

# City of London Breeding Bird Survey 2017

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## I. Introduction and executive summary

This is the third successive year volunteers have undertaken a comprehensive breeding bird survey covering the City of London and closely adjacent areas. As in previous years there has been a particular emphasis on collecting data concerning the breeding season population of Black Redstarts. The conservation status of Black Redstarts is now Red and the BTO/RSPB estimated breeding population in the entire UK is only 19 and 44 pairs. Based on 73 sightings during the 2017 survey period, there is evidence of possibly nine separate Black Redstart territories in the City. Although caveats should be applied to both the size of the UK's breeding population and the number of breeding pairs in the City, there is strong evidence that there is a stable population of breeding pairs in the City. Based on the BTO/RSPB figures, this means that the City may hold up to half of the total UK breeding population. This is a significant population and any proposed disturbance or destruction of Black Redstart habitat should be subject to a full ecological impact survey. Planners should ensure

meaningful mitigation measures are in place before redevelopment begins.

Including all species found, this report is based on over 700 sightings made between March and August 2017; these were supplemented by the results of the annual nest box cleaning exercise that took place in September.

In total the 2017 Survey recorded:

- 53 species
- evidence of up to 29 species breeding in the City
- over 70 sightings of Black Redstarts, the earliest on 10 April and the last in mid-September, providing evidence of up to nine territories in the City
- two breeding colonies of House Sparrow on the City fringes
- a thriving population of predator species with observations of a pair of Peregrine falcons, Kestrel and Sparrowhawk

**Table I: Survey observations 2015 - 2017**

	2017	2016	2015
Total number of observations	703	623	626
Number of Black Redstart observations	73	40	30
Total number of species observed	53	39	49
Species with evidence of breeding	29	27	28

The previous breeding bird surveys in 2015 and 2016 and rooftop surveys in 2004 and 2014 have established that there is a diverse range of breeding bird species in the City of London, including scarce Amber and Red listed species. That imposes a responsibility on the City Planners to consider the unique situation and to ensure that the habitat of these scarce and rare breeding species is maintained.

## 2. Methodology

The team of regular observers applied the same methodology as in 2016, based on regular ground level walks throughout the survey period, supplemented by some roof top visits. The previous survey results suggested that a longer observation period would be beneficial, extending from March to include July with some continuation in August. The team was joined by some new members and other experienced birders working in the City provided sightings from areas with restricted access, such as private courtyards that could

not be seen from public spaces. Although all parts of the City were surveyed, the coverage was not as uniform as we would have liked and some areas did not receive sufficient coverage; in particular around the Temple Gardens. Members of the City Gardens team provided some useful sightings for which we are most grateful.

The purpose of the Survey is to establish the breeding season populations of a number of species. For many species that nest in inaccessible roof tops, such as Black Redstarts, Grey Wagtails and the gull species it is impossible to find definite proof of nesting, but other indications can be found such as gulls indulging in dive bombing activities; recently fledged young; adult birds collecting nest material or food for young. For some species the best indication of the locations of territories is from singing male birds, or in the case of some species such as the tits, the post-breeding season cleaning of nest boxes reveals more information on number of nests, and whether the breeding season was successful.

A number of observations were taken from the London Wiki. The postings on this website include sightings of

Black Redstarts, and some singing birds that have attracted visiting birders. Quite rightly the website instructs its contributors not to post details of nesting by scarce breeding birds (those included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended) and such reports are removed. However, in the case of Black Redstarts in the City, reports of singing birds do not give away the locations of nesting birds and the rooftop areas where they may nest are not accessible to the general public. If there is a danger to these birds it is through normal rooftop activities by maintenance staff, or during construction works. In the event that a nest site should be found, measures would be taken by FoCG and the City Gardens team to protect such sites from disturbance and the LNHS/ RSPB would be informed immediately. Where nesting is suspected the exact location is not identified in case the site is used again in 2018.

All the observations were recorded on GiGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London) and are also available on the Friends of City Gardens website [www.friendsofcitygardens.org.uk](http://www.friendsofcitygardens.org.uk).

### 3. Biodiversity Action Plan target species and Birds of Conservation Concern

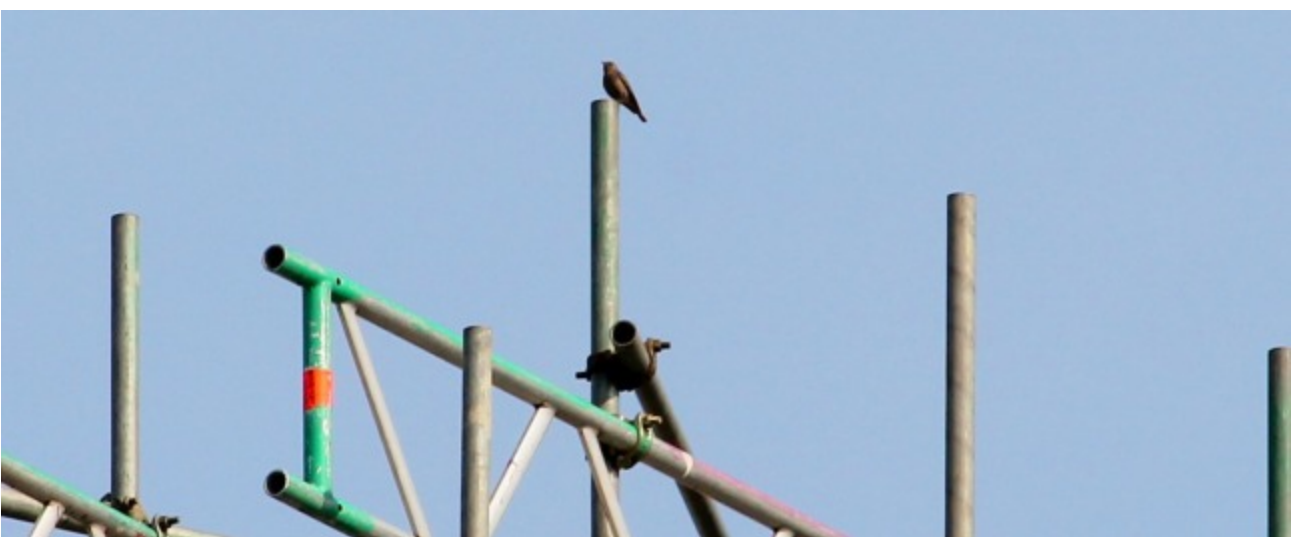
This year both the BAP species for the City and National List of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) remain the same as in 2016. The current City of London BAP for 2016 - 2020 has four target bird species; House Sparrow, Black Redstart, Peregrine Falcon and Swift, chosen because they are exemplars of their ecological niches and highly adapted to the urban environment.

