City of London Breeding Bird Survey 2015

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1. Introduction and executive summary

The primary purpose of this survey was to establish a viable methodology for identifying and recording the breeding population of Black Redstarts in the City of London. The area of the City is only just above one square mile (2.59 square kilometres), which is the size of many ordinary English villages, yet it is one of the most densely built-on areas of land in the world with a daytime population of around 400,000, of which only circa 9,000 are residents.

The daytime influx of office workers puts pressure on the green spaces in the City. It might be reasonable to assume that there is little biodiversity in the Square Mile but this is certainly not the case. The City of London Corporation[1] recognises 376 open spaces, in total approximately 32 hectares. Eighty per cent of these spaces are less than 0.2 hectares. But in addition to this there are privately owned green spaces, many of them at roof top level that are an increasingly important resource for biodiversity. Since the bombing of London during WWII Black Redstarts have taken up residence, initially in the bombed-out ruins but subsequently they have adapted to living in London and the South East and the City of London has continued to be a UK stronghold of this species.

This very smart Black Redstart was photographed on one of the green roofs at One New Change.

The UK has three categories of conservation importance. Red is the highest priority, with designated species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green. Black Redstarts are on the amber list owing to the small size of the UK breeding population which is less than 300 pairs, and also because it has been decreasing as a breeding species. In fact it is thought that the UK population is now less than 100 pairs, so it is very important that the City's population of Black Redstarts is carefully monitored and protected.

In this study, observers recorded 31 sightings of Black Redstarts from 11 locations. It seems likely that the breeding population in the City comprises 5 to 10 pairs. Assuming a UK total of 100 pairs this is between 5% and 10% of the total UK population. This means the population of Black Redstarts in the City is significant (sites with more than 1% of UK population of listed scarce breeding species are generally held to be significant in conservation terms) and suitable protection must be afforded to them so that their numbers can at least be maintained at present levels. The City of London Corporation has an obligation to put in place measures to assess the impact of habitat change (demolition or changes to roof areas) that may affect this population.

In addition to sightings of Black Redstarts, observers recorded other breeding birds. Out of the 49 species recorded during the survey period there was evidence to suggest that 28 species are breeding in the City. The current Biodiversity Action Plan[2] lists the House Sparrow and the Peregrine Falcon as target species together with the Black Redstart. The survey recorded only one population of House Sparrows in the City and more needs to be done to provide suitable habitat for these birds if they are to continue to survive in the the Square Mile. A pair of Peregrine Falcons has bred regularly in the City for at least the last ten years, although in 2015 they did not succeed in raising young.

In addition to resident breeding birds, the survey recorded a substantial number of migrant species. The City's green spaces are an important resource for migrating birds where they can rest and refuel; future studies will examine what more can be done to improve these resources.

2. Methodology

A rooftop bird survey conducted by Friends of City Gardens (FoCG) in 2014 clearly demonstrated that Black Redstarts were present and it was estimated that there were 4 or 5 territories in the City with a concentration

[1] *The City of London Open Space Strategy Supplementary Planning Document January 2015, p.5*

[2] *City of London Biodiversity Action Plan 2010 - 2015, currently being updated, will be relaunched for the period 2016 - 2020 in early 2016.*

in the Guildhall/Cheapside area. However, the survey was limited to two mornings in April and May and observations were made from just seven rooftops. It was considered that, in the 2015 breeding season, searching for Black Redstarts primarily at ground level by traversing the whole of the area of the City might reveal territories that were out of sight from the rooftops. Extending the period of observations to four months from mid-March to early July was also intended to enable identification of singing males who might not be picked up on just two dates. In addition to ground level observations there were opportunities to access rooftop sites during the survey period.

