friendly habitats of the park. The number of each individual species seen or heard is recorded to gain some idea of abundance/population. We will also attempt to record whether a species is breeding in the park.

It would be impossible to record 100% of the wildlife that lives in or uses the park but over time, by carrying out a regular count, we will be able to record the vast majority of the wildlife that exists in the park and get a rough estimate of their numbers. However, for some species, e.g. nocturnal species, a more targeted approach may be needed, i.e. specific nighttime walks or events. One such event is the annual "moth night", which began in 2021 and as a result we now have started to build records of the moth species in the park. We have also held evening bat watches and a wildlife picnic during the summer.

### **Reporting**

Each month, an email report will be issued, recording the wildlife identified that month. Then at the end of the year, an annual report will be issued. This report will compare year to year, highlighting any noticeable differences between the years.

All bird records will be sent to the Essex Bird Recorder, as part of the wider monitoring of UK bird populations. Similarly, all butterfly, moth and dragonfly records will be sent to the various Essex recorders for these orders of insects. Amphibians and reptiles will be recorded via an online recording site for such animals. Mammals have not been included in this wider recording process at the moment, mainly because we see so few, but this may be something to consider in the future, especially in respect of bat species.

## Species Recorded in 2023

Below are the detailed lists of all the wildlife seen/heard during 2023, compared to the 2022 details set alongside.

### Birds 2023 – 54 Species

| Summary of Birds recorded in WCP - 2023 |                            |               |                 |             |               |                 |             |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Number of Species                       | 54                         | Visits        | 13              |             |               |                 |             |
|   |                            | 2023          |                 |             | 2022          |                 |             |
| Common Name                             | Scientific Name            | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | % of Visits | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | % of Visits |
| Barn Swallow                            | Hirundo rustica            | 8             | 5               | 38%         | 15            | 5               | 38%         |
| Black-headed Gull                       | Chroicocephalus ridibundus | 112           | 10              | 77%         | 65            | 10              | 77%         |
| Canada Goose                            | Branta canadensis          | 9             | 8               | 62%         | 19            | 8               | 62%         |
| Carrion Crow                            | Corvus corone              | 7             | 13              | 100%        | 16            | 13              | 100%        |
| Cetti's Warbler                         | Cettia cetti               | 2             | 1               | 8%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Common Blackbird                        | Turdus merula              | 7             | 10              | 77%         | 9             | 10              | 77%         |
| Common Buzzard                          | Buteo buteo                | 2             | 8               | 62%         | 1             | 1               | 8%          |
| Common Chaffinch                        | Fringilla coelebs          | 2             | 2               | 15%         | 2             | 3               | 23%         |
| Common Chiffchaff                       | Phylloscopus collybita     | 10            | 5               | 38%         | 6             | 7               | 54%         |
| Common Gull (Mew Gull)                  | Larus canus                | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 1             | 1               | 8%          |
| Common House Martin                     | Delichon urbicum           | 8             | 3               | 23%         | 2             | 2               | 15%         |
| Common Kestrel                          | Falco tinnunculus          | 1             | 3               | 23%         | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Common Kingfisher                       | Alcedo atthis              | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 1             | 1               | 8%          |
| Common Moorhen                          | Gallinula chloropus        | 7             | 11              | 85%         | 8             | 13              | 100%        |
| Common Reed Warbler                     | Acrocephalus scirpaceus    | 5             | 5               | 38%         | 6             | 5               | 38%         |
| Common Snipe                            | Gallinago gallinago        | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 1             | 1               | 8%          |
| Common Starling                         | Sturnus vulgaris           | 80            | 6               | 46%         | 15            | 7               | 54%         |
| Common Swift                            | Apus apus                  | 5             | 5               | 38%         | 2             | 2               | 15%         |
| Common Tern                             | Sterna hirundo             | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 1             | 2               | 15%         |
| Common Whitethroat                      | Sylvia communis            | 3             | 4               | 31%         | 3             | 3               | 23%         |
| Common Wood Pigeon                      | Columba palumbus           | 70            | 13              | 100%        | 25            | 13              | 100%        |
| Duncock                                 | Prunella modularis         | 4             | 5               | 38%         | 4             | 8               | 62%         |
| Eurasian Blackcap                       | Sylvia atricapilla         | 11            | 7               | 54%         | 8             | 7               | 54%         |
| Eurasian Blue Tit                       | Cyanistes caeruleus        | 18            | 12              | 92%         | 14            | 12              | 92%         |
| Eurasian Bullfinch                      | Pyrrhula pyrrhula          | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 1             | 1               | 8%          |
| Eurasian Collared Dove                  | Streptopelia decaocto      | 6             | 9               | 69%         | 4             | 7               | 54%         |
| Eurasian Coot                           | Fulica atra                | 3             | 10              | 77%         | 5             | 11              | 85%         |
| Eurasian Jay                            | Garrulus glandarius        | 3             | 4               | 31%         | 2             | 8               | 62%         |
| Eurasian Magpie                         | Pica pica                  | 14            | 12              | 92%         | 16            | 13              | 100%        |
| Eurasian Siskin                         | Spinus spinus              | 12            | 1               | 8%          | 3             | 1               | 8%          |
| Eurasian Skylark                        | Alauda arvensis            | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 1             | 1               | 8%          |