Last year we reported that in 2016 a consortium of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) updated the list of the Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BoCC 4). This is an assessment of 247 species of UK, Channel and Isle of

Man breeding birds. Each species is assigned to one of three categories according to the current level of Conservation Concern. As a reminder, these categories are:

- Red List: These species are either globally threatened, or there has been an historical population decline in UK during the period 1800-1995, or severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population or UK breeding range over last 25 years, or longer-term period.
- Amber List: These are species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe, or species recovering from an historic population decline during 1800-1995 or suffering from a moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population or contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period. This category also includes rare breeders with 1-300 breeding pairs in UK and localised breeders with at least 50% of UK breeding or non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites. Also, internationally important species where at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population is in the UK.
- The Green List includes all the species for which the above do not apply.

The previous surveys have shown that the avifauna of the City is surprisingly rich and includes a number of species which are on the red and amber lists, including; Mallard, Herring Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Kestrel, Grey Wagtail, Starling and Dunnock. In the case of Gull species, they seem to be thriving as a nesting species in the City; an increasing number of records of Great Black-backed Gull suggest that they too may be nesting in the City. The City's Gull populations are very hard to monitor because they too are nesting on rooftops and the increasing City population should be viewed positively, bearing in mind how badly they are doing in the more traditional nesting areas.



*A typical distant sighting of a Black Redstart over the Guildhall*

### 3.1 Black Redstart

In 2017 Black Redstarts were present in nine separate locations with additional sightings at three further locations that could have been additional or wandering individuals. The nine locations where singing males have been observed several times over the breeding period suggest that there are at least nine breeding pairs in the City. This refines the conclusions drawn from the 2015 and 2016 surveys that suggested the breeding population of Black Redstarts in the City to be in the range of five to ten pairs.

It was a late start for Black Redstart sightings in 2017 with hardly any until the second half of May when the weather improved. A constantly singing first year male bird attracted interest amongst birdwatchers and this led to a very good return of sightings, especially around Guildhall. Singing males were also found in other locations, including several in full breeding plumage. Several of these sightings were in the same general locations as in 2016. Although there were reports from 12 locations, nine were probably territories with multiple sightings. Care has been taken to exclude the possibility of counting mobile singing birds for more than one territory, but equally it is clear that not all territories are found through singing birds. For example, at the one site with proven breeding (pair feeding hidden young) there was no singing bird recorded.

The 2016 Survey recorded birds from seven or eight locations. The results for 2015 through to 2017 indicate a fairly stable population in the City during the breeding season (possibly even increasing) set in the context of the UK breeding population estimated by the RSPB to be between only 19 to 44 breeding pairs. If these figures are to be believed the City's birds could represent as much as half of the breeding population in the UK. That deduction is perhaps a stretch since the actual UK nesting numbers might be greater as breeding is difficult to prove (for instance around nuclear power stations at Dungeness and Sizewell). Nevertheless it is clear that the City population is a significant part of the UK Black Redstart population and should be afforded all the necessary protections to preserve it at present levels.

This has important implications for planning and development since any disturbance to or demolition of current roof top habitats could have a significant impact on the population of this increasingly rare bird.

### 3.2 House Sparrow

The 2016 and 2017 results for this species have been encouraging; in addition to the colony at Golden Lane/Fortune Park a separate population was also found on the west side of the Tower of London. Both populations are just a few meters from the City boundary, with birds feeding regularly within the City. A record of House Sparrows nesting in a Great Tit nest box on a tree in Fortune Park indicates that the species could be helped to spread with suitably placed nest boxes attached to trees and potentially areas could be targeted to re-establish other colonies that were once

a feature of the City.

House Sparrows are notoriously reluctant to expand their territories once they have lost sites so providing new nest sites, feeding stations and improved habitat must be close to existing colonies. In the City volunteers have been providing enhanced feeding with high protein foods such as meal worms in the breeding season to improve chick and female mortality although there is no compelling evidence that this increases the size of the colony or its spread.

### 3.3 Peregrine Falcon

The Barbican nest site has been continuously used and monitored since the year 2000 by members of the London Peregrine Partnership (<http://london-peregrine-partnership.org.uk>). In 2015 the resident pair failed to breed, probably due to old age. The nest was taken over by a new pair that raised chicks in 2016, but they failed to fledge and although the new pair was still present in 2017 they again failed to breed. It is thought that this may be because they are an inexperienced pair so they may be more successful in 2018.

### 3.4 Common Swift

The fourth City of London BAP target species is the Common Swift, an Amber listed species that used to breed in the City. Efforts are being made to bring them back with special swift nest boxes placed on a number of buildings. It is a declining species in general and is on the Amber list of conservation concern for this reason. During 2015 and 2016 they were largely absent (two in 2015 and one in 2016) but 2017 saw a dramatic increase in sightings with groups of up to 16 being observed. One bird was found grounded on a 27<sup>th</sup> floor balcony in the Barbican and was successfully relaunched. It will be interesting to see if the apparent recovery continues in 2018.

### 3.5 Other species of Conservation Concern in the City

A number of scarce species are nesting in surrounding boroughs that have larger parks and gardens and these species may eventually move into the City. They include Mistle Thrush, Common Tern, Tawny Owl and House Martin. We need to be mindful of the needs of these species and perhaps consider habitat enhancements that could encourage them to join the other scarce breeding



*A Blue tit in Postman's park (SH)*

## 4. Breeding Birds

Out of the 53 species recorded during the survey period, there is evidence to suggest that 29 have nested in the City, or attempted to do so. Although the survey team does not look for nests, evidence for breeding can be rather obvious, for example; gulls dive bombing, adult birds collecting nest or food for young and of course cleaning nest boxes in autumn also provides hard evidence of nesting, be it only Great and Blue Tits.

### 4.1 Observations and evidence of breeding

Table 2 below summarises the results of over 700 separate observations over the period March to August 2017. Of the 29 species listed there is compelling evidence that 22 definitely bred and it is highly likely that the remaining seven species are also breeding in the City. It is also likely that the number of pairs of these 29 species that are raising young is considerably greater than shown below as only firm evidence of breeding behaviours as listed above has been accepted as proof..

**Table 2: Observations and evidence of breeding**

Species	Observations	Locations	Pairs seen	Proven breeding
Mallard	many	3	0	0
Kestrel	21	2	1	1
Peregrine	8	4	1	1
Moorhen	4	2	2	0
Coot	8	3	2	2
Lesser Black- backed Gull	Widespread	0	0	1
Herring Gull	Widespread	0	0	0
Feral Rock Dove	Widespread	0	0	0
Wood Pigeon	Widespread	0	0	0
Pied Wagtail	9	6	1	0
Grey Wagtail	12	5	2	1
Dunnock	23	9	5	1
Robin	27	13	1	1
Black Redstarts	70	12	1	1
Blackbird	114	38	21	19
Goldcrest	3	1	1	0
Wren	29	17	0	0
Coal Tit	3	1	1	1
Great Tit	35	13	2	6
Blue Tit	73	29	5	15
Long-tailed Tit	1	1	2	0
Magpie	17	11	2	3
Magpie	17	11	2	3
Jay	2	2	1	0
Carrion Crow	22	16	1	7
Starling	40	9	?	At least 17 nests
House Sparrow	4	2	?	At least 6 nests
Chaffinch	1	1	1 Singing male	
Goldfinch	66	35	10	5
Greenfinch	17	7	3	1

## 4.2 Results of nest box cleaning 2017

The 53 nest boxes in 22 gardens that are maintained by the City Gardens team are cleaned during the latter half of September. The occupancy of the boxes was recorded and a detailed report prepared which can be found on the FoCG website at

[https://www.friendsofcitygardens.org.uk/Nest\\_Box\\_Cleaning\\_Report\\_September\\_2017.pdf](https://www.friendsofcitygardens.org.uk/Nest_Box_Cleaning_Report_September_2017.pdf)

This report does not include all the nest boxes in the City as there are also nest boxes in private gardens and on the rooftops of buildings with green roofs that are managed independently.