A team of experienced volunteer birdwatchers was recruited; in order that coverage of the City would be uniform, each was assigned an area to monitor. These were overlapped so that all parts of the City were covered by two individuals. Depending on the circumstances of each observer some would visit during lunchtimes, others at weekends or during evenings. The organising team also went out searching more widely but also trying as much as possible to avoid certain areas getting a more concentrated effort than others. Observers started submitting sightings of other bird species, and a more detailed picture started to emerge of the City bird populations. In addition to those observers taking a formal part in the survey there were others who contributed records, either directly or through web-based sightings reports, such as postings on the London Bird Club wiki website
http://londonbirders.wikia.com/wiki/LatestNews.

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

3. Breeding bird summary

3.1 Data from direct observation

Of the 49 species recorded during the survey period, there is evidence to suggest that 28 species are breeding in the City. Definitive proof can be hard to come by and it may come in different ways, ranging from gulls indulging in dive-bombing activities, to observers finding a nest or seeing young. In the case of some species such as tits, the post-breeding season cleaning of artificial nest boxes revealed further numbers nesting in addition to those listed in Table 1, and this data is given separately in section 3.2 of this report.

With some species, such as Black Redstarts and our two species of wagtail, it is very difficult to establish proof of nesting because they tend to stay at rooftop level, but territories held by male birds normally indicate nesting at such sites.

An immature Pied Wagtail on the Nomura green roof in mid-September 2015, suggesting local breeding.

Table 1: Species breeding in the City

Species	Observations	Locations	Pairs seen	Proven breeding
Mallard	1		3	1
Kestrel	1		1	1
Peregrine	1			1 (failed)
Moorhen	1	2		
Coot	1	3	2	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1			Certainly breeding
Herring Gull	1			Certainly breeding
Great Black-backed Gull	1		1	
Pied Wagtail	15	11	1	1
Grey Wagtail	18	14	4	2
Dunnock	22	10	3	1
Robin	34	15	4	2
Black Redstart	31	11		2
Blackbird	96	39	17	8
Wren	44	16		1
Great Tit	15	11		2+
Coal Tit	3	2		1
Blue Tit	40	19		4
Magpie	38	20	1	3
Jay	3	2	1	
Carrion Crow	45	21		14
Starling	22	10		7 estimated
House Sparrow	7	1	?	1
Chaffinch	4	2		
Goldfinch	67	40	16	2
Greenfinch	15	8	6	

3.2 Evidence of breeding birds from annual nest box cleaning

There is evidence of Great tits and Blue tits breeding in the City - using both artificial nest boxes and crannies in buildings. Breeding using nest boxes is monitored by annual cleaning every autumn and the number of nests is recorded. There are now over 40 nest boxes in gardens maintained by the City Gardens team. The majority are tree mounted woodcrete boxes with entrance holes varying between 26 mm and 32 mm in diameter. The results for the last three years' nesting seasons are set out in Table 2; occupancy levels are generally around 40%. The long, cold spring of 2014 may be the reason for the dip in the number of nests that year. In 2015 sixteen of the nest boxes had been occupied. The majority of nests were those of Great tits (66%) with the remainder Blue tits and one Wren - see Table 3. No nests had been built in sparrow or open-type 'robin' boxes - probably because there are many squirrels in the City and open boxes are not secure against predation.

Table 2: Nest box occupancy 2013 - 2015

	2015		2014		2013	
	boxes	nests	boxes	nests	boxes	nests
Number	41	16	36	11	30	12
Occupancy of checked boxes	39%		31%		40%	

Table 3: Number of nest boxes and nests for 2015 breeding season

	Total nests	Great tit	Blue tit	Wren
Barbican - Fann Street	1	1	0	0
Barbican - Speed House	1	1	0	0
Barbican - St Giles	2	2	0	0
Barbican - Thomas More	1 + 4 probably partial	0	1	0
Bunhill Fields	2	1	1	0
Cleary Garden	1	0	0	1
Finsbury	1	1	0	0
Postman's Park	1	0	1	0
St Mary Aldermanbury	1	1	0	0
St Paul's Cathedral	1	1	0	0
Total	16	8	3	1
Total definitely completed	12	0	0	0
% of completed nests		**66%**	**25%**	**8%**

The breeding success from these nests cannot be accurately assessed. Non-invasive observation confirms that some completed nests were used and young were successfully raised. There was less evidence of chick mortality in 2015 compared with 2014, although a complete clutch of nine Great tit eggs had been abandoned in a box in St Paul's churchyard.