|                           |                                   |    |    |      |    |    |     |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----|----|------|----|----|-----|
| Eurasian Sparrowhawk      | Accipiter nisus                   | 1  | 3  | 23%  | 0  | 0  | 0%  |
| Eurasian Wren (British)   | Troglodytes troglodytes indigenus | 7  | 6  | 46%  | 6  | 8  | 62% |
| European Goldfinch        | Carduelis carduelis               | 18 | 12 | 92%  | 14 | 12 | 92% |
| European Green Woodpecker | Picus viridis                     | 2  | 7  | 54%  | 5  | 5  | 38% |
| European Greenfinch       | Chloris chloris                   | 5  | 7  | 54%  | 7  | 5  | 38% |
| European Herring Gull     | Larus argentatus                  | 2  | 6  | 46%  | 4  | 9  | 69% |
| European Robin            | Erithacus rubecula                | 17 | 12 | 92%  | 17 | 12 | 92% |
| Fieldfare                 | Turdus pilaris                    | 60 | 3  | 23%  | 1  | 1  | 8%  |
| Great Cormorant           | Phalacrocorax carbo               | 3  | 2  | 15%  | 6  | 1  | 8%  |
| Great Crested Grebe       | Podiceps cristatus                | 2  | 3  | 23%  | 0  | 0  | 0%  |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker  | Dendrocopos major                 | 1  | 4  | 31%  | 1  | 2  | 15% |
| Great Tit                 | Parus major                       | 5  | 10 | 77%  | 6  | 6  | 46% |
| Grey Heron                | Ardea cinerea                     | 0  | 0  | 0%   | 2  | 1  | 8%  |
| Greylag Goose             | Anser anser                       | 4  | 1  | 8%   | 3  | 1  | 8%  |
| House Sparrow             | Passer domesticus                 | 13 | 10 | 77%  | 6  | 3  | 23% |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull  | Larus fuscus                      | 2  | 4  | 31%  | 1  | 3  | 23% |
| Lesser Whitethroat        | Sylvia curruca                    | 1  | 1  | 8%   | 2  | 4  | 31% |
| Long-tailed Tit           | Aegithalos caudatus               | 12 | 11 | 85%  | 22 | 9  | 69% |
| Mallard                   | Anas platyrhynchos                | 12 | 13 | 100% | 12 | 9  | 69% |
| Northern Lapwing          | Vanellus vanellus                 | 9  | 1  | 8%   | 4  | 1  | 8%  |
| Peregrine Falcon          | Falco peregrinus                  | 0  | 0  | 0%   | 2  | 1  | 8%  |
| Red Kite                  | Milvus milvus                     | 1  | 2  | 15%  | 0  | 0  | 0%  |
| Redwing                   | Turdus iliacus                    | 67 | 4  | 31%  | 30 | 2  | 15% |
| Rock Dove (Feral)         | Columba livia 'feral'             | 2  | 1  | 8%   | 15 | 3  | 23% |
| Rook                      | Corvus frugilegus                 | 0  | 0  | 0%   | 20 | 1  | 8%  |
| Song Thrush               | Turdus philomelos                 | 2  | 5  | 38%  | 3  | 4  | 31% |
| Spotted Flycatcher        | Muscicapa striata                 | 0  | 0  | 0%   | 1  | 1  | 8%  |
| Stock Dove                | Columba oenas                     | 1  | 1  | 8%   | 3  | 2  | 15% |
| Tufted Duck               | Aythya fuligula                   | 3  | 2  | 15%  | 0  | 0  | 0%  |
| Western Jackdaw           | Coloesus monedula                 | 3  | 1  | 8%   | 3  | 1  | 8%  |
| White Wagtail (Pied)      | Motacilla alba yarrellii          | 2  | 2  | 15%  | 2  | 2  | 15% |
| Yellowhammer              | Emberiza citrinella               | 0  | 0  | 0%   | 2  | 1  | 8%  |

As in 2022, we recorded birds on 13 visits during 2023 (12 monthly visits plus the wildlife picnic,) and identified 54 bird species, which is in line with previous years: (2020 – 53; 2021 – 53; 2022 – 56.) After a record 10 new species in 2022, it was always going to be difficult to add new bird species to our list and only 2 new species were added to the park list in 2023 - Great Crested Grebe and Red Kite. A pair of Great Crested Grebes were present at the lake for several months and we did have hopes that they might breed but no evidence of breeding was seen, and we certainly did not see any grebe chicks. Red Kites are becoming more common in Essex and with possibly as many as 30 pairs breeding in the county, numbers are likely to increase further. Two birds were seen in 2023, both giving great views, even without binoculars, and hopefully we will see more of these fabulous birds in future years.