Twenty three of the boxes had completed nests, which matches the number of nests occupied in 2016. The occupancy of the nest boxes seems to accord well with field observations of nesting pairs and detailed by the systematic list. Some nests may have been deserted before egg laying, for instance in Postman's Park where disturbance from building work is suspected.

In summary for the 2017 nesting season:

- 53 nest boxes in 22 gardens were checked and cleaned.
- 23 of the boxes had completed nests. This represents 43% of all boxes available during the nesting season - slightly down from 51% in 2016 but up on the 30% in the 2015 nesting season.
- The majority of nests were those of Blue Tits (74%) with the remainder Great Tits.
- No nests had been built in open-type 'robin' boxes.
- In 2017 there were 11 nests (48%) with either unhatched eggs or dead chicks, compared with 82% in 2016. This improvement is probably the result of warmer, drier summer weather compared with the cold wet spring and early summer in 2016. On average the mean daily temperature in the City over the key months of March to May was over 2°C warmer in 2017 than 2016.

**Table 3: Occupancy of nest boxes 2015 - 2017 breeding seasons**

	2017		2016		2015	
	boxes	nests	boxes	nests	boxes	nests
Barbican - Fann Street	3	2	3	2	2	1
Barbican - Speed	2	1	1	1	1	1
Barbican - St Giles	2	1	2	2	2	2
Barbican - Thomas More	7	4	7	3	7	1
Bunhill Fields	8	2	7	2	6	2
Cleary Garden	2	2	2	1	2	1
Finsbury Circus	2	2	2	2	2	1
Petticoat Square	2	1	0	0	0	0
Portsoken	1	0	1	0	1	0
Postman's Park	4	0	3	1	3	1
St Andrew Holborn	1	0	0	0	0	0
St Anne and St Agnes	1	0	1	1	0	0
St Botolph without Bishopsgate	1	1	1	0	1	NA
St Dunstan's in the East	5	2	5	2	6	0
St Olave's Hart Street	1	0	0	0	0	0
St Olave's Silver Street	1	1	1	1	0	0
St Mary Aldermanbury	2	1	2	2	1	1
St Mary Staining	1	1	1	1	0	0
St Michael Cornhill	1	0	1	0	0	0
St Paul's Cathedral	4	1	4	2	4	1
St Peter's Cornhill	1	0	1	0	0	0
Smithfield Rotunda	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Occupancy of checked boxes</b>		<b>45%</b>		<b>51%</b>		<b>30%</b>

Further nest boxes have been installed bringing the total for 2018 to 72, and this includes at two new locations so it will be interesting to see if there is a corresponding increase of pairs making use of the boxes.

## 5. Migrant and regular visiting species

Interest in migrant birds in London seems to be growing, and perhaps due to favourable weather conditions, 2017 has been a very good year for sightings of both migrant birds and birds from nearby nesting areas. The gardens around St Paul's Cathedral seem to attract insectivorous migrants. Nearby, the free to access rooftop of One New Change seems to be a particularly good place to sky watch for larger passing migrants as well as smaller migrants flying over the City.

During Open Garden Squares Weekend ([www.opensquares.org](http://www.opensquares.org)) in June other rooftops are open to the public and observers took advantage of this and found some interesting birds flying over, including a Little Egret on 18 June. In fact migrants can turn up in any City garden and in 2017 the star migrant was probably the female Pied Flycatcher in the Temple Gardens on 8 May. In St Paul's Churchyard spring migrants included Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Reed and Sedge Warbler. Typically warblers seem to stay for relatively long periods; the habitat is comparatively rich, with plenty of invertebrates so it is not beyond the realms of possibility that these species may stay to nest. Scarce birds do turn up at different times of year, for instance a Redwing was observed in January; in September a



*Unexpected Redwing at St Paul's Churchyard on 27 and 28 January (Photo: Ken Murray)*

Sparrowhawk, and in August a female Wheatear was sighted on a rooftop adjacent to Fleet Street.

City gardens are clearly an important resource for migrating birds, providing cover and forage. This also highlights the need for green corridors to enable species to move between green spaces.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

**Black Redstart population significant and maintained:** This Survey confirmed the continuing presence of a significant population of Black Redstarts. The current list of Birds of Conservation Concern estimates a total UK breeding population in the range of 19-44 pairs; the City may hold between 20 - 47% of

the UK's breeding pairs. It is clear that the City population continues to be highly significant. Continued monitoring seems vital and it is important that we continue to learn about the requirements for the conservation of this species in this particular urban habitat. The beneficial link between green roofs and Black Redstarts seems to be evident from the results, but we should also seek to understand the importance of church spires and similar towers as singing posts. Although beyond the control of FoCG and the survey team, it has been gratifying to find out that at least one commercial green roof is being designed for as a foraging site for Black Redstarts and a Species Action Plan detailing features to include in green roofs has been prepared as guidance for developers.

It is also vital that any change to the City's rooftop habitat through demolition of buildings and alterations to the rooftop spaces is carefully considered by the City Planning department to ensure that this important species continues to thrive in the City. Detailed environmental impact studies should routinely be undertaken so that any adverse impacts can be offset before damage is done to potential nesting sites.

**Importance of other species:** The Survey revealed a greater number of species present in the City during the breeding season compared with the previous two years. This is probably because the weather was relatively favourable for nesting birds. As pointed out in previous reports, the rooftop populations of other species in addition to the Black Redstart also deserve consideration.

**Grey Wagtail:** is a species that has become habituated to urban environments and has been nesting in the City for many years, largely unnoticed.

**House Sparrow:** with two colonies on the edge of the City, House Sparrows appear to be holding on and new efforts are planned with further well-placed nest boxes. However lawn areas are also important for adults to find invertebrates to feed to their chicks and suitable green spaces, such as around St Paul's Cathedral have the potential to attract new more central nesting colonies. Sparrows are quite happy to be in the company of people, so some focused actions should enable them to return to this former well known nesting location.

**Gulls:** although regarded by many as nuisance birds, the City continues to have substantial populations of Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. These species are now on the Red and Amber lists of population concern owing to population reductions in non-urban parts of the UK. The City's rooftop environment is also key for these species and at the very least the breeding situation in the City should be established.

**Greenfinch:** after being absent for several years, Greenfinches seem to be re-establishing themselves in the City. At one time they were relatively common but the population crashed, probably through illness that drastically reduced numbers



throughout the country. Young were seen this year at Finsbury Circus so it is to be hoped that the completion of Crossrail work will help this species in that area, but other former localities for this species may also soon have breeding pairs.