In addition to the boxes maintained by the City Gardens team there are many boxes in private gardens but data about occupancy is not available. This might be a useful exercise for volunteers to explore.

The nest materials are an eclectic mix of moss and grass mixed with cigarette filters (white cotton-wool type fibres) and in the case of the Great tit nest shown in the photograph, human hair, wool and fabric from clothing and animal hair (probably squirrel).

Great tit nest made from cigarette filters, moss, human hair, textiles and animal fur.

Wren nest from a birch log box in Cleary Garden. The nest box was filled with a layer of leaves and the nest constructed out of moss so the hole was aligned to the hole in the nest box. The birch log box was damaged and replaced by a Schwegler woodcrete box

3.3 Resident versus summer visitor breeding population

This survey was only concerned with the City of London breeding population of Black Redstarts, so the data generated is limited to the survey period (months of March-August). This rather begs the question as to whether the City population is made up of resident birds or summer visitors or both.

A look at published distribution maps, e.g. www.birdguides.com/species/species.asp?sp=130095, suggests that the London and Thames gateway populations are resident birds, but the more isolated populations are migrant breeders. Birds present along the West and South West of the UK are wintering only, and apparently all the other more Northern populations are summer visitors only. Every year there is also a significant number of migrant birds recorded at mainly coastal locations from Shetland southwards, with a distinct October/early November peak in numbers. In fact the distribution maps suggest that the London/Thames Gateway nesting populations are the most northerly resident populations of this species, adding a further justification for active conservation on the basis of concerns about isolation and edge of range.

It is quite possible that the City has both resident and migrant birds. This will be verified by non-breeding season observations in the known nesting areas over the 2015/16 winter period.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The survey revealed an increased number of species present in the City. The 2014 survey recorded the presence of 23 species from 300 sightings. The 2015 survey recorded 49 species in total of which 28 were probably breeding.

4.1 Target species in the City's Biodiversity Action Plan

4.1.1 Black Redstart

This survey confirmed that the City of London has a healthy population of Black Redstarts with 31 sightings from eleven different locations across the City. It is likely from the observation of singing males that there are between five and ten breeding pairs in the City. Depending on the number of pairs in the UK this year, the City population probably represents over 5% of the UK breeding population. This level is regarded as significant. In view of the increasing number of skyscrapers with small roof areas or roofs taken up by plant, it seems likely that suitable nest sites may become increasingly scarce in the City. It is important to continue to monitor closely and to collect information 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.

As the Black Redstart population in the City comprises a significant portion of the total UK population it is important that any changes to its habitat through demolition of buildings and alterations to the rooftop spaces are carefully considered by the City Planning Department and detailed environmental impact studies are undertaken before any such changes are made so that any adverse impacts can be mitigated.

Map 1: Black Redstart sightings in the City 2015

4.1.2 House Sparrow

There has been a severe decline in the UK House Sparrow population over the last 20 years. It is estimated that Greater London lost 70% of its House Sparrows between 1994 and 2001. Due to the rapid population decline the species has been designated with the highest level of conservation concern, i.e. red status. The decline is linked to availability of food, air pollution and loss of habitat and nesting sites. The decline in House Sparrows nationally has also been observed in the City.

The survey identified only one colony on the edge of the City. It is very important that action should be taken to help this species, perhaps with well-placed nest boxes and planting of seed-rich forage species. Residents of Breton House (Barbican) have made a splendid contribution to helping the House Sparrows on this site but perhaps some further actions across the City might re-establish colonies on other sites where individuals have been observed.

4.1.3 Peregrine Falcon

Peregrines saw a dramatic fall in numbers in the 1960s due to the use of organo-chlorine insecticides and persecution but numbers have since recovered and the species is present in many urban areas, with the nesting sites closely monitored. Around 20% of the European Peregrine population breeds in the UK and therefore it is important to protect this species. The Peregrine Falcon's natural habitat is cliff ledges and these birds are attracted to the City's tall buildings. A pair of Peregrine Falcons have nested in the City for at least ten years and raised young every year. It is thought that in 2015 a new pair took over the nest site but unfortunately they failed to raise young this year.