Canada Goose, appear to be continuing their decline at the lake and as in 2022, some months they are not there at all. Numbers are down, despite chicks being fledged and reaching adulthood each year. Perhaps there is too much disturbance at the lake – we can only speculate on why their numbers have reduced. Where they go is also unknown. Sort distance summer migrants Common Chiffchaff and Eurasian Blackcap continue to do well in the park, with up to 10 Chiffchaff and 11 Blackcap present in the park last year, although Chiffchaff were present for fewer months compared to 2022. Common House Martin and Common Swift also show a slight increase on 2022 sightings, which is welcome news for these much declined species. Common Starling and Common Wood Pigeon were both seen in large numbers last year, but I feel these were one-off instances, rather than increases in abundance of these species. However, by recording each month we may see some long term changes in populations over time. Fieldfare and Redwing, both winter visitors, were present in good numbers in 2023. Numbers vary each year for these “thrush” species and depend on weather, food supply on breeding grounds, and breeding success during the spring.

Otherwise, most of our resident bird populations appear to be stable, with no noticeable increases or reductions apparent.

Finally, it was good to record Kingfisher again in the park, showing that this species uses the lake for feeding, probably more regularly than we realise. Sadly, we did not record Bullfinch, or Common Tern, this year and only 1 Lesser Whitethroat. Fingers crossed for sightings of these species in 2024!

We now have 4 years data of bird numbers in the park and here is the total summary of all the birds seen in the park over the last 4 years:

| Total Summary of Birds recorded in WCP - All Years |                                   |               |                 |             |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Number of Species                                  | 70                                | Visits        | 49              |             |
| Common Name  | Scientific Name                   | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | % of Visits |
| Barn Swallow                                       | <i>Hirundo rustica</i>            | 15            | 18              | 38%         |
| Black-headed Gull                                  | <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> | 300           | 40              | 83%         |
| Canada Goose                                       | <i>Branta canadensis</i>          | 52            | 36              | 75%         |
| Carrion Crow                                       | <i>Corvus corone</i>              | 16            | 49              | 102%        |
| Cetti's Warbler                                    | <i>Cettia cetti</i>               | 2             | 4               | 8%          |
| Common Blackbird                                   | <i>Turdus merula</i>              | 10            | 38              | 79%         |
| Common Buzzard                                     | <i>Buteo buteo</i>                | 2             | 9               | 19%         |
| Common Chaffinch                                   | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>          | 3             | 11              | 23%         |
| Common Chiffchaff                                  | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>     | 10            | 21              | 44%         |
| Common Gull (Mew Gull)                             | <i>Larus canus</i>                | 10            | 5               | 10%         |
| Common House Martin                                | <i>Delichon urbicum</i>           | 30            | 10              | 21%         |
| Common Kestrel                                     | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>          | 1             | 6               | 13%         |
| Common Kingfisher                                  | <i>Alcedo atthis</i>              | 1             | 2               | 4%          |
| Common Moorhen                                     | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>        | 8             | 46              | 96%         |
| Common Pheasant                                    | <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>        | 1             | 1               | 2%          |
| Common Reed Bunting                                | <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>       | 1             | 1               | 2%          |
| Common Reed Warbler                                | <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>    | 6             | 18              | 38%         |
| Common Snipe                                       | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>        | 1             | 1               | 2%          |
| Common Starling                                    | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>           | 80            | 32              | 67%         |
| Common Swift                                       | <i>Apus apus</i>                  | 11            | 11              | 23%         |
| Common Tern  | <i>Sterna hirundo</i>             | 1             | 2               | 4%          |
| Common Whitethroat                                 | <i>Sylvia communis</i>            | 5             | 13              | 27%         |
| Common Wood Pigeon                                 | <i>Columba palumbus</i>           | 70            | 49              | 102%        |
| Dunnock  | <i>Prunella modularis</i>         | 5             | 23              | 48%         |