**Starling:** as indicated last year progress is being made to understand the nesting population of Starlings in the City with nesting along the Thames at sites such as Blackfriars Bridge, Adelaide House and the Tower of London. A post-breeding gathering was also observed in Festival Gardens. This is another red listed species so these sites are important breeding areas and St Paul's is again an important location. Four specialised Starling nest boxes have been installed in St Paul's Churchyard and it will be interesting to see whether they are occupied in 2018.

**Birds in City fringes and potential habitat enhancements:** a number of species were observed on City fringes and with minor enhancements to habitat, these may be encouraged to nest in the City. Suggested enhancements could include:

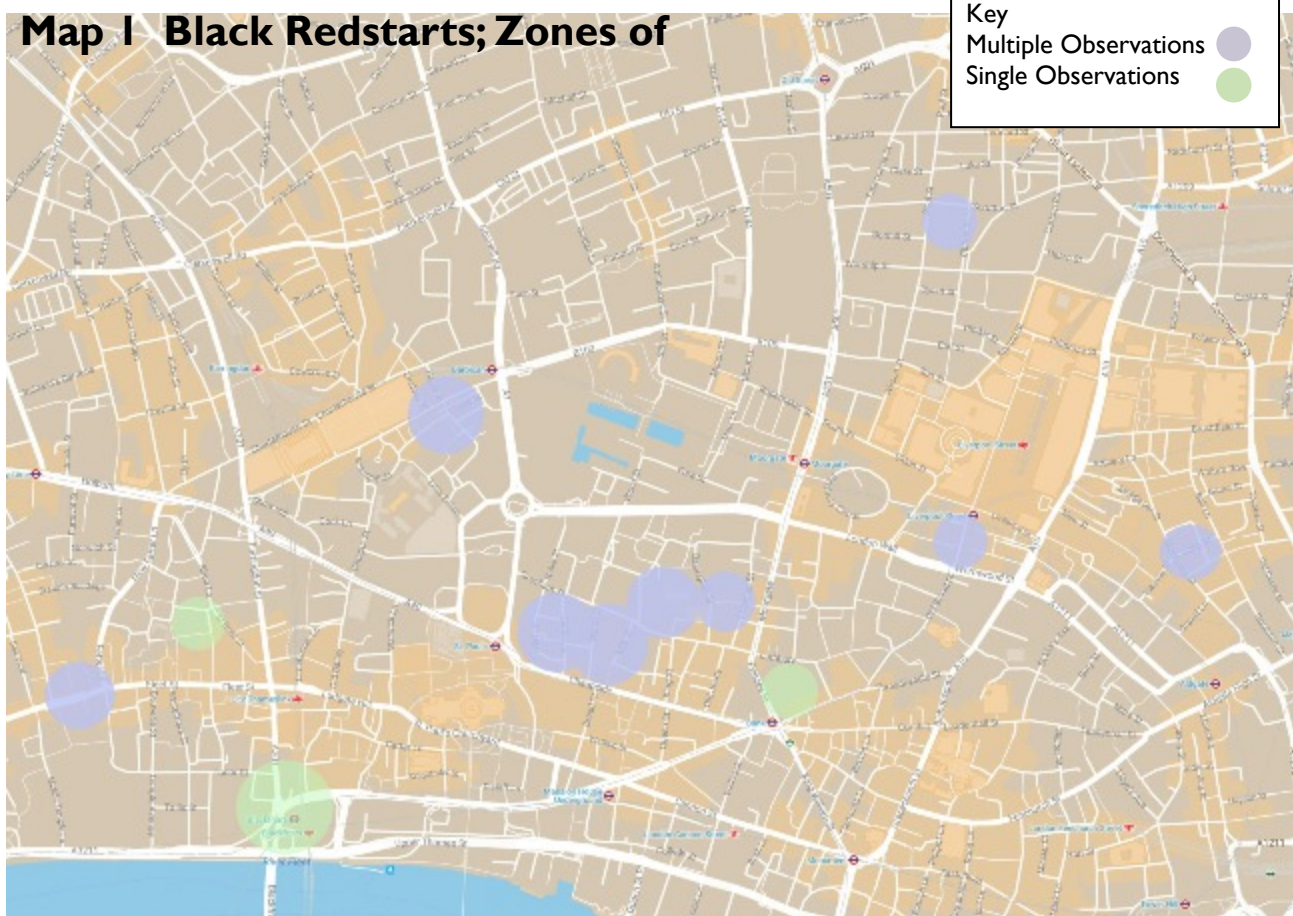
**Thicker spiny or thorny shrubbery:** For example, the sighting of a pair of Long-tailed Tit during 2016 was followed by a party of four seen in Bunhill Fields on 3 April 2017. To encourage this species to nest in the City it may be necessary to plant more thorny shrubbery, such as pyracantha, cotoneaster or ribes.

**Multi-layer shrubbery:** Birds need to be able to move from ground level to the tree canopy within an environment that is protected from predators and at the same time provides forage from berries and insects. A pair of Goldcrest was present in the Temple gardens for several days in early May and may have nested in a suitable tree and a pair of Coal Tits appears to have bred nearby suggesting that the City can support smaller insectivorous birds.

**Green corridors:** Birds need to be able to move safely from one green space to another protected from predators. Planting more street trees, or if ground conditions do not permit deep rooted species, planting hedges, such as those around Smithfield would greatly improve cover and link green spaces effectively.

**Reducing disturbance:** Migrant birds continue to be observed in the shrubbery of St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, especially on the south side and this could lead to further species colonising the City. This part of the Churchyard is not a thoroughfare, although visitors often mistakenly access it hoping it leads to an exit so there is excessive foot traffic along the path, causing disturbance. Better signage is recommended here to reduce the level of disturbance. In general creating dense shrub beds and making sure there are quiet spaces for birds in all gardens is important.

**Map 1 Black Redstarts; Zones of**



**Future Surveys:** A further breeding bird survey is planned for 2018, and for this access will be sought to several rooftops in the City. This will help us to locate Black Redstarts, but will be carried out carefully so as not disturb any breeding birds that may be discovered. Also, the exact locations of any such breeding sites will not be disclosed.

## 7. Acknowledgements

We are grateful to all those who contributed to this survey of City birds during the 2017 breeding season. In addition to those who reported their sighting directly to the survey team. We are also obliged to other individuals (*italics*) also contributed records via various social media channels such as postings on the 'London Bird Club Wiki' website [http://londonbirders.wikia.com/wiki/LatestNews\\_and\\_Twitter](http://londonbirders.wikia.com/wiki/LatestNews_and_Twitter). We are grateful for all sightings however they are received.