It is important that the nesting sites of these birds are protected, that artificial nests are installed at select and appropriate locations and building managers and occupiers are made aware of their significance and protected status.

4.2 Other species

A Goldfinch at St. Mary Aldermanbury

The survey also recorded some interesting observations of species other than the BAP target species. Both Goldfinches and Grey Wagtails appear to be more numerous than expected. The increase in Goldfinch populations in urban areas has been noted by the BTO who estimate that numbers increased by about 80% between 2002 and 2012. The reasons for this are not clear and are the subject of further research into feeding behaviour. The presence of Grey Wagtails in the City was already known but the population density seems to be similar to that in its natural habitat of fast-flowing streams in the countryside. Grey Wagtails are known to visit urban areas in winter, but the City's population is clearly breeding. Prima facie the City does not provide any of this species' preferred habitat so its success may reflect the birds' versatile and opportunistic feeding habits.

The City has a rather obvious gull population living at rooftop level near to the Thames. Nesting Herring Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were identified during the 2004 rooftop survey and there is a year-round population of Black-headed Gulls. We do not have sufficient data on the habits of gull populations in the City and whether they are changing. This will be a focus of future surveys.

4.3 Migratory birds

Finally, although this is primarily a survey of breeding birds, the extended time period of observations resulted in many records of migratory species passing through the City in late spring. This emphasises the importance of the City's green spaces as refuelling and resting places for species such as the Black Cap, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Sedge, Willow and Garden Warblers - all of which were observed during the spring migration period in late April. Investigation of species passing through the City during the spring and autumn migrations and observation of feeding habits will be the subject of future surveys and will inform the habitat action plans for each of the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation identified in the BAP.

Appendix 1 Systematic List

(See page 14 for observer initial key)

A1. Biodiversity Action Plan Target Species

A1.1 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

31 records from 11 locations,mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding areas. Juveniles were seen at two locations in the City but it seems likely that the breeding population comprises 5 to 10 pairs.

(See also the map on page 7)

Mansell Street
One singing 16 March but no subsequent activity at this location.

St. Paul's Cathedral/St. Vedast alias Foster
Early records at St. Paul's 3 April (PL); One New Change - photographed 27 April (KM); St. Paul's - south side 26 May; St. Paul's Cathedral School 7 June (HB); St. Vedast alias Foster 13 June (CHF) and 20-25 June singing reliably (SL); 150 Cheapside, juvenile observed on the rooftop on 23 July (CHF/KJ).

Eversheds (One Wood Street)
First-summer male photographed on the rooftop by guest on guided walk on 13 June, while the St. Paul's bird could be heard singing in distance (CHF). Two juveniles present on the Eversheds roof on 20 July (CHF/KJ).

Guildhall (North and South sides)
An early sighting on 15 April involved 3 birds seen together from an office window (PB) but subsequent sightings suggested territories to the north and south sides of this area.

Guildhall North Side
One singing, on high, heard from St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden/Basinghall Street on 26 April (CHF); adult male seen on North Wing rooftop on 28 April (PB); Standard Chartered/White Horse Yard 20 May (DG); North Wing one making repeated visits to a potential breeding site in a lift tower 4 June (PB); one heard singing 13-14 Basinghall Street, possibly above Mason's Avenue and later Woolgate Exchange 18 June (GdS).

Guildhall South Side
One heard singing from the rooftop at 30 King Street on 3 May (GdS). One was singing reliably on the church spire of St. Lawrence Jewry during the second half of June and photographed (SL).

Bank of England
One reported on London Wiki Birder on 14 April is believed to relate to this location and claimed to be 6th consecutive year at this site (TS). One regularly seen in an internal courtyard, reported 8 May (DB). One heard singing 17 May (DG). One seen singing on a crane above the Bank of England on 5 June (GdS per London Wiki Birder). One still singing most days and a colleague claims to have seen a pair (reported by DB on 13 June).

