

City of London Breeding Bird Survey 2016

Charles Fentiman

Friends of City Gardens



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1. Introduction and executive summary

The primary purpose of this 2016 Breeding Birds Survey was to collect data on the number of breeding pairs of Black Redstarts in the City. This objective became of greater importance as the Survey progressed, following upgrading of the conservation status of Black Redstarts from Amber to Red. This change was the result of the revised estimate of the size of the UK breeding population from over 100 pairs to between 19 and 44 pairs. The City's population, established in the 2015 Breeding Birds Survey, of between five and ten pairs was already regarded as significant on a national basis; the new estimate of the total UK population suggests the City population is in fact well in excess of our previous estimates of 10% of the total population.

The 2016 Survey recorded a total of 40 sightings of Black Redstarts. The data indicate there are seven or more territories suggesting there are seven or more breeding pairs. Based on the new RSPB assessment of the UK breeding population, the City may be home to up to 37% of the UK breeding population. This finding 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 UK breeding population of this increasingly rare bird.

The 2016 Survey also established the number of different species and total numbers of breeding birds in the City of London, using the same methodology as that used in the 2015 Survey and the rooftop surveys in 2004 and 2014. Observers recorded over 600 sightings during the period from March to July 2016, supplemented by the results of the annual nest box cleaning exercise in November. In total the 2016 Survey recorded 39 species, of which there was evidence to suggest that 27 nested in the City; this compares with 49 species recorded in 2015, of which 28 were believed to have nested. However, this reduction is probably the consequence of fewer observers in 2016 and should not be regarded as significant.

As well as producing significant results for the Black Redstart population, the 2016 Survey established data on populations of two other target species listed in the City's Biodiversity Action Plan 2016 - 2020, namely the House Sparrow and the Peregrine Falcon. The House Sparrow continues to be a Red listed species. The Survey confirmed the existence of two breeding colonies of House Sparrows on the fringes of the City; one at the Tower of London and the other in Fortune Park, just to the north of the City. Research has shown that House Sparrows are slow to recolonise and active interventions, including providing nesting sites and green corridors, will be necessary to help this species to move back into the City where it was once a common sight.

A new pair of Peregrine Falcons bred successfully in 2016 having taken over a nest site previously occupied by an older breeding pair that failed to raise young in 2015.

2. Methodology

Observers applied the same methodology as in 2015, based on regular ground level walks throughout the survey period, supplemented by some roof top visits. The 2015 survey concluded that a longer survey period would be beneficial, so in 2016 observations were made between March and July. Since there was a smaller team of volunteers in 2016, observers were not allocated designated areas and each team member was free to search as they wished. 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 parts of the City did not receive sufficient coverage; in particular the area around the Temple Gardens. Members of the City Gardens team provided some useful sightings for which we are most grateful.



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>.

In order to establish whether a species was breeding, observers did not risk disturbance of nesting pairs but observed from a safe distance. For many species definitive proof of breeding was sought in a variety of ways. For example, it could come from gulls indulging in dive bombing activities, as well as seeing recently fledged young, or adult birds collecting nest material, or collecting food for young. For some species the best indication of the locations of territories is from singing male birds, or in the case of species such as tits, the post breeding season cleaning of nest boxes reveals more information on number of nests, and whether the breeding season was successful.

With species such as Black Redstarts and both species of Wagtail it is very difficult to establish proof of nesting because they tend to stay at rooftop level and may only demonstrate their presence by regular singing. Territories held by male birds normally indicate broadly where there is nesting activity.

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.

3. BAP target species and Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC)



Typical distant view of a singing Black Redstart in the City, this one is on the wind vane of St Lawrence Jewry, next to Guildhall (Photo: by Stephen Leaman)

The City's BAP 2016 - 2020 lists four target 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. In 2016 a consortium of bird conservation organisations, including 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)¹. This is an assessment of 247 species of UK, Channel and Isles of Man breeding birds. Each species is assigned to one of three categories according to the current level of Conservation Concern.

- The species appear on the Red List if they are 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.
- The Amber List is for 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 popu-

lation 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 House Sparrow is on the Red list and the Black Redstart was added in 2016, highlighting the importance of the population in the City.