Paul Beckett (PB)	Gehan de Silva (GdS)	Quentin Given (QG)
Julie Bridgland (JB)	Helga Sands (HS)	Gary Howard (GH)
David Bradnum (DB)	John Archer (JA)	A La Pietra (ALP)
Matt Evans (ME)	Bob Beaumont (BB)	Stephen Lemon (SLn)
Charles Fentiman (CHF)	Paul Boulton (PBt)	Andrew Lyburn (AL)
Dusty Gedge (DG)	Simon Bradley (SB)	Francis O'Sullivan (FOS)
Nic Guerra (NG)	Hugh Bradshaw (HB)	James Palmer (JP)
Richard Hack (RH)	John Cadera (JCa)	Kieron Palmer (KP)
Sarah Hudson (SH)	John Colmans (JC)	Simon Robinson (SR)
Kate Jenrick (KJ)	Matthew Cunningham (MC)	Francis Tusa (FT)
Stephen Leaman (SL)	Charlie Farrell (CF)	Sash Tusa (ST)
Ken Murray (KM)	Simon Fogg (SF)	James Walsh (JW)
Frank Nugent (FN)	George Kalli (JK)	Paul Whiteman (PW)
Nick Senior (NS)		Steve Younger (SY)

We would also like to thank the many other individuals who have helped, including the companies and organisations that have provided access to their green rooftops during the survey period, including the access provided for the Open Garden Squares Weekend on 17 and 18 June (<http://www.opensquares.org>), as well as the specific purpose of the survey. These were: Eversheds, Nomura International plc and 201 Broadgate, Broadgate City of London. Access to these green roofs has been very valuable from the point of view of assessing the Black Redstart population and it is hoped that future bird surveys will be able to make more use of these roofs.

## 8. References

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## Appendix I: Systematic List

### BAP Target Species

#### **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

2017 was a late start in terms of Black Redstarts sightings with only rather vague second hand reports by security personnel at one traditional site in early April. A singing bird was heard at one site on 25 April but nothing further until 12 May when there was a report of a singing bird having returned to a site where there was a singing bird the previous year. Concern was increasing about the apparent lack of any observations, then, within a few days from 20 May reports came from several locations. These early sightings seem to have coincided with a warmer sunny spell starting at around 20 May. Singing birds were much more in evidence during June and continued to a lesser extent through July. During this breeding season there was more interest from people wanting to come to London to see Black Redstart (perhaps prompted by the presence of a singing bird at the Houses of Parliament) and this helped increase the overall number of reports from 40 in 2016 to 73 sightings in 2017. A very vocal grey male, in Guildhall was also responsible for part of the apparent increase in sightings but it seems likely that this bird was in its first breeding season and did little more than practice singing (and according to reports its song was often rather poor). However, far better plumaged adult singing males were found in other localities and in early July a pair of adults were located feeding hidden young, in a location where there had been no previous sightings during the year. In total Black redstarts were reported from 12 locations but excluding localities with just one observation it seems that there were probably nine territories with singing males.

#### St Lawrence Jewry, Guildhall and surroundings

The situation in this area was made rather confused by the persistent singing of a grey (probably first summer) male. This bird was rather mobile and was seen on the spire of St Lawrence Jewry would regularly fly over to the North wing of Guildhall and Basinghall Street and Standard Chartered. Records were also received from Coleman Street and once even Moorgate that almost certainly relate to this bird (CHF, FN, GK, JC, NS, RH, SB, ST).

#### Guildhall, North Wing

A full breeding plumaged adult male was also reported around Guildhall on several occasions, most often around the hidden rooftops of the north wing. These areas are not accessible to the public with observations by observers with offices overlooking these areas (NS, PB). One slightly tentative report related to the poorly singing grey bird on some scaffolding being replaced briefly by what looked like an adult male that sang for a short period with a much richer song (FN). The last reports at this location was on one of the hidden rooftops on 9 and 14 September (PB) and the last report was of a grey individual feeding on the rooftop on 20 September (NS).

#### One Wood Street

The Eversheds green roof has in the past been one of the more reliable locations for birds to be seen (strictly private and no regular access) and personnel that have regular access to the rooftop have become familiar with the species. Nesting has not been recorded but the green roof offers foraging areas. This year Black Redstarts have been largely absent. One of the security personnel reported them to be present in April and May (per DG). There was a brief sighting of a male bird on 1st June (JB) but subsequently distant song could occasionally be heard, mostly from the direction of St Lawrence Jewry Church, but also from the direction of St Paul's (JB).

#### St Vedast, Foster Lane

Reports received of singing birds from 2nd June (JW, FN, NS). A grey singing bird was seen on 9 June and the last sighting on 5 August was also a grey bird, but a comment related to a sighting on 6 July was that it was a different bird to the grey immature bird singing at Guildhall, which was also present on that date (NS).

#### Bank of England

For the past few years this had been a regular locality with birds recorded from one of the inner courtyards, but they were absent in 2017 (DB). However one was reported on the London Wiki Birder website for the Bank Junction on 25 May (GK).

#### Old Broad St/Gt Winchester St, London Wall

One was heard singing on three dates between 24 May and 8 July (DB, NS). This site had a singing bird in 2016 and interestingly singing at 9.15pm on 15 June (DB).

#### Bishopsgate, Spitalfields, Cobb Street

Three records in this general area where Black Redstarts have been present in the past. One heard near the RBS building on 25 April (DG), Spitalfields on 24 May (MC per London Wiki Birder) and one singing in Middlesex Street by junction with Cobb Street (GH, per Twitter).

#### Smithfield Market

A report on London Wiki Birder for Charterhouse St on 12 April, stated Black Redstart back again and singing (BB). It was subsequently reported in the Farringdon area on 22 and 28 May (CF and AL per London Wiki Birder). On 29 May a pristine adult male was seen singing in Little Britain by Smithfield Rotunda and flew over the market and started singing again in Peter Lane (FN, CHF). This bird may relate to observations in the same general area during 2015 and 2016.

#### Holywell Row and Clifton Street

This year there were no reports from the Leonard Street/Paul Street area despite searches but a report on the London Bird Club Wiki included a photo of an adult male singing in Holywell Row on 30 June (PB). This bird was seen again on 1 July by the

junction with Clifton Street (NF). In 2016 there was also a sighting at this general location.

#### Blackfriars / Tudor Street

One was heard reported on 28 June (NS) and seen distantly on a nearby rooftop on the 29 June, and heard singing Tudor Street 6 July (NS).

#### Shoe Lane/Wine Office Court

A rather isolated report came from this area of a singing bird on the 31 May (SY per London Bird Club Wiki). Subsequent searches of the area failed to find any birds subsequently but it is quite possible that this bird moved on to the nearby Blackfriars Station area.

#### Law Courts (location generalised)

Following up a poor photo posted on Twitter the observer went to see the bird in questions and found a male bird collecting food for young that were out of sight on 5 July. The next day a male and a female were taking food to very noisy young that were out of sight. The observers are to be congratulated for the find and the detective work but the details are withheld. The site is separate from the other locations.