St. James Garlickhythe
Heard for a few days in front of Vintners Place and finally seen singing 19 May but not subsequently despite searches in the area (GdS).

Zetland House (Just to the north of the City) EC2A 4HJ
Snatches of song heard 12 May in Earl Street, considered by observer to relate probably to this species (EK). A visitor at RSPB Rainham reported to AR on 1 June that there was a pair present at Zetland House.

Ropemaker Place
Just outside the City, one was heard singing from street level on 10 June (SL)

Devonshire Square
Heard singing and seen from Harrow Place on 24 May (PL)

Snow Hill/Cock Lane
One was seen flying back and forth between the tops of several buildings on 20 May (NR)

A1.2 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

The only records received concerned the remaining colony at the southern end of Golden Lane (AR), with calling birds in Fann Street (at Viscount House), the old Cripplegate Library, Golden Lane and at Breton House, Barbican (CHF). They are also evident in the Peabody Estate and Fortune Park, which are adjacent but just outside the City. Residents have established a wildlife garden at Breton House and feed the birds and this attracts the sparrows; several juvenile birds were seen there amongst the adults on 23 July (CHF/KJ).

A1.3 Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

Individuals were noted over the City during the survey period and the established nest in the Barbican was occupied by a new pair; apparently they have not raised young (SH/DJ).

A2. Other species

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*
One on Thames opposite Custom House on 12 April (DP/ST) and possibly the same individual in flight past Tower Bridge 24 April (GdS).

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
One on Thames opposite Custom House on 12 April (DP/ST).

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*
Numerous sightings during the survey period, of which these are the most notable: Barbican Lakes a female with 2 freshly hatched chicks on 1 April (CHF); Southwark Bridge 5 drakes on Thames 30 April (GdS); Guildhall on 3 May (GdS); Aldermanbury a pair on 6 May flying low amongst office workers at lunchtime landed on the small pond at St. Lawrence Jewry (CHF); Bishop's Square a pair together on water feature on 10 May (PL).

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*
Regularly seen flying to and from the Thames, presumably from the colony at Walthamstow reservoirs. Individuals seen along the Thames 29 April and 6 May were confidently identified as subspecies *P.C. sinensis* on basis of diagnostic gular angle (CHF).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*
One reported on at Tower Bridge, (GS *per* London Wiki Birder).

Grey Heron *Ardea cineria*
One reported on London Bridge on 18 May (GdS) and another at the Barbican 24 May (AR).

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
One on Thames opposite Custom House on 13 May (GdS).

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*
One perched briefly by Lloyds TSB; Churchyard of St. John Zachary on 23 April flying (KM); Love Lane one flying east 29 April (CHF/KM); St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden one on 1 May (KM). Also one seen at Tower Bridge, flying west along the Thames on 9 May (GdS).

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
A movement over on the 9 April, with a total of 7 individuals, including a group of 3 together (KM/CHF).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*
A well-established nest at the City of London police station in Wood Street was occupied from at least 17 April and sightings around that part of the City were presumably attributable to this pair. On 6 May the approach of a Lesser Black-backed Gull resulted in frantic alarm calling, suggesting young in the nest (CHF). Four seen together on the Port of London Authority building near the Tower of London on 12 April (DP/ST) suggests that there may be further pairs in the general area.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*
Individuals were noted on the Barbican Lakes and also the lake at St. Giles Cripplegate - may have nested but young were not seen (CHF).

Common Coot *Fulica atra*
A pair bred on the lake at St. Giles Cripplegate raising at least three chicks - well grown on 11 June. Another pair bred at the Barbican Lakes; only one chick was seen but this also seemed healthy on 11 June (CHF). Also individuals on Thames opposite Custom House on 12 April (DP/ST), 6 May (CHF), 8 and 14 May (GdS).

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
One heard calling in the evening along the Thames opposite the 'oyster shed' pub (Angel Lane) on 15 May (GdS).

Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*
Remarkably, there was just one report of this species during the period. This was a bird at the Tower of London on 8 April (DP). They are a familiar sight in the City during the winter so there was an expectation that non-breeding birds would remain but this is evidently not the case.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*
Away from the Thames this has been the most numerous species of gull, with birds seen throughout the area. The largest noted gathering was 14 resting on the roofs to the south of St. Paul's Cathedral, especially on the roof of Bracken House on 17 April (CHF). On a visit to the green roof of the Grange Hotel (St. Paul's) there were several pairs acting territorially, including dive-bombing; nests were not found but these birds were evidently nesting in the area (CHF/SH).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
Although frequently encountered along the Thames, few records were received, but they are known to breed along the Thames as recorded by the 2004 rooftop bird survey. A gathering of 34

along the Thames Foreshore on 30 April (GdS) probably relates to a local breeding population.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*
A single bird at Custom House on 24 April, and a pair present at this locality on 7 May displaying to each other (GdS). There is a small breeding population near Canary Wharf and these birds may relate to this population.

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.

Common Swift *Apus apus*
Only two sightings reported, 2 flying west past the roof at One New Change on 19 May (KM) and a record for Tower Bridge on 30 June (PW *per* London Wiki Birder).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*
One heard, just outside the City, at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 9 April (KM/CHF) and within the City one seen in the trees King's Bench Walk (Temple area) on 9 April (KM/CHF).

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
One flew past the rooftop at One New Change on 6 May (KM).

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*
Just outside the City, 2 were seen at Tower Bridge on 30 June (PW *per* London Wiki Birder).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla Alba*
15 records from 11 locations of which 8 were during April so may have involved migrating birds. The only definite breeding record was just outside the City at Allen and Overy (Bishop's Square) with an adult feeding young on 5 June (EK). It seems likely that breeding is more widespread, perhaps on rooftops.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
18 records from 14 locations of which only 2 were during April, so these were unlikely to involve migrating birds. The sightings were from the North and East of the City and often involved pairs. Proof of breeding came from the Barbican Underground Station (adult feeding young) on 13 June (SH) and an adult bird collecting insects, near the water feature, at Bowater House (Golden Lane) on 23 July; it flew off westwards so may have related to a second brood at Barbican Station. A pair displaying at Sun Street on 12 May (EK) may relate to other sightings at St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate (KM/PL). A pair present at Sir John Cass Primary School for several days in July (SH) is also suggestive of nesting in that area.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis*
22 records from 10 locations, mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites, but proof of breeding came from one site only. The locations were: Tower Hill, opposite Tower (AL); St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate (CHF/PL); Bishop's Square (CHF); London Bridge - Grants Quay/Dark House Walk (GdS/HB); Cutter Street/Harrow Place junction (CHF); St. Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (CHF/KM/GdS/HB); Cleary Gardens (CHF); Primrose Street (PL); Golden Lane (AR); Elder Gardens - juvenile (PL).

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*
34 records from 15 locations, mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites and there was proof of pairs from three sites in the City. The locations were: St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate (KM); St. Paul's Churchyard - *nest located in wall* (KM/CHF/HB); Temple Church (CHF); King's Bench Walk/Mitre Court (CHF); St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden (CHF); Finsbury Circus – *two seen together* (PL); Elder Gardens (PL); Fidelity Gardens, 25 Cannon St. – *pair present* (CHF/HB); Tower of London (DP/ST); St. Bride's Church (HB); Golden Lane (AR); Smithfield/St. Bartholomew's area (AR); just outside the City at Folgate Street - *feeding young* (EK) and Barbican main lake (CHF).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*
Just outside the City, at Lincoln's Inn Fields there were 2 singing birds on 9 April, 2 females together on 26 April and one singing on 29 April (CHF/KM). Also on the edge of the City there was a singing bird at Golden Lane on 2 May.