3.1 Black Redstart

The 2015 Survey recorded the breeding population of Black Redstarts in the City to be in the range of five to ten pairs. The 2016 Survey shows that the population seems to have been maintained, doubtless aided by the ever increasing number of green roofs in the City. Nevertheless, with the reclassification of the Black Redstart from the Amber to the Red List, the City is an even more important area for the maintenance of the UK breeding population. In fact the current RSPB assessment indicates that the UK breeding population is only between 19 and 44 pairs, perhaps indicating a further severe decline elsewhere in other UK breeding populations. The 2016 Survey

¹ Mark Eaton, Nicholas Aebischer, Andy Brown, Richard Hearn, Leigh Lock, Andy Musgrove, David Noble, David Stroud and Richard Gregory. Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. <http://britishbirds.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BoCC4.pdf>
BTO/RSPB Summary of BoCC 4, <https://www.bto.org/science/monitoring/psob>

produced 40 sightings, indicating seven or more territories. Using the RSPB estimates, the City may be holding up to 37% of the UK breeding population.

3.2 House Sparrow

The 2016 results for this species have been encouraging, as 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. Although this is technically just inside Tower Hamlets (by a few meters) the birds were regularly feeding across the City boundary. Populations adjacent to the City are important because they could, with careful management of habitats and provision of nesting sites, be the launch pad for spreading this species back into their old City sites where they were once ubiquitous.



3.3 Peregrine Falcon

During the 1970's the Peregrine Falcon was a very rare species in the UK, only nesting in fairly remote locations such as in Wales and Scotland. Over the years numbers have increased and they have spread back to all parts of the UK, and remarkably back into Greater London, where there are now several breeding pairs, including regular breeding sites in the heart of London. Within the City there is one regular nest site that has been closely monitored for a number of years. In 2015 the resident pair failed to breed, probably due to old age, but in 2016 a new pair took over the nest site and raised three chicks, two females and a male.

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. Unfortunately, they are now only an occasional visitor to the City with only one sighting (of two together) during the 2015 survey and a single bird sighted during 2016.

3.5 Other species of Conservation Concern in the City

BoCC 4 does not only list the species according rarity, but also to changing populations, either by changes to the size or range of the population. Additional species that either breed in the City or may do so in the future that are of concern are:

Red listed

Herring Gull, *Resident breeding*

Grey Wagtail, *Resident breeding*

Starling, *Resident breeding*

Mistle Thrush, *Resident breeding close to the City*

Amber listed

Mallard, *Resident breeding*

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Resident and Summer visitor breeding*

Great Black-backed Gull, *Resident breeding close to the City*

Common Tern, *Summer visitor close to the City*

Tawny Owl, *Resident breeding close to the City*

Kestrel, *Resident breeding*

House Martin, *Summer visitor breeding close to the City*

Dunnock, *Resident breeding*

It is not altogether surprising to see some of these species on the list; it is well known that UK populations of Starling, House Martin and Kestrel have been declining steeply, but others are species that are becoming increasingly familiar in the South East. Numbers of Grey Wagtail, for example seem to be increasing in London, including the City; the BoCC 4 report makes it clear that it is on the list because of concerns about the species in its traditional habitat along upland streams and rivers. The City and other parts of central London provide a different sort of habitat to which Grey Wagtails have adapted, but in view of the wider national perspective, the City population may not be as secure as we would like. The same applies to Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull, which appear to be in sharp decline nationally but increasing in towns and cities. Why they like to be in the City of London and whether they do any harm or whether they may offer the City some benefit, for instance in supporting the River Thames ecosystem, or removing food wastes is an interesting area of future study.

4. Breeding birds

Out of the 39 species recorded during the survey period some 27 species have presented evidence to suggest that they have nested in the City, or may have attempted to do so. The survey team did not look intrusively for nests, but gathered other behavioural evidence of breeding. Evidence was also taken from the annual nest box cleaning exercise in autumn after the end of the breeding season.

4.1 Observations and evidence of breeding

Table 2 in Appendix 1 summarises the results of over 600 separate observations over the period March to July 2016. Of the 27 species listed there is compelling evidence that 19 are breeding and it is highly likely that the remaining eight species are also breeding in the City. It is also likely that the number of pairs of these 27 species that are raising young is considerably greater as only firm evidence of breeding behaviours, as set out in Section 2, has been accepted as proof.

Table 1: Occupancy of nest boxes for 2016 breeding season

Location	Number boxes	Number nests
Barbican - Fann Street	3	2
Barbican - Speed	1	1
Barbican - St Giles	2	2
Barbican - Thomas More	7	3
Bunhill Fields	7	2
Cleary Garden	2	1
Finsbury Circus	2	2
Portsoken	1	0
Postman's Park	3	1
St Anne and St Agnes	1	1
St Botolph without Bishopsgate	1	0
St Dunstan in the East	5	2
St Olave Silver Street	1	1
St Mary Aldermanbury	2	2
St Mary Staining	1	1
St Michael Cornhill	1	0
St Paul's Cathedral	4	2
St Peter Cornhill	1	0
Total	45	23

4.2 Results of nest box cleaning November 2016

There are now 45 nest boxes in gardens maintained by the City Gardens team with a variety of designs for use by Blue Tits and Great Tits and some open fronted boxes designed for Robins. All the nest boxes in City gardens were cleaned in November 2016. The occupancy of the boxes was recorded and a detailed annual report prepared which can be found on the FoCG website.