Although the number of observations was very high compared with those during the previous two years they probably do not indicate any increase in number of birds but perhaps collectively we are becoming more successful at finding singing birds. The locations of territories appear to be traditional so it seems likely that each pair returns to favoured localities until one or the other dies. Sites seem to be used for up to around 6 years and may be re occupied by new individuals if the location particularly good, but not necessarily straight away. The presence of rather mobile grey immature birds seems to indicate that they do not necessarily breed in their second year but this is conjecture. On a wider note there have been no reports in the City outside the period 10 April to 20 September indicating that the City birds are likely to be spending the winter elsewhere.

#### **House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

The colony adjacent to the Barbican, Breton House at the southern end of Golden Lane remains active. A detailed assessment of number of nests was not made this year but the colony appears largely unchanged. They are regularly present in Fortune park and still come to feed at the wildlife garden at Breton House which is within the City (SH, CHF). Of significance was the occupation of a Great Tit nest box on a tree in Fortune Park seen on 20 May. The male was singing from the gable end of this nest box (designed with a pitched roof) about 15ft up a tree and the male was then seen to fly into the nest box.

The Tower of London colony continued to thrive in the gift shop building just outside the City boundary and the highest count was on 3 May with six birds seen of which three were females. However, that was a dull day and birds could be heard in the buildings. The appearance of scaffolding on the building caused concern and the Ecology Department of Tower Hamlets was notified. They checked the site and the following response

received on 15 May from John Archer, the Tower Hamlets Biodiversity Officer; "We found nesting starlings, and sparrows building nests. The work, which involves emergency replacement of some unsafe timbers and repainting, will be undertaken under advice from ecological consultants to minimise disturbance to nesting birds. It is not intended to block any of the places that sparrows nest, so there should be no long-term issue".

Another intriguing communication came from a non-birder member of the gardening team suggested that House Sparrows might be present along Middlesex Street, but none were found. During the rooftop bird survey in 2004 this was the only area where they were recorded so these new sightings may be significant.

#### **Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

This year the nest on the Barbican continued to be occupied by a new pair that had taken over the nest in 2016. Several sightings were reported during the breeding season, mainly distant sightings, perched near the nest. They are also sometimes seen on the dome of St Paul's, for instance two were perched on there on 4 June, seen from the rooftop of One New Change (KM) and sightings there also include a brief skirmish with a Buzzard on 21 March (NS). We understand from FoCG that this year the pair failed to breed probably related



to the immaturity of this pair (SH).

*Sparrowhawk at St Pauls Churchyard on St Paul's on 15 September (KM)*

#### **Common Swift** *Apus apus*

Six reports were received; six individuals over St Paul's Cathedral on 10 June (FN), 16 high in the sky above Angel Lane (Nomura Roof Garden) on 17 June, and at Guildhall two on 4 July (RH), 16 on 7 July and two on 15 July (NS). Finally, interestingly one stranded on 27th floor balcony of a Barbican tower and released successfully (per SH). This is a welcome return of this species and may indicate there are more insects above the City and perhaps nesting not too far away.

#### **Other species**

##### **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*

A pair present on Thames at the Millennium Bridge on 14 August, JP per London Bird Club Wiki.

**Canada Goose** *Branta canadensis*

One on Thames at London Bridge; a pair on Thames foreshore at low tide on 3 April (CHF), and a pair at Blackfriars on south side on 31 May (RH).

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

One on Thames at Blackfriars old bridge; a pair resting on pillar, then flew East along river on 8 May, and one resting on pillar on 31 May (RH).

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*

Probably severely under recorded and are usually present at the main sites, such as the Barbican lakes (CHF). Along the Thames a male was resting on pillar at Blackfriars old bridge on 30 June (RH). This year there were no chicks recorded, so possibly a bad year for nesting.

**Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*

Regularly seen flying to and from the Thames, presumably from the nesting colony at Walthamstow reservoirs. Individuals seen on mooring posts opposite Customs House with two on 3 April and two on 20 April. It was low tide on both occasions and they were seen clearly and confidently identified as subspecies *P.C. Sinensis* on basis of diagnostic gular angle (CHF).

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

On 18 June, two seen flying eastwards, during a rooftop vigil from Nomura rooftop on Open Garden Squares Weekend (FN).

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*

Seen flying over St Paul's on two occasions, on 19 April one was flying East (KM) and on 4 June one flying West (FN). Although these may be migrating birds they do now nest at various locations surrounding London so they may be wandering individuals.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

Three reports received, from New Change 21 March, one heading West after brief skirmish with Peregrine above St Paul's (NS); 10 May seen distantly from One New Change heading West (KM) and 3 June two over St Paul's heading West (FN).

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

One was circling above Temple Gardens/Tudor Street, early morning on 14 March (ME). Another photographed in the trees at St Paul's on 15 September (KM).

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

One high over New Change heading to the westwards on 14 September (NS).

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

This year the well-established nest at the City of London police station in Wood Street was occupied during the early part of April, with mating observed on 3 April and other sightings at or near the nest site until 10 May (RH, KM) but soon after activity at the nest ceased. Observations from offices of Guildhall also indicated that the nest had been abandoned, perhaps through disturbance by gulls (PB). However Kestrels had been seen regularly nearby at St Paul's Cathedral and Cheapside from February (CF and KM) and these

sightings were presumed to be the Wood Street pair. Display activity was seen here on 20 April (CHF, KM) and on 1st May one appeared to bring food for another that didn't fly off (RH). Through June further regular sightings here (RH, KM, CHF, FN), including sightings of the male carrying food towards the SW tower of St Paul's on 4 June (KM). On 8 July there were four Kestrels present, including 2 juveniles sitting openly on ledges (CHF, KM, FN).

The relationship between the two nest sites is unclear; did the Wood Street pair fail and abandon their nest because of competition from a new pair as St Paul's (perhaps food competition), or was it simply that disturbance by gulls at Wood Street drove the pair to abandon and move to an alternative site? Monitoring through the 2018 breeding season may provide some answers. Major construction work on the Police Station is expected to start in 2018 and this may cause disturbance to the nest site. A Kestrel was also noted at the Tower of London on 15 March (JC) but no further sightings there.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

Two pairs were present in the Barbican complex where they appear to be resident but no young reported this year (CHF).

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra*

A pair bred on the lake at St Giles Cripplegate and eggs were laid according to a local resident but no chicks were observed (SH). Another pair built a nest at the main lake in the Barbican complex but young were not seen (SH, CHF).

As during 2015 and 2016 adult individuals were regularly seen on Thames generally opposite Customs house (CHF). There does not seem to be a prospect of nesting at this locality, so these are presumably non breeding birds.

**Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus*

Two were flying up river at Bankside on 5 June at 06.35 (SF). These qualify for inclusion in this report as they would have crossed Blackfriars Bridge which is entirely within the City.

**Black-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

This species is included for completeness since it is a common species along the Thames in winter and inland in areas such as around the Barbican, but they appear to leave early in spring and not return until well into the autumn. Nevertheless as they are known to nest in colonies in Essex and Kent, it is likely that odd individuals may well appear during the summer months, such as around the Tower of London.

**Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

A pair was resting on the mooring posts at Custom House on 20 April (CHF) and one flew over Blackfriars Bridge on 1st May (RH). This species has been recorded nesting near Canary Wharf so it is entirely possible that they may start to breed in the City, if they are not already doing so.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

Away from the Thames this was again the most frequently encountered species of gull and regularly seen scavenging for scraps at crowded locations where people are careless with waste. Concentrated numbers probably indicate favoured nesting sites. For instance, the area to the South of St Paul's Cathedral around the Grange Hotel, and between Guildhall and London Wall, but nest sites are probably present throughout the City (CHF). One nest at New Bridge Street was monitored produced two chicks seen on 15 June, but not seen subsequently (RH). Regularly seen along the Thames, but 25+ birds at Blackfriars Bridge on 5 May was noteworthy (RH).

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*

As in previous years they were frequently encountered along the Thames. Few records were received. However they are known to breed along the Thames. Further inland they are seen regularly, especially around St Paul's Cathedral, normally flying around but one landed there on 20 June (RH). With this species being on the BoCC4 Red List all such sightings are significant.

**Yellow-legged Gull** *Larus michahellis*

Two adults and an immature were present at Blackfriars Bridge on 24 July (NS). This is the first time we have noted this species in the City but it is the southern counterpart of the Herring Gull, common around the Mediterranean, and they disperse in late summer and can be relatively common in the Thames estuary.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus michahellis*

A second calendar year individual lingered at Southwark then flew East on 3 March. This is the South Eastern counterpart of Herring Gull and individuals are regularly found in England during winter months, including returning individuals in and around London.

**Feral Rock Dove** *Columba livia*

This species is a common and widespread breeding species in the City.

**Wood Pigeon** *Columba palumbus*

This species is a common and widespread breeding species in the City.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*

Two seen flying high over the Nomura roof top (Angel Lane) on 17 June, during the Open Garden Squares weekend (FN). Five seen flying high heading South over New Change on the 14 September (NS)

**Meadow Pipit** *Delichon urbicum*

Two seen flying high to the South West over New Change on the 14 September (NS)

**Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla Alba*

Nine records from six locations between 20 April and 22 July (RH, FN, KM, PB, CHF), including a pair on the rooftop of Nomura (Angel Lane) on 17 June (FN).

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea*

Twelve records from five locations of which two were providing evidence to suggest nesting. In 2015 and 2016 there were birds nesting at Barbican Tube Station but

there were no sightings there in 2017, although sightings along Charterhouse Street and Smithfield suggest that they are still in the area (CHF, FN). Regular activity was also noted near Bishopsgate (KM, RH, FN).

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*

23 reports came from nine locations and mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites but five of the locations held pairs of birds. These were Finsbury Circus (CHF, RH), St Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (CHF, RH), Festival Gardens (KM, RH), Inner Temple Gardens (RH) but the most surprising was a pair on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor roof garden of the Nomura building during the Open Garden Squares Weekend (FN). Although numbers appear to be slightly down from 2016, that may not be the true case as observations of single birds were at sites where pairs had been seen the previous year and the numbers may simply reflect how active the individuals were during the monitoring visits.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula*

27 reports from 13 locations and mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites as follows: Inner Temple Gardens (ME, RH, CHF); Middle Temple Garden (CHF); St Paul's North Side (KM, RH, CHF); St Paul's South side, adult seen with juvenile (RH); St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Gardens (KM); Barbican - Speed House garden; Barbican - Thomas More garden – pair seen together; Barbican - St Giles Cripplegate; Barbican – Breton House; Smithfield Rotunda and St Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (CHF) and Devonshire Square (RH). Most of the above were noted on multiple occasions but it seems likely that there were others hidden away, not singing during monitoring visits.

**Wheatear** *Erithacus rubecula*

A report from the London Bird Club Wiki website of a female Wheatear on top of buildings in Serjeant's Inn, by Mitre Court, Fleet Street on 31 August (HB). Although this sighting is outside the breeding season and surely relates to a passage migrant, it is included here for interest.

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus*

One was present on the lawns at St Paul's Churchyard on 27 and 28 January (KM, SH).

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

114 reports were received from at least 38 locations and most almost certainly relate to breeding birds. Pairs were seen at 21 of the sites and proof of nesting came from the following 11 sites, probably representing 19 broods: Inner Temple Gardens, offspring seen from two pairs in May and June (RH, CHF). Adults regularly seen from May – July collecting food for young at St John Zachary (Gresham St) and Noble Street and flying with food to St Mary Staining (Oat Lane) and probably more than one brood (CHF, RH). Festival Gardens there were at least three territories throughout the period and juveniles seen at each, and female spotted sitting on eggs in May (CHF, RH, KM). Girdlers' Gardens (Coleman's St) had a pair present, often at the intersection of Moorgate and London Wall with regular food collecting and juvenile(s) seen in June and July (CHF, RH). St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Gardens, a male carrying

a faecal pellet on 20 April (CHF). Barbican - Thomas More garden had two pairs present and one pair was seen to have a nest along the wall level with 172 Aldersgate St (CHF). West Smithfield Rotunda, a juvenile was present on 1st May (CHF). Devonshire Square, a male with a juvenile on 23 April (RH). 25 Basinghall Street, a male collecting food for young on 27 June (RH). St Olave's Court, an abandoned used nest found during nest box cleaning in September (SH). Interestingly it appears to be very difficult to locate blackbirds in the City at the start of the survey period (March/April); they are far more in evidence in May and June so it seems likely that they leave their nesting territories in the winter. Some are certainly present in the winter but apparently much harder to find than during the summer months.



One of the most common birds in the City, this Blackbird was at St Pauls Churchyard in January (KM)

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla*

One was recorded at Bunhill Fields on 3 April (NS) and another on the same date at Finsbury Circus (CHF). At St Paul's Cathedral a singing male was present on several dates from 20 April to 5 May (KM, CHF). It was usually singing from the same location in the NE corner but was also noted to the South of the Cathedral.

**Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis*

One was present in St Paul's Churchyard from 20 April and there were two from 28 April until 5 May (KM) and present on 10 May (CHF) may have been one of the original birds. Another sighting of one was just outside the City at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 22 April (KM).

**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*

One was present at Bunhill Fields on the 21 March (NS).

**Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Present at St Paul's Churchyard between 19 April until 14 May with two birds present from 2 May (KM, CHF). At Finsbury Circus one was present on 1st May (RH, CHF).

**Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Present at St Paul's Churchyard between 24 April and 5 May (KM).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*

Kings Bench Walk/Inner Temple Gardens heard 5 May (ME) and two seen together on 8 May and heard in a cedar tree at same location on 11 May (RH).

**Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes*

29 reports came from 14 locations usually singing males defending territories, but this species is probably under reported with the records being contributed by only three people. Being difficult to spot most records related to singing males located at: St Paul's Churchyard/St Paul's Cathedral School (RH, CHF), Christchurch Greyfriars, church and churchyard (CHF), Noble Street - St Olave Silver Street (CHF, RH), Bunhill Fields (CHF), Barbican - Andrewes High Walk, Seddon High Walk and Beech Gardens, NW end of gardens on terrace (CHF). Nearby there was also a singing bird at Barbican Wildlife Garden (CHF, NG). The Temple Gardens area held at least three territories (CHF, ME, RH). Just outside the City there was also a singing bird within the Tower of London (CHF).