|                           |  |    |    |      |
|---------------------------|--|----|----|------|
| Eurasian Blackcap         | <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>                | 11 | 21 | 44%  |
| Eurasian Blue Tit         | <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>               | 35 | 47 | 98%  |
| Eurasian Bullfinch        | <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>                 | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Eurasian Collared Dove    | <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>             | 8  | 25 | 52%  |
| Eurasian Coot             | <i>Fulica atra</i>                       | 5  | 41 | 85%  |
| Eurasian Jay              | <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>               | 4  | 18 | 38%  |
| Eurasian Magpie           | <i>Pica pica</i>                         | 16 | 48 | 100% |
| Eurasian Siskin           | <i>Spinus spinus</i>                     | 12 | 2  | 4%   |
| Eurasian Skylark          | <i>Alauda arvensis</i>                   | 1  | 3  | 6%   |
| Eurasian Sparrowhawk      | <i>Accipiter nisus</i>                   | 1  | 8  | 17%  |
| Eurasian Wren (British)   | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes indigenus</i> | 10 | 31 | 65%  |
| European Goldfinch        | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>               | 27 | 45 | 94%  |
| European Green Woodpecker | <i>Picus viridis</i>                     | 5  | 24 | 50%  |
| European Greenfinch       | <i>Chloris chloris</i>                   | 7  | 19 | 40%  |
| European Herring Gull     | <i>Larus argentatus</i>                  | 20 | 21 | 44%  |
| European Robin            | <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>                | 23 | 47 | 98%  |
| Fieldfare                 | <i>Turdus pilaris</i>                    | 60 | 6  | 13%  |
| Goldcrest                 | <i>Regulus regulus</i>                   | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Great Cormorant           | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>               | 6  | 8  | 17%  |
| Great Crested Grebe       | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>                | 2  | 3  | 6%   |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker  | <i>Dendrocopos major</i>                 | 3  | 11 | 23%  |
| Great Tit                 | <i>Parus major</i>                       | 9  | 31 | 65%  |
| Grey Heron                | <i>Ardea cinerea</i>                     | 3  | 4  | 8%   |
| Greylag Goose             | <i>Anser anser</i>                       | 4  | 5  | 10%  |
| House Sparrow             | <i>Passer domesticus</i>                 | 13 | 23 | 48%  |
| Lesser Black-backed Gull  | <i>Larus fuscus</i>                      | 6  | 13 | 27%  |
| Lesser Whitethroat        | <i>Sylvia curruca</i>                    | 2  | 7  | 15%  |
| Little Egret              | <i>Egretta garzetta</i>                  | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Little Grebe              | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>            | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Long-tailed Tit           | <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>               | 22 | 33 | 69%  |
| Mallard                   | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>                | 12 | 44 | 92%  |
| Mute Swan                 | <i>Cygnus olor</i>                       | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Northern Lapwing          | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>                 | 9  | 2  | 4%   |
| Peregrine Falcon          | <i>Falco peregrinus</i>                  | 2  | 1  | 2%   |
| Red Kite                  | <i>Milvus milvus</i>                     | 1  | 2  | 4%   |
| Redwing                   | <i>Turdus iliacus</i>                    | 67 | 10 | 21%  |
| Rock Dove (Feral)         | <i>Columba livia 'feral'</i>             | 15 | 7  | 15%  |
| Rook                      | <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>                 | 20 | 3  | 6%   |
| Sedge Warbler             | <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>        | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Song Thrush               | <i>Turdus philomelos</i>                 | 3  | 17 | 35%  |
| Spotted Flycatcher        | <i>Muscicapa striata</i>                 | 1  | 1  | 2%   |
| Stock Dove                | <i>Columba oenas</i>                     | 3  | 9  | 19%  |
| Tufted Duck               | <i>Aythya fuligula</i>                   | 3  | 4  | 8%   |
| Western Jackdaw           | <i>Coloesus monedula</i>                 | 21 | 4  | 8%   |
| White Wagtail (Pied)      | <i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>          | 2  | 5  | 10%  |
| Yellowhammer              | <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>               | 2  | 1  | 2%   |

Our list is now up to 70, which is quite surprising, and I never expected to see so many species in such a small area.

The list above shows the largest daily count of birds seen during all of our walks and the number of times that species has been seen. The percentages shown, can be viewed as the likelihood of seeing that species on a visit to the park, although the seasons need to be taken into consideration here, as many of the birds will only be seen at certain times of year e.g., Common Whitethroat has been seen on 27% of our walks but in winter the likelihood of seeing this bird will be nil as it's a summer migrant.