In summary for the 2016 nesting season:

- 45 nest boxes were checked and cleaned in 19 gardens.
- 23 of the boxes had completed nests (51%), in comparison to 30% in the 2015 nesting season.
- There were in addition four partial nests that had not been completed.
- The majority of nests were those of Blue Tits (65%) with the remainder Great Tits.
- No nests had been built in open-type 'robin' boxes.
- In 2016 there were 19 nests (82%) with either unhatched eggs or dead chicks.

Although the odd dead chick or abandoned egg can be expected, in 2016 the frequency and the number of dead chicks were much higher than in previous years. For example, at least eight very immature unfledged Blue Tits were found in a nest from Fann Street and 12 Great Tit eggs were found abandoned in a nest in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard. This level of abandoned young or eggs was considerably more than in 2015 when there were only four such nests (25%). The 2016 level of abandonment may be a reflection of the below average temperatures and wetter than average conditions in April and May that may have reduced insect food sources.

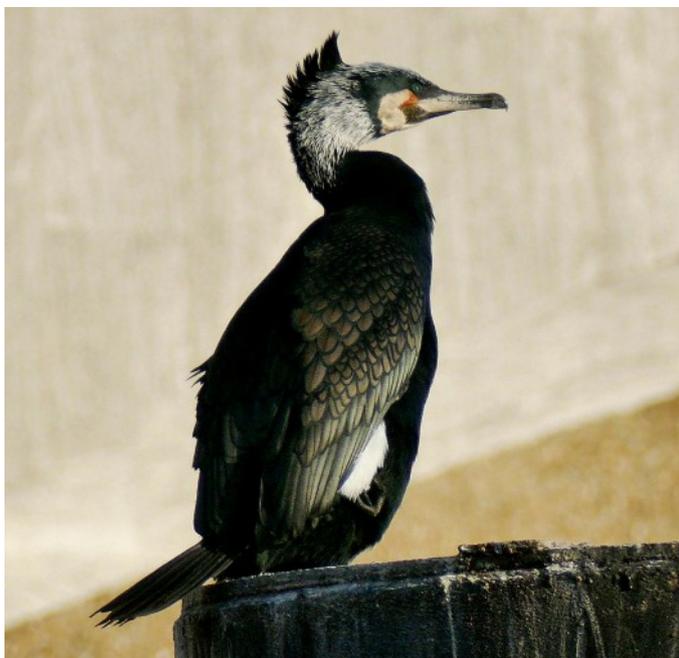
There are cases where occupancy by Blue Tits has not been confirmed as the remains of Great Tit nests were subsequently found; it is known that Blue Tits are often evicted by Great Tits. Also, failed breeding can be followed by a second brood in another nest box, so a cautious approach is to be followed with regards to numbers. In addition to the nest boxes managed by the Gardening team there are other nest boxes scattered around the City that have been installed by others and not part of the FoCG cleaning programme. The indications that there may be multiple occupancy of nest boxes is perhaps worthy of attention in 2017 to determine the frequency of Blue Tit evictions by Great Tits.



Abandoned Great Tit nest in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard

5. Migrant and regular visiting species

Compared to 2015 there were fewer migrant species seen but nevertheless migrant warblers were present around St Paul's Cathedral during much of May, and a Blackcap singing in early June may indicate potential breeding. Other regular visiting species are known to be nesting nearby, such as Cormorants, commuting between where they nest, at Walthamstow reservoirs, and regular feeding locations along the Thames. Also visits by Grey Heron probably involve birds from the heronry in Regent's Park. One of these (*the opening photo kindly contributed by Polly Barton*) was bold enough to make a mid-morning visit to the ornamental pond opposite St Lawrence Jewry church, next to Guildhall. They also nest at Walthamstow reservoirs, but these individuals have less human contact, so may be too wary to visit this particular pond. A Little Egret seen flying over St Paul's Cathedral possibly also came from London's first breeding colony, which is also at Walthamstow reservoir.