Blackbird *Turdus merula*
96 records were received from 39 locations and most almost certainly relate to breeding birds. Pairs were present at 17 of the sites and definite proof of nesting came from the following 8 sites: Fidelity Gardens, 25 Cannon St., chicks fed by adults on 29 April and 6 May (CHF/KM); Cleary Garden, female collecting nest material on 29 April (CHF); Wilson Street/Sun Street junction, a tailless juvenile present on 22 June (PL); St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden, female carrying faecal pellet 6 May (CHF); Postman's Park, a female collecting food for young on 13 June (CHF); St. Anne and St. Agnes Churchyard, occupied nest found in old brick wall

on 26 April (CHF/KM); Wood Street, tailless chick waiting in trees outside entrance to Eversheds on 11 June (CHF); Finsbury Circus, female collecting nest material on 9 April (PL) and male with food on 9 June (PL); Staples Inn, a pair collecting nest material on 15 May (HB); Elder Gardens, just outside the City, 2 pairs present and juveniles seen on 23 April and also on 10 May (PL).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

One recorded at St Mary Aldermanbury Garden on 26 April, spending most of its time feeding in a copper beech tree (CHF/KM).

These migrants (Garden warbler on the left and Willow warbler on the right) were feeding together in a Copper Beech tree at St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden and occasionally joined by a Common Whitethroat.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

One in full song in Noble Street at St. Anne and St. Agnes Churchyard on 26 April (CHF/KM) and the same bird or another on 29 April in Fidelity Gardens, 25 Cannon Street.

This singing Sedge Warbler was at St. Agnes Churchyard on 26 April, only occasionally showing itself.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

One was present in St Paul's Churchyard on 26 April and another was present at St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden from the 26 to 29 April (CHF/KM).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

One was present just outside the City at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 9 April (CHF/KM).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

44 records were received from 16 locations and most singing birds noted at the locations on different occasions during spring probably relate to breeding birds. Chicks were seen at two sites, proving that they are indeed nesting in the City. The following are the principal sites: Fore Street/St. Giles Cripplegate 1 April-11 June (CHF); Barbican (Thomas More Garden - Seddon High walk) 17 and 26 April (CHF); St. Paul's Churchyard/New Change 1 April-13 June (HB/CHF/ME); St. Anne and St. Agnes Gardens from 9 April (HB) and collecting nest material on 29 April (CHF); Noble Street, two juveniles foraging in ditch on 26 June (CHF/SH); Cleary Gardens one singing from 8 April and on 7 June two scruffy chicks seen with adult (HB); in both Inner and Middle Temple Gardens birds singing on several occasions between 17 April and 11 June and it seems likely that more than one territory is involved (CHF); Portsoken Garden/Goodman's

Yard/Minories (DP/CHF); Golden Lane/Fortune Park 2 May to 11 June bird singing regularly (AR/CHF); Fann Street Wildlife Garden one heard singing on three visits between 11 June and 20 July (CHF).

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

There were 12 records of migrant birds between 23 April and 12 May. Other than individuals just outside the City (Lincoln's Inn Fields), one on 26 April and one at Shoreditch High Road station on 12 May (EK), all the sightings were in the area between St. Anne and St. Agnes Churchyard and St. Paul's Cathedral and may relate to an arrival with other migrants around 23-26 April (KM/CHF).

Great Tit *Parus major*

15 records were received from 11 locations. One nest was located in the masonry of the Chartered Insurance Institute at 20 Aldermanbury (KM/CHF). Nesting must have taken place near the Fann Street Wildlife Garden as juvenile birds were seen there on 26 June (SH/CHF). We anticipate that a better idea of nesting numbers will come when nest boxes are cleaned out at the end of the summer.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*

This was not an expected species for the City so a record on 20 April from Inner Temple Gardens was a nice surprise (ME). It was an even greater surprise on 6 May when CHF saw a bird with a full beak of food for young disturbed by law clerks moving papers. This bird then flew down into the sunken space in front of one of the terraces. It flew out without food shortly after and a gap in the masonry was clearly visible where the bird had gone, so presumably this is the nest site. Another was reported at Fann Street Wildlife Garden on 23 June.