### Butterflies 2023 – 18 Species

| Summary of Butterflies recorded in WCP - 2023 |                        |               |                 |             |               |                 |             |
|---|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Number of Species                             | 18                     | Visits        | 13              |             |               |                 |             |
| 2023  |                        |               |                 | 2022        |               |                 |             |
| Common Name                                   | Scientific Name        | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | % Sightings | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | % Sightings |
| Brimstone                                     | Gonepteryx rhamni      | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 2             | 1               | 9%          |
| Brown Argus                                   | Aricia agestis         | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Comma Butterfly                               | Polygonia c-album      | 1             | 2               | 15%         | 5             | 3               | 27%         |
| Common Blue                                   | Polyommatus icarus     | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 3             | 2               | 18%         |
| Essex Skipper                                 | Thymelicus lineola     | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Gatekeeper                                    | Pyronia tithonus       | 240           | 2               | 15%         | 122           | 2               | 18%         |
| Green-veined White                            | Artogeia napi          | 4             | 1               | 8%          | 1             | 1               | 9%          |
| Holly Blue                                    | Celastrina argiolus    | 20            | 3               | 23%         | 5             | 3               | 27%         |
| Large Skipper                                 | Ochlodes venatus       | 2             | 1               | 8%          | 1             | 1               | 9%          |
| Large White                                   | Pieris brassicae       | 15            | 4               | 31%         | 5             | 4               | 36%         |
| Marbled White                                 | Melanargia galathea    | 6             | 2               | 15%         | 8             | 1               | 9%          |
| Meadow Brown                                  | Maniola jurtina        | 50            | 5               | 38%         | 55            | 3               | 27%         |
| Orange Tip                                    | Anthocharis cardamines | 2             | 1               | 8%          | 3             | 1               | 9%          |
| Painted Lady                                  | Vanessa cardui         | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 1             | 1               | 9%          |
| Peacock Butterfly                             | Inachis io             | 11            | 4               | 31%         | 6             | 2               | 18%         |
| Red Admiral                                   | Vanessa atalanta       | 8             | 4               | 31%         | 2             | 3               | 27%         |
| Ringlet                                       | Aphantopus hyperantus  | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Small Copper                                  | Lycaena phlaeas        | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |
| Small Heath                                   | Coenonympha pamphilus  | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 2             | 1               | 9%          |
| Small Skipper                                 | Thymelicus sylvestris  | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 2             | 1               | 9%          |
| Small Tortoiseshell                           | Aglais urticae         | 1             | 1               | 8%          | 5             | 2               | 18%         |
| Small White                                   | Artogeia rapae         | 24            | 4               | 31%         | 7             | 2               | 18%         |
| Speckled Wood                                 | Pararge aegeria        | 4             | 5               | 38%         | 6             | 6               | 55%         |
| White-letter Hairstreak                       | Strymonidia w-album    | 0             | 0               | 0%          | 0             | 0               | 0%          |

In 2023, we saw butterflies on 7 of our walks and identified 18 species of butterfly compared to 19 in 2022, (2021 – 22; 2020 – 21.) No new species were added to our list last year. As has been reported nationally, several butterfly species did very well in 2023, and this was reflected in the park. Gatekeeper, Holly Blue, Large White, Peacock, Red Admiral, and Small White, were all seen in record numbers during the year. Let’s hope we see many of their offspring in 2024. Sadly, there were also some losers too, we did not see any Common Blue or Small Skipper and only identified 1 Essex Skipper. It will be interesting to see if this improves in 2024. We also failed to see Brown Argus and White Letter Hairstreak but both are small butterflies and could very easily be missed. The park has proven to be an excellent place to see butterflies in the summer months and long may this continue.

Our overall total for the park remains unchanged at 24 – see below:

| <b>Total Summary of Butterflies recorded in WCP - All Years</b> |                               |                      |                        |                    |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Number of Species</b>  | <b>24</b>                     | <b>Visits</b>        | <b>49</b>              |                    |
| <b>Common Name</b>  | <b>Scientific Name</b>        | <b>Max Day Count</b> | <b>No of Sightings</b> | <b>% Sightings</b> |
| Brimstone   | <i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>      | 2                    | 4                      | 8%                 |
| Brown Argus   | <i>Aricia agestis</i>         | 3                    | 2                      | 4%                 |
| Comma Butterfly   | <i>Polygonia c-album</i>      | 5                    | 8                      | 16%                |
| Common Blue   | <i>Polyommatus icarus</i>     | 6                    | 7                      | 14%                |
| Essex Skipper   | <i>Thymelicus lineola</i>     | 6                    | 4                      | 8%                 |
| Gatekeeper  | <i>Pyronia tithonus</i>       | 240                  | 8                      | 16%                |
| Green-veined White  | <i>Artogeia napi</i>          | 6                    | 7                      | 14%                |
| Holly Blue  | <i>Celastrina argiolus</i>    | 20                   | 9                      | 18%                |
| Large Skipper   | <i>Ochlodes venatus</i>       | 3                    | 4                      | 8%                 |
| Large White   | <i>Pieris brassicae</i>       | 23                   | 15                     | 31%                |
| Marbled White   | <i>Melanargia galathea</i>    | 17                   | 6                      | 12%                |
| Meadow Brown  | <i>Maniola jurtina</i>        | 135                  | 15                     | 31%                |
| Orange Tip  | <i>Anthocharis cardamines</i> | 3                    | 4                      | 8%                 |
| Painted Lady  | <i>Vanessa cardui</i>         | 1                    | 1                      | 2%                 |
| Peacock Butterfly   | <i>Inachis io</i>             | 11                   | 11                     | 22%                |
| Red Admiral   | <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>       | 8                    | 10                     | 20%                |
| Ringlet   | <i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>  | 6                    | 3                      | 6%                 |
| Small Copper  | <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>        | 2                    | 2                      | 4%                 |
| Small Heath   | <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>  | 2                    | 2                      | 4%                 |
| Small Skipper   | <i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>  | 6                    | 5                      | 10%                |
| Small Tortoiseshell   | <i>Aglais urticae</i>         | 5                    | 7                      | 14%                |
| Small White   | <i>Artogeia rapae</i>         | 25                   | 14                     | 29%                |
| Speckled Wood   | <i>Pararge aegeria</i>        | 9                    | 22                     | 45%                |
| White-letter Hairstreak   | <i>Strymonidia w-album</i>    | 2                    | 1                      | 2%                 |

As previously mentioned, I feel we may someday get a colony of Purple Hairstreak in the oak trees and may get the odd migrant at times but we are probably pretty close to identifying all current butterflies in the park with the above list and I do not see many additions in future.

## Dragonflies – 6 Species

| Summary of Dragonflies/Damselflies recorded in WCP - 2023 |                       |               |                 |               |                 |
|---|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Number of Species   | 6                     |               |                 |               |                 |
|   |                       | 2023          |                 | 2022          |                 |
| Common Name   | Scientific Name       | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | Max Day Count | No of Sightings |
| Azure Damselfly   | Coenagrion puella     | 0             | 0               | 1             | 2               |
| Black-tailed Skimmer                                      | Orthetrum cancellatum | 0             | 0               | 4             | 1               |
| Blue-tailed Damselfly                                     | Ischnura elegans      | 5             | 2               | 7             | 3               |
| Brown Hawker  | Aeshna grandis        | 2             | 1               | 0             | 0               |
| Common Blue Damselfly                                     | Enallagma cyathigerum | 2             | 1               | 0             | 0               |
| Common Darter   | Sympetrum striolatum  | 2             | 1               | 3             | 1               |
| Large Red-eyed Damselfly                                  | Erythromma najas      | 1             | 1               | 0             | 0               |
| Migrant Hawker  | Aeshna mixta          | 9             | 3               | 3             | 2               |
| Willow Emerald  | Chalcolestes viridis  | 0             | 0               | 2             | 2               |

6 species were recorded in 2023, the same number as 2022 (2021; 8, 2020; 3,) with no new species added to the park list. Brown Hawker was good to see and there were reasonable numbers of Migrant Hawker at times. Sadly, we did not see the Willow Emerald in the park last year, but it is certainly breeding in the area. A surprise was not seeing Black Tailed Skimmer which is normally quite common around the lake. Perhaps all the recent work on the ponds near the pavilion may prove fruitful for dragonflies in 2024?

Our overall list remains at 10 species:

| Total Summary of Dragonflies/Damselflies recorded in WCP - All Years |                       |               |                 |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Number of Species  | 10                    |               |                 |
| Common Name  | Scientific Name       | Max Day Count | No of Sightings |
| Azure Damselfly  | Coenagrion puella     | 1             | 2               |
| Black-tailed Skimmer   | Orthetrum cancellatum | 7             | 4               |
| Blue-tailed Damselfly  | Ischnura elegans      | 7             | 7               |
| Brown Hawker   | Aeshna grandis        | 2             | 4               |
| Common Blue Damselfly  | Enallagma cyathigerum | 10            | 3               |
| Common Darter  | Sympetrum striolatum  | 5             | 4               |
| Emperor (Blue) Dragonfly   | Anax imperator        | 1             | 1               |
| Large Red-eyed Damselfly   | Erythromma najas      | 3             | 2               |
| Migrant Hawker   | Aeshna mixta          | 13            | 9               |
| Willow Emerald   | Chalcolestes viridis  | 2             | 2               |

I have seen Large Red Damselfly in the past and surely one day we will see Banded Demoiselle here. There are also a few relatively common dragonflies missing from our list e.g. Four Spot Chaser, and new dragonflies are being seen in the UK every year, so who knows which species we may add to the list in future!