Sightings of migrating birds, mostly in the latter part of April are interesting, as they may indicate potential future nesting species. The sightings also demonstrate that heavily built up areas can attract scarce migrating birds; the locations where such migrants are regularly seen (St Paul's Cathedral in particular), may be because of overnight illumination of such buildings. These birds often sing, enhancing these locations and an information board about this could be of interest to visitors to the City.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The Survey confirmed that the City of London still has a healthy population of Black Redstarts and identified at least seven territories. This may represent between 15 - 37% of the UK's breeding pairs. This means that the population in the City is nationally highly significant, with important implications for planning policy. There is a risk that if the number of new skyscrapers with restricted roof areas continues to grow that suitable nesting areas may be lost for this species. Monitoring is vital and it is important that we continue to learn about the requirements for the conservation of this species in the City.

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 the church spires and similar towers as singing posts. It is vital that any change to the City's 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. Detailed environmental impact studies should routinely be undertaken so that any adverse impacts can be offset before damage is done to potential nesting sites.

The Survey also established that other Red and Amber list species of Conservation Concern, such as the House Sparrow, Peregrine Falcon, Herring Gull and Black Headed Gull are breeding within the City and this too is of importance to planning policy and on going management of habitats within the Square Mile.

The population of other rooftop species also deserves consideration, and in particular the Grey Wagtail. The species has become habituated to urban environments and it seems very likely that they have been nesting in the City for many years, largely unnoticed. With their position on the Red List of Conservation Concern, the City has an obligation to establish the population size and trend for this species. In 2016 the Survey found that there were probably five territories and clear evidence of nesting for three of these.

House Sparrows seem to be holding on, with two colonies on the edge of the City and more efforts are needed to support this species, perhaps with well-placed nest boxes. Lawn areas are also important for adults to find invertebrates to feed to their chicks. Residents of Breton House (Barbican) have made a splendid contribution to helping the species but perhaps some further actions could increase the colony and to bring them back into the City, for instance within the Barbican complex. The green space around St Paul's Cathedral also has the potential to be a good site for House Sparrows in the centre of the City with suitable lawn areas and ample potential nesting sites reasonably close to the current colonies at Golden Lane and the Tower of London. Sparrows are quite happy to be in the company of people, so some focussed actions should enable them to return to this site and perhaps others.

Other populations seem to be reasonably stable, although numbers of Goldfinches seem to be down, and the lack of sightings of Greenfinches is concerning. Progress was made in finding nesting sites of Starlings (also Red Listed), but this was rather late in the nesting cycle but the sites will be checked earlier during 2017.

The lower total number of species recorded as present in the City during the 2016 breeding season may be explained by the poor weather in spring, which was unfavourable for both nesting birds and surveying and may not be a significant decrease. The sighting of a previously unrecorded species in the City, namely a pair of Long-tailed Tits, was a welcome addition to the breeding season list and the combined total of species recorded over the two years 2015 to 2016 has increased to 47 different species.

A further breeding bird survey is planned for 2017, and for this we have agreed access to several rooftops in the City which will help us to locate Black Redstarts, but this will be carried out carefully so as not to disturb any breeding birds that may be discovered. Also, the exact locations of any such breeding sites will not be disclosed.

Acknowledgements

Observers

We are grateful to all those who contributed to this survey of City birds during the 2016 breeding season. In addition to those who took part directly a number of other individuals also contributed records. Some contributions came from indirect sources such as postings on the 'London Bird Club Wiki' website <http://londonbirders.wikia.com/wiki/LatestNews> and others did so indirectly, for instance by telling the members of the survey team. The names of such are also listed below in italics.

Initials are used to identify observers listed in the appendix.

Helen Baker (HB)	Kate Jenrick (KJ)	<i>Polly Barton (PB)</i>
Paul Beckett (PB)	Elwira Kakyusik (EKk)	<i>John Cadera (JC)</i>
David Bradnum (DB)	Ed Keeble (EK)	<i>Tom King (TK)</i>
David Crowley (DC)	Pete Lambert (PL)	<i>Richard Gowing (RG)</i>
Matt Evans (ME)	Stephen Leaman (SL)	<i>Bob Graves (BG)</i>
Charles Fentiman (CHF)	Ken Murray (KM)	<i>Paul Hawkins (PH)</i>
Dusty Gedge (DG)	Andy Reid (AR)	<i>A La Pietra (ALP)</i>
Nic Guerra (NG)	Nick Rutter (NR)	<i>A Lewis (AL)</i>
Richard Hack (RH)	Gehan de Silva (GdS)	<i>Heather Rumble (HR)</i>
Sarah Hudson (SH)		<i>Francis Tusa (FT)</i>

Image Credits

Ken Murray (pages 6, 10, 12), Sarah Hudson (pages 5, 7, 12), Polly Barton (page 10), Stephen Leaman (page 3), [Public domain image](#) (page 7)