Blue Tit *Parus major*

40 records were received from 19 locations fairly evenly distributed across the City. We anticipate getting a clearer idea of nesting numbers once the nest boxes in the City are cleared. However, broods of young were evident in June as follows: Fidelity Gardens, 25 Cannon Street on 11 June, and possibly the same brood in trees at junction of Cheapside and New Change on 13 June (CHF), Guildhall Yard in a tree by St. Lawrence Jewry on 11 June (CHF) and Postman Park on 13 June (CHF).

Magpie *Pica pica*

Seen throughout the City (20 locations) and during the winter old nests are evident, but it has been rather difficult to establish occupancy, nevertheless nesting evidence was noted at St. Mary Aldermanbury Garden (CHF/HB/GdS); Maughan Library/Cliffords Inn (HB/CHF); St. Bride's Churchyard (HB).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

One was seen at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 9 and 29 April (KM/CHF). A pair was present at Finsbury Circus on 16 April.

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 13 occupied nests were located (HB/PL/CHF), plus other locations where birds were seen but no nest identified. For instance, a fledged brood of three was present in Whittington Garden on 11 June (CHF).

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

22 records were received from 10 locations but there do appear to be areas of focus, perhaps related to nesting areas. Birds were encountered along the Thames and in particular to the South of St. Paul's Cathedral. In early April 8-10 birds were feeding together in Cleary Gardens (CHF/HB). These seem to have dispersed for breeding and on 2 May HB reported that they were using the vent holes on the River and London Bridge sides of the building. This accorded with sightings in mid-April in King William Street by CHF/AL. In June and July Starlings were gathering at St Paul's with juvenile birds. Counts there included 19 together on 11 June (CHF) and 30 plus on the 20 July (KM). Another area with Starlings is around Finsbury Square where up to 5 were seen in April (CHF) and on 24 May PL saw two entering a hole in a single story building. Starlings are also present around the Tower of London (ST/AL), and a small flock, including young, was noted in the Golden Lane area on 24 May (AR).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Although several were present at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 29 April (KM/CHF) only four reports were received from within the City. Three of these records were at Golden Lane on 2 and 10 May plus 1 June (AR), suggesting residency in the area. The only other record was at the Tower of London on 10 April (ST).

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

67 records were received from 40 locations and in many cases the sightings involved pairs, or even small groups. At least one juvenile bird was part of a group of 6 in Elder Garden on 21 June (PL) but this was the only proof of nesting. It seems very likely that the City has a good breeding population of this species and it could be argued that other

than Feral Dove this may now be the most numerous breeding species. Some of the records involved birds heard at rooftop level suggesting that they are making at least some use of this habitat, but they are also making use of feeders as reported at St. Paul's Churchyard (mixed seed) on 6 May (CHF) and Elder Garden (nyjer seed) 23 April (PL).

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

15 records were received from 8 locations and 6 of the sightings involved pairs. At Finsbury Circus a pair was present from 9 April until at least 24 May (PL). Up to 4 were seen in the Elder Garden area on dates in May and June.

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Friends of City Gardens is a community group of volunteers based in the City of London. As well as supporting biodiversity surveys, such as the City of London Rooftop Bird Survey 2014 and the City of London Breeding Bird Survey 2015, FoCG encourages best biodiversity practice in the City through its annual City in Bloom competition (www.cityinbloom.org). In 2015 FoCG delivered Green Roof Enhancement Workshops for City building managers and planners, contributed to the City of London's updated Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 - 2020 and created a new green space on the disused platform of Barbican Underground Station. FoCG volunteers carry out many hands-on green space improvement projects, including planting native hedges, sowing wildflower meadows, planting and maintaining a community orchard and herb garden and cleaning bird boxes. And we work with local primary schools to help children learn about biodiversity as well as how to grow and cook their own vegetables.

FoCG will be carrying out another Breeding Birds Survey in 2016. If you would like to participate in the Survey or other biodiversity activities please contact FoCG www.friendsofcitygardens.org.uk