## Mammals – 2 Species

| Summary of Mammals recorded in WCP - 2023 |                           |               |                 |               |                 |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Number of Species                         | 2                         |               |                 |               |                 |
|   |                           | 2023          |                 | 2022          |                 |
| Common Name                               | Scientific Name           | Max Day Count | No of Sightings | Max Day Count | No of Sightings |
| Common Pipistrelle                        | Pipistrellus pipistrellus | 0             | 0               | 27            | 1               |
| Eastern Grey Squirrel                     | Sciurus carolinensis      | 3             | 7               | 2             | 2               |
| Red Fox                                   | Vulpes vulpes             | 1             | 2               | 0             | 0               |
| Soprano Pipistrelle                       | Pipistrellus pygmaeus     | 0             | 0               | 2             | 1               |

We saw mammals on 7 of our walks and these mainly consisted of Grey Squirrels. The only other mammal seen in the park was Red Fox. We did not have a “bat night” in 2023, so no bats were recorded.

Our overall list remains at 4. There must be plenty of small mammals in the park that we never see, and I am surprised that we have not seen a Hedgehog yet. I do think there is so much disturbance during the day and well into the night that many mammals do not emerge till very late!

## Moths – 16 Species

| Summary of Moths recorded in WCP - 2023 |                          |               |       |          |             |
|---|--------------------------|---------------|-------|----------|-------------|
| Number of Species                       | 16                       |               |       |          |             |
| Common Name                             | Scientific Name          | Last Sighting | Count | Sighting | Status      |
| Agapeta hamana                          | Agapeta hamana           | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Box Tree Moth                           | Cydalima perspectalis    | 13/09/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Bramble Shoot Moth                      | Notocelia uddmanniana    | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Brimstone Moth                          | Opisthagraptis luteolata | 30/06/2023    | 3     | 2        | Adult       |
| Cloaked Minor                           | Mesoligia furuncula      | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Common Wainscot                         | Mythimna pallens         | 30/06/2023    | 3     | 1        | Adult       |
| Diamond-back Moth                       | Plutella xylostella      | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Emperor Moth                            | Saturnia pavonia         | 21/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Caterpillar |
| Heart And Dart                          | Agrotis exclamationis    | 30/06/2023    | 2     | 1        | Adult       |
| Light Arches                            | Apamea lithoxylaea       | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Pale-shouldered Brocade                 | Lacanobia thalassina     | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Setaceous Hebrew Character              | Xestia c-nigrum          | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Silver Y                                | Autographa gamma         | 30/06/2023    | 4     | 2        | Adult       |
| Small Magpie                            | Anania hortulata         | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| The Magpie                              | Abraxas grossulariata    | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Water Veneer                            | Acentria ephemerella     | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |

We identified 14 moth species during our moth night, despite the rain and cold weather on the night. We also saw a Box Tree Moth in September and Barbara & Richard found an impressive Emperor Moth caterpillar in June.

Our overall list now stands at 41, with 8 new species added during 2023. One year we will get decent weather for our moth night, and we could get some spectacular results. In addition, we may get the help of the Essex Moth Group in 2024 and it will be interesting to see what they can find. Thanks again to Colin for providing all of the moth attracting equipment.