A Goldfinch and a Blue Tit share a feeder in Bunhill Fields

Appendix I: Systematic list

Table 2: Observations and evidence of breeding

Species	Observations	Locations	Pairs seen	Proven breeding
Mallard	11	8	1	0
Kestrel	0	0	1	1
Peregrine	3	0	1	1
Moorhen	0	2	0	2
Coot	0	3	2	1
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Widespread	0	NA	3
Herring Gull	Widespread	0	NA	NA
Feral Rock Dove	Widespread	0	0	0
Wood Pigeon	Widespread	0	0	0
Pied Wagtail	6	6	1	0
Grey Wagtail	10	5	1	3
Dunnock	26	13	6	2
Robin	32	16	2	2
Black Redstart	41	9	2	1
Blackbird	121	41	18	17
Wren	27	14	1	2
Great Tit	19	12	3	6
Blue Tit	67	30	12	15
Long-tailed Tit	1	1	1	0
Magpie	34	22	4	1
Jay	2	1	1	NA
Carrion Crow	33	20	0	10
Starling	24	9	0	At least 7 pairs
House Sparrow	8	2	NA	Edge of City at least 9 pairs
Chaffinch	2	1		1 Singing male
Goldfinch	48	25	12	1
Greenfinch	1	1	0	0

BAP Target Species

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

This year there were relatively few sightings early in the breeding season, although informal comments from staff on buildings indicated that they were back in breeding areas from mid-February. However, singing birds were much more in evidence from late May through to the end of June. In total there were 41 sightings from nine locations and mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding areas. A post breeding family party was recorded in early July. The records enabled seven likely breeding locations to be identified. All sightings are detailed as follows:

1. Lime Street

One singing 29 March, but no subsequent sightings reported at this location (ALP per London Wiki Birder)

2. St Lawrence Jewry & One Wood Street

Staff at 1 Wood Street (Eversheds roof) reported their presence from mid-February. Subsequently, there were twelve reported sightings, mostly of a singing bird on St Lawrence Jewry Church, but also at 30 Gresham Street (SL, RH, DG, CHF & HR). Singing was particularly reliable during the second half of June from the church spire of St Lawrence Jewry, and the individual was photographed (SL). This was also a key location for a singing male in 2015.

3. Guildhall & Standard Chartered

We are informed that Black Redstarts were regularly observed during June from the rooftop of Standard Chartered Bank in Basinghall Street, but specific dates were not given (DG). Also, recorded singing from the roof of Guildhall on four occasions from 8 April to the end of June (NR, & SL). On 26 June this bird was singing at the same time as the St Lawrence Jewry singing male, showing that two territories were involved (SL).

4. Bank of England

The first one was a male reported in one of the inner courtyards (TK per DB) on 7 April. A singing bird was recorded from outside the Bank complex at Lothbury on 18 April, and during June just one sighting, but during July a pair was regularly feeding in one of the internal courtyards (DB).

5. Broad Street

One was singing regularly between the base of Tower 42 and the junction of Great Winchester Street and Old Broad Street between 2nd and 8 June (DB).

6. Devonshire Square/Harrow Place

Singing heard from rooftops in the area on seven occasions between 16 May and 21 June (JC and RG per London Wiki Birder, and DG).

7. St Andrew's Church Farringdon Street

Three seemingly unrelated records came from this area, on 5 May (FT), 11 June (SL) and 16 June (PH). The proximity of these individuals suggests that this may relate to a territory in this area. There was also a sighting in this area during May 2015.

8. Tabernacle Street/Worship Street

We were informed that Black Redstarts have been in this area for the last two years at least (EKk) and five individual records were received from 18 April - 12 June (EK, EKk and RH). These sightings were just to the north of the City (Leonard Street/Paul Street area) but the 18 April sighting was very close to the City with one singing at the junction of Worship Street and Clifton Street. It is entirely possible that there is more than one territory in this area.

9. Angel Lane/Lower Thames Street

One record of a pair and two juvenile Black Redstarts on the green roof of the Nomura Building on 29 July (per Dusty Gedge). This is a well visited site where there were no other sightings so these birds must relate to a family party from a nearby territory.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

The colony at the southern end of Golden Lane remains with at least active four nest sites identified generally around Fortune Park. They are regularly present in the park and still come to the wildlife garden at Breton House, which is within the City (SH, CHF).

During 2015 there were no House Sparrows recorded at a former colony at the Tower of London, however during 2016 there has been ample evidence that there is a thriving colony around the western side of the Tower of London complex. This colony seems to be centred on the Gift Shop opposite to the PAUL Three Quays coffee shop. On 18 April there were at least nine chirruping male birds and a similar number was counted on 4 June. Females were also present, but less easy to spot (CHF). Another colony was discovered across the river from the Tower, at Fair Street (GdS).