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*

Kings Bench Walk/Inner Temple Gardens a female on 8 May (RH).

**Great Tit** *Parus major*

35 records were received from 13 locations and, in addition to the sightings, proof of nesting as follows: One nest was located in the masonry of the Chartered Insurance Institute at 20 Aldermanbury (RH) – this nest site was also used by this species during the last two years at least. Temple Gardens, present during May (ME), St Paul's Churchyard a pair 1st May (RH), collecting food for young 14 May (CHF) and the nest box cleaning report identified that one nest box on Ginko had been used by this species (SH), further used nest was found to have been occupied in Barbican Wildlife Garden (FoCG nest box cleaning report). In Barbican - Thomas More Garden three nest boxes had been used and one contained six dead chicks, so it seems likely that the use of other nest boxes may have related to one pair trying again. The nest box cleaning report also identified a nest box in Cleary Gardens had been used (SH). In addition to definite proof of nesting, a pair was seen together at Waithman Street/Apothecary Street on 29 May so it seems likely there was a nest nearby.

**Coal Tit** *Periparus Ater*

A pair observed at Inner Temple Gardens between 27 April and 31 May when at least one juvenile was present with the adult birds (RH). Although the sightings were around a Blue Atlas tree, Coal Tits nested nearby in 2015 in Kings Bench Walk, so this might relate to the same pair, or offspring of that pair.

**Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Again an increase in the number of reports compared to the previous year with 74 records coming from 30 locations, many of the sightings related to pairs, often close to nest boxes. However, definitely occupied nest boxes and sightings of juveniles were as follows, including results of the nest box cleaning exercise in September (FoCG): Barbican occupied nests were at Thomas More Garden (SH), Speed House (SH), and near to St Giles Church (CHF, SH). An occupied nest box at St Botolphs-without-Bishopsgate (SH), Bunhill Fields two nest boxes had been used (SH) and at St Paul's a nest was found in

a space in the Masonry of the church (KM). A nest box St Mary Aldermanbury was well watched (RH, CF, KM) and the use of the nest box confirmed during nest box cleaning in September (SH). Similarly a nest box at St Mary Staining, Oat Lane was seen to be occupied with visits from adults (KM, CHF) and confirmed by nest box cleaning in September (SH). Adults regularly seen feeding along Noble Street (RH, CHF) may have related to this nest but the cleaning also confirmed the use of a used nest box at St Olave's, Silver Street (SH). Two nest boxes in Finsbury Circus were seen to be used (RH, CHF) and also confirmed during the cleaning in September (SH). Another confirmed nest box was in Barbican Wildlife Garden (SH) and further used nest boxes were one in Cleary Gardens and two in St Dunstan's in the East. One site with less success was in Postman's Park where of five nest boxes only one had a partially completed nest. Many visits were made to this site but clearance work had visibly reduced the number of birds in this park and a pair of resident squirrels will not have helped. Nest boxes in the Temple Gardens are managed separately from FoCG but observations indicated that at least one nest boxes had been successfully occupied with a brood of fledged young seen (ME, RH).

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*

Four were seen together in Bunhill Fields on 3 April (NS) suggesting nesting nearby, but the lack of subsequent sightings suggest that it is not yet in the City.

**Magpie** *Pica pica*

A reduction in number of sightings with 16 compared to 31 during 2016, coming from 10 locations. Juvenile birds were seen at two locations, at Snowhill House on 17 June, and another at St Andrew Holborn Garden on 8 July. Since these locations are relatively close there is the possibility that these relate to the same brood. An occupied nest was found at Cleary Gardens on 3 April, and a fresh looking nest at Barbican Wildlife Garden on 14 May but occupancy not confirmed (CHF). Adult pairs were also noted on several dates at Guildhall and St Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (CHF). It does seem that the decrease in sightings relates to a real decrease of this species in the City.

**Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

A pair was observed at Inner Temple Gardens on 27 April (RH) and a singleton seen on a rooftop at Great Winchester Street on 1st May (RH). It is quite possible that these sightings relate to the same birds as observed in the City during 2015 and 2016 when they tried to build a nest at the Barbican.

**Carrion Crow** *Corvus corone*

Since this species builds and occupies bulky nests in tall trees it has been fairly easy to identify occupied nests. In total seven occupied nests were located and in addition one juvenile away from the locations of the nests (RH, CHF). This species roams widely in the City and are frequently encountered and perhaps as a result of familiarity they can be overlooked.

**Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

41 records were logged from nine locations which seem to include both breeding areas as well as post breeding gathering areas. Efforts to locate breeding colonies seem to be paying off with 10+ nest holes located on Blackfriars Bridge with activity observed between 1st May and 15 June (RH); King William Street on the side masonry of Adelaide House with at least six nests with birds coming and going (CHF). Also, nesting confirmed at the gift shop (JA) just outside the City boundary at the Tower of London with up to 12 birds observed feeding on the lawn areas in April (CHF). One adult collecting food at Finsbury Square on 1st May suggests a further nesting site in that area. Although odd birds were seen at St Paul's during March and April - max. four on 19 April (KM). The beginning of the post-nesting gathering there was on 24 May when there were five juveniles present with five adult birds (RH) and numbers increased rapidly to a peak of 55+ by the end of July (RH, CHF, KM). This appears to be an equal mix of adults and juveniles usually present throughout the day, so this is not a roost. The Thames seems to be a key nesting area for the birds and they appear to use facilities provided such as the water feature on the Nomura roof garden (Angel Lane) where three were bathing during the Open Garden Squares Weekend on 17 June (FN).

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*

Only one record, one singing at Bunhill Fields, on 1st May (CHF).

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis*

After a drop in numbers of sightings in 2016 this year has seen a welcome return to the 2015 level with 66 records from 35 locations. Definite breeding records included a nest found with a brooding female at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate on 20 April (KM), a fresh out of the nest juvenile on the ground at St Paul's on 20 May (KM) and another at the same location being fed by parent on 27 June (RH). Another juvenile was recorded at Devonshire Square on 23 April (RH). A decaying used nest was found on 25 January 2018, in manicured bushes between North wing Guildhall and the Chartered Insurance Institute building. An active pair was recorded several times at this locality (RH, CHF) from May to July. Despite their colourfulness they can be very hard to see and most sightings result from the call or song being heard first.

**Greenfinch** *Chloris chloris*

This year has seen something of a return of this species to the City with 17 reports, coming from seven locations with a juvenile on the ground in Finsbury Circus on 1st July (RH, CHF). A pair present at Devonshire Square April and May (RH) became four birds in July (FT per London Bird Club Wiki) so perhaps two young? Other locations with single sightings were Tower of London, Philpot Lane, Barbican Wildlife Garden and Charterhouse Street; several sightings at St Paul's between 20 May and 8 July (KM, RH, CHF). The number of sightings is very encouraging so perhaps we are seeing the start of a re-establishment of the species after being all but wiped out by disease.