| Total Summary of Moths recorded in WCP - All Years |                           |               |       |          |             |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|-------|----------|-------------|
| Number of Species                                  | 41                        |               |       |          |             |
| Common Name  | Scientific Name           | Last Sighting | Count | Sighting | Status      |
| Agapeta hamana                                     | Agapeta hamana            | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Anania crocealis                                   | Anania crocealis          | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Box Tree Moth                                      | Cydalima perspectalis     | 13/09/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Bramble Shoot Moth                                 | Notocelia uddmanniana     | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Bright-line Brown-eye                              | Lacanobia oleracea        | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Brimstone Moth                                     | Opisthograptis luteolata  | 30/06/2023    | 5     | 4        | Adult       |
| Buff Ermine  | Spilosoma luteum          | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Cloaked Minor                                      | Mesoligia furuncula       | 30/06/2023    | 2     | 2        | Adult       |
| Common Emerald                                     | Hemithea aestivaria       | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Common Footman                                     | Eilema lurideola          | 01/07/2022    | 2     | 1        | Adult       |
| Common Rustic                                      | Mesapamea secalis         | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Common Wainscot                                    | Mythimna pallens          | 30/06/2023    | 5     | 2        | Adult       |
| Diamond-back Moth                                  | Plutella xylostella       | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Dingy Footman                                      | Eilema griseola           | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Emperor Moth                                       | Saturnia pavonia          | 21/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Caterpillar |
| Flame Shoulder                                     | Ochropleura plecta        | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Fox Moth   | Macrothylacia rubi        | 08/09/2021    | 1     | 1        | Caterpillar |
| Gypsy Moth   | Lymantria dispar          | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Heart And Dart                                     | Agrotis exclamationis     | 30/06/2023    | 3     | 2        | Adult       |
| Lesser Broad-bordered Yellow Underwing             | Noctua janthe             | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Light Arches                                       | Apamea lithoxylaea        | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Lime-speck Pug                                     | Eupithecia centaureata    | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Lunar-spotted Pinion                               | Cosmia pyralina           | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Marbled Minor                                      | Oligia strigilis          | 11/06/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Oak Eggar  | Lasiocampa quercus        | 23/06/2021    | 1     | 1        | Caterpillar |
| Oak Processionary                                  | Thaumetopoea processionea | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Old Lady   | Mormo maura               | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Orange Swift                                       | Hepialus sylvina          | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Pale-shouldered Brocade                            | Lacanobia thalassina      | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Ruby Tiger   | Phragmatobia fuliginosa   | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Setaceous Hebrew Character                         | Xestia c-nigrum           | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Silver Y   | Autographa gamma          | 30/06/2023    | 6     | 4        | Adult       |
| Small Magpie                                       | Anania hortulata          | 30/06/2023    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Straw Dot  | Rivula sericealis         | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Straw Underwing                                    | Thalpophila matura        | 21/08/2021    | 2     | 1        | Adult       |
| The Magpie   | Abraxas grossulariata     | 30/06/2023    | 2     | 2        | Adult       |
| The Spectacle                                      | Abrostola tripartita      | 01/07/2022    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Water Veneer                                       | Acentria ephemerella      | 30/06/2023    | 3     | 2        | Adult       |
| White-point  | Mythimna albipuncta       | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Willow Beauty                                      | Peribatodes rhomboidaria  | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |
| Yellow Shell                                       | Camptogramma bilineata    | 21/08/2021    | 1     | 1        | Adult       |

### **Amphibians & Reptiles – 3 Species – all years.**

| <b>Record date</b> | <b>Record time</b> | <b>Species</b>         | <b>Lifestage</b> | <b>Sex</b> | <b>Quantity</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|
| 01/10/2023         | 11:00:00           | Common lizard          | Adult            | unknown    | 1               |
| 27/07/2023         | 11:30:00           | European pond terrapin | Adult            | unknown    | 1               |
| 21/09/2022         | 11:00:00           | Adder                  | Adult            | male       | 1               |

Having seen two reptiles in 2023, I decided to record these via an online recording database, “The Record Pool”. The records are then reported to the Essex Amphibian & Reptile Group (EARG). I also have in my notes that I saw an Adder on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022. In 2024, the EARG have agreed to visit the park and show us the areas where we may find Amphibians and Reptiles and how to look for them. Hopefully, this will lead to a few more species being added to our list.

### **Additional Targeted Visits**

In addition to the monthly walks, the following will take place in 2024:

1. **Moth Night.** This has become a successful and entertaining event and will continue in 2024 – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July has been penciled in. The Essex Moth Group may be involved this year. We will also do some star gazing if the weather permits.
2. **Bat Watch/Night Walk.** We will go on an evening walk sometime early August to test out our bat detectors and ID skills! May ask the Bat group to come along too.
3. **Late Spring Picnic.** This was a very pleasant day, and a few birds and butterflies were seen. The plan is to sit by the lake for a couple of hours and see what happens. A similar event will be held in 2024.
4. **Amphibian & Reptile day.** The EARG will visit the park and show us how and where to look for these animals.

The dates for all of these events will be confirmed by me and displayed on the website.

### **Recap 2023**

Yet another successful year of wildlife walks and we now have 4 years of data and our understanding of the park, and its wildlife is increasing with every visit. We are now starting to include more specialist countywide groups in our walks and events e.g. Essex Wildlife Trust, Essex Bat Group etc., which can only be good for the park.

My highlights of the year were:

1. Seeing great views of Red Kites – what fabulous birds they are.
2. The large numbers of butterflies in the park during the summer.
3. The impressive Emperor Moth caterpillar found by Barbara & Richard.
4. The Fox sunning itself near the pavilion pond.

Looking forward to another year of great wildlife and seeing you all on the walks.

**Martin Singleton**

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