The common feature of these locations is that they have lawn areas, perhaps sufficient for the adults to find invertebrates for their chicks during their critical development stage. Other places with areas of lawn are St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, the Barbican and the Inner Temple Gardens. Perhaps efforts could be made at these locations to help sparrows to return.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

This year the nest on the Barbican was occupied by a new pair that had driven off the old birds that had failed to raise young last year. The new pair raised three chicks that fledged successfully (Per SH). At ground level there were only three sightings by the survey team although they are regularly seen by those living in the area.

Common Swift *Apus apus*

Only one sighting reported of one flying above Newgate Street on 20 June (RH). The general complete lack of swifts and hirundines over the City suggests that there are insufficient insects flying above the City for them to feed.

Other species

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

One on Thames opposite Custom House, resting on mooring post on 28 April (CHF).

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Sightings right through the survey period, mostly around the Barbican lakes and along the Thames. The highest counts were 14 at the Barbican on 8 April and eight on the lake on 21 May. There were no sightings giving direct evidence of nesting, but a pair was found sitting together on the pond in the gardens of Bowater House, Golden Lane on 31 March.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Regularly seen flying to and from the Thames, presumably from the colony at Walthamstow reservoirs. Individuals seen on mooring posts opposite Custom House with four on 18 April and three on 4 June. It was high tide on both occasions and they were identified as subspecies *P.C. Sinensis* on basis of diagnostic gular angle (CHF).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

One heading SSW over St Paul's Cathedral on 22 May (KM).

Grey Heron *Ardea cineria*

One New Change, one flying over on 21 April and astonishingly one sighted on the edge of the Gresham Street pond at Guildhall mid-morning on 14 April (PB) (photo at start of report taken by Polly Barton).

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

A well-established nest at the City of London police station in Wood Street was occupied from at least 7 April and sightings around that part of the City were presumably attributable to this pair. Adult birds were present at the nest site and also seen locally until 26 June after which no further sightings during checks on the site (RH, KM, CHF). There was also a sighting of a female being "seen off" by a Herring Gull that may relate to the same pair.

Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Two pairs are known to have bred in the Barbican complex where they appear to be resident. On Barbican main lake there were two adults with three chicks on 7 April and at St Giles Cripplegate an adult and a juvenile on 21 May (CHF).

Common Coot *Fulica atra*

A pair bred on the lake at St Giles Cripplegate raising at least two chicks – almost adult size on 25 July. Another pair built a nest at the main lake in the Barbican complex, but young were not seen (CHF). As during 2015, adult individuals were seen on the Thames generally opposite Custom House with a maximum of three on 4 June (CHF). There does not seem to be a prospect of nesting at this locality, so these are presumably non breeding birds.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*

Away from the Thames this has been the most frequently encountered species of gull and regularly seen at locations where there are likely to be scraps of discarded food. Notable gatherings were not observed, but this is perhaps due to the demolition of buildings where gatherings were observed during 2015. Three nest sites were reported, although there are clearly others that have not been located. New Bridge Street a nest produced three chicks seen on 7 June, but only one chick visible on 30 June (RH). At Basinghall Avenue a well grown juvenile was seen on a rooftop on 13 July (CHF), and another well grown juvenile seen with an adult in attendance on a rooftop at the junction of Gunpowder Square and Wine Office Court (CHF).

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*

Although frequently encountered along the Thames, few records were received, but Herring Gulls are known to breed along the Thames, for example nests were observed near Cannon Street Station during the 2004 Rooftop Bird Survey. Two sightings during the present survey suggests that they are still nesting near the junction of Queen Street Place and Upper Thames Street, with adults seeing off a Kestrel on 24 June and other nesting behaviour noted there on 30 June (GdS). Now that Herring Gulls are on the Red List, such sightings have added significance.

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.

Ring-necked parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

A single individual was recorded at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 22 April (KM) and at least two at Angel Lane, on the Nomura roof garden on 9 June (per DC).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopus major*

One heard, just outside the City, at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 13 May (ME).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla Alba*

Six sightings between 14 May and 11 July from separate locations (RH, HB & CHF) but only one sighting involved a pair near Aldgate on 4 June (CHF).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Ten records from five locations of which three were providing evidence of nesting. They bred for the second year at Barbican Tube Station (SH) and several sightings near Guildhall (RH, PB, SL & CHF) and an adult bird was filmed collecting insects, near the pond at Gresham Street on 12 May (DG). Also an adult collecting food for young was seen at Minories on 12 July (BG) and another bird observed nearby at St Olave, Hart Street Churchyard on 13 July may be a related sighting (SL).

Duncock *Prunella modularis*

26 records came from 13 locations and mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites, but proof of breeding came from



only one site in Gresham Street at St Anne and St Agnes Churchyard (HB). Pairs were observed at St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Gardens (CHF), St Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (CHF), Cleary Gardens (HB), St Paul's/Festival Gardens (KM) and at Christchurch Greyfriars church and churchyard (HB). It was noticed that birds were often found on the ground by park benches looking for discarded scraps, and perhaps this is an important food source for this species in the City (CHF).

Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

32 reports from 15 locations and mostly related to singing birds in likely breeding sites and there was proof of pairs from two sites in the City. The locations were:

Christchurch Greyfriars, pair collecting food and nest material on 15 June (HB); St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, at least two locations with regular sightings (RH, HB, CHF); 25 Cannon Street garden, individuals seen on several occasions and juveniles heard on 17 July (HB); St Mary Aldermanbury Gardens (RH, KM, CHF); Barbican - south side of St Giles Cripplegate (CHF, KM); Barbican - Thomas More garden (CHF); Golden Lane/Fortune Park, one singing 31 March (CHF); Fann Street

Wildlife Garden, one singing 31 March (CHF); St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Gardens 4 June (CHF); Smithfield Rotunda, one singing 31 March (CHF); Lincoln's Inn Fields, one singing 24 May (HB); Cleary Gardens, two singing on 28 April (CHF, HB); Aldgate in St Botolph Street, singing birds on both sides of the road on 4 June (CHF); Tower of London – north side, one singing, and another singing in Trinity Square Gardens on 17 May (CHF).



Blackbird *Turdus merula*

121 reports were received from at least 42 locations and most almost certainly relate to breeding birds. Pairs were present at 18 of the sites and proof of nesting came from the following 13 sites:

St Mary Aldermanbury, juvenile seen 30 June (RH); St Mary Staining (Oat Street) by Pewterer's Hall, female collecting nest material 21 April (KM); St Paul's Cathedral/Festival Garden, juvenile seen on 4 and 15 June (HB, CHF); 25 Cannon Street garden, juveniles present 30 June, 17 July and 11 August (HB); London Wall/Moorgate junction, male collecting food 14 May (RH); St Botolph-without-Bishopsgate Gardens, a juvenile on 4 June (CHF); Christchurch Greyfriars Garden, a male with juvenile was present on 17 July (HB); St Anne and St Agnes Churchyard, a fledgling was seen on 21 May (RH); Noble Street, Roman ruins, two juveniles seen on 20 June, and further juveniles heard 25 July (RH); Postman Park, juveniles seen on 19 May and 5 June (HB); Temple Gardens, three pairs raised young (KJ); St Dunstan in the East, a juvenile seen on 11 August (HB); St Bartholomew the Great, a juvenile seen on 5 August (HB).

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*

Migrant blackcap were recorded at St Mary Aldermanbury Garden on 18 April (CHF); two at Saint Paul's Cathedral

Churchyard on 21 April (KM, CHF), and singles on the 22 and 28 April (KM). Notably, one singing on the edge of the City at Victoria Embankment Gardens on 10 June (ME), indicating the possibility that in the future this species may nest in the City gardens.

Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

Individuals were present in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard between 23 April and 22 May with up to four individuals (KM). Another sighting of one individual on 22 April (KM) just outside the City at Lincoln's Inn Fields. This is a very similar pattern of arrivals as in 2015, and the late date may also indicate some potential for future nesting.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*

One was present in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard on 21 and 23 April (KM).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

One was present in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard on the 23 April (KM) and another was present at Lincoln's Inn Fields on the 22 April (KM).

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

One was present in St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard between 23 and 28 April (KM, CHF) and one sighted there, singing on 11 June may have been the same lingering individual or another late migrant (KM).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Far fewer sightings than in 2015 with only 28 records received, but from 14 locations which is only one less, suggesting that the weather may have reduced sightings rather than an actual decrease in abundance. The locations with singing males were located at: St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard/St Paul's Cathedral School (CHF); 25 Cannon Street Gardens (KM); St Anne and St Agnes Gardens (KM, RH, HB, CHF); St Olave Silver Street (RH); nest located at St John Zachary churchyard Gresham Street; (RH); St Bartholomew the Great churchyard (CHF); Museum of London Rotunda (CHF); Barbican - Thomas More Garden (CHF, KM); Barbican - Andrewes High Walk (CHF); Postman's Park (CHF, HB); Cleary Gardens (HB); Both Inner and Middle Temple Gardens birds singing on several occasions (ME, CHF); Golden Lane/Fortune Park two singing 31 May (CHF); Fann Street Wildlife garden heard singing from two locations and a recently used nest found (CF, SH, NG).

Great Tit *Parus major*

18 records were received from 10 locations. 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 last year. Other locations include: Temple Gardens, present during May (ME); St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, present through April to June (CHF, RH); two nests confirmed by the nest box cleaning report (FoCG); 25 Cannon Street Gardens (CHF); 35 Wood Street (RH); Fann Street Wildlife Garden 31 March (CHF), and confirmed by nest box cleaning report (FoCG); Smithfield Rotunda, pair seen in May and a juvenile present on 18 July (RH); St Dunstan in the East, a pair present in April (HB) and two nests confirmed by the nest box cleaning report (FoCG) and probably the same individual present at Custom House on 18 April (CHF); Clifford Inn, one singing on 21 April (RH); a further nest was found to have been occupied in Thomas More Gardens, Barbican (FoCG).

Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

A significant increase compared with 2015 with 67 records coming from 27 locations, many of the sightings related to pairs, often close to nest boxes. Occupied nest boxes and sightings of juveniles were as follows: Laurence Pountney Hill Garden (CHF); St Dunstan in the East, at least one occupied nest perhaps two (HB); Temple Gardens, a pair raised young (ME); St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard, occupied nest just North of the Cathedral School (CHF, RH, HB), but nest cleaning report suggested occupancy by Great Tit (FoCG); St Mary Staining (Oat Street), by Pewterer's Hall (KM), confirmed by nest box cleaning report (FoCG); St Mary Aldermanbury Garden, occupied nest box in Copper Beech tree (CHF, RH, KM, HB) but nest box cleaning suggests the next was occupied by Great Tit, so perhaps reused or possible eviction (FoCG); Cleary Gardens (HB), confirmed by nest box cleaning report (FoCG).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

A pair was seen in a tree in St Mary Aldermanbury gardens, on the evening of 5 May (RH). The date would normally fit with breeding activity but this could be a non-breeding pair, although there remains the tantalising possibility of breeding nearby. This species could certainly find suitable habitats for nesting in the City.

Magpie *Pica pica*

31 sightings were logged coming from 23 locations but although quite a few nests were found it was difficult to tell if they were occupied. Furthermore, with this species it is known that a relatively high proportion of birds are non-breeding. However nesting was proven at the following locations: Staple Inn, two fledglings waiting to be fed by parents (CHF) and Clifford Inn, occupied nest 21 April (HB).

Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

A pair present during March for several days at the Barbican, in Thomas More Gardens and they started nest building (SH). They were still present on 31 March, but could not be found subsequently (CHF). However, there was a further sighting reported in the Barbican complex on 4 July (AL per London Wiki Birder). Perhaps these sightings relate to the same birds as observed in Finsbury Circus Garden during 2015.

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 nine occupied nests were located (HB, CHF), plus other locations where birds were seen but no nest identified. Although there were fewer nests than in 2015, this species roams widely in the City and are frequently encountered. At least one nest site was lost due to development work but it seems likely that the City population is stable.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

24 records were received from nine locations which seem to include both breeding areas as well as gathering areas. Early spring birds were noted at several locations with up to eight at the Tower of London on 18 April (CHF), but most sightings related to single birds or pairs. Nest sites were located on: Blackfriars Bridge, at least one nest (RH); King William Street, on the riverside masonry of Adelaide House, with at least three nests visible (CHF). This nest site fits with observations at this location during the 2015 survey. The first juveniles were seen at St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard on the 19 May when there were four juveniles present with five adult birds. Numbers at

this location continued to rise through the summer with 32 on 17 July and 40 individuals on 8 August, mostly juveniles (HB).

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*

Only two sightings from within the City, possibly related to the same bird. A male singing in Fortune Park on the 31 March (CHF), and a male was present in the nearby Fann Street Wildlife Garden on 28 April (CHF, KM).

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*

There was a significant decrease in the number of sightings of this species compared with the previous year with 48 reports compared to 67 records in 2015. The same decrease was shown by the number of locations where individuals were seen down from 40 to 25 and even allowing for fewer visits being made to the Temple area. One family party was however seen at St Paul's Churchyard on 30 June with at least one very small juvenile seen (HB). Nevertheless it seems likely that there has been a significant decrease in the City population, but this may also be due to bad weather in spring limiting the amount of vocalisation of this species. Despite their colourfulness they can be very hard to see and most sightings result from the call or song being heard first, so the apparent decrease may well have more to do with the adverse weather in spring.



Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

There was only one sighting this year, one individual at Finsbury Circus on 18 April (CHF). This is the same location where a pair was present last spring. Like the previous species there appears to have been a marked decrease of this species.