



## Big Garden Birdwatch in the City January 2023

2023 is the 16th year we have counted birds in City gardens as part of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. We have created a database that enables us to look at trends in the relative numbers of different species through time and compare results with what is going on at the national level. This year we counted 19 different species (excluding feral pigeons) and just over 200 individual birds.

We would like to thank Aleksei who organised the birdwatch and the group of 12 volunteers who counted in 22 different City gardens.

### Results



*Robin in Postman's Park*

- The number observations of nearly all species was higher this year than in 2022, with the exception of Goldfinches. The weather over the count weekend was sunny and dry, which may have partially contributed to the increase.

- Blue tits were still less numerous than Great tits. This may be a result of the hot dry summer in 2022 affecting insect prey, contributing to a poor breeding season for these small birds. Nationally, there are roughly 1.5

times more Blue tits (3.6 million pairs) than Great tits. The relative numbers of these two species in previous years in the City have more or less complied with this ratio until last year and again in 2023 when they were roughly equal. The nest box cleaning survey also revealed an almost 50/50 split of successful nests in the 2022 breeding season between these two species.

- Goldfinches were the most observed bird last year (17% of total observations) but observations this year were down substantially, confirming a trend we have seen throughout the winter.
- Other finches are also not faring so well. We have seen very few Chaffinch and Greenfinch over the last few years. Both these species have been affected by Trichomonosis, a disease spread by parasites.
- For the first time this year, Ring-necked parakeets were observed in the count. They have been regular visitors to Bunhill Fields over the past couple of years and bred there in 2022, taking over a Greater spotted woodpecker nest hole. The woodpecker was also observed in the count this year in Bunhill Fields and appears to be excavating a new nest hole.
- House sparrow observations have continued the upward trend and have now been recorded in five gardens across the City.

- We observed one Redwing, a common winter visitor in cold winters.
- Gardens with feeders, not surprisingly, hosted more species and more individual birds. We now feed regularly in 11 gardens.
- Nationally, the top three species in the 2022 Birdwatch (2023 results will not be available until mid-April) were House sparrows, followed by Starlings and Blue tits. In the City we have never recorded Starlings during the Birdwatch but large mixed flocks of adults and juveniles can be seen on the grass in St Paul's after the breeding season.



Redwing Photo credit Wikimedia Commons



Starlings in St Paul's Cathedral Garden July 2022

### Fig 1: Birdwatch results 2018 - 2023

Note: Count for 2023, 2022 and 2021 includes 22 gardens, 2020 23 gardens and in 2019 and 2018 18 gardens.

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Blackbird	18	15	11	40	29	21
Blue tit	28	28	29	40	32	16
Carrion crow	21	19	13	9	6	7
Chaffinch	0	0	0	1	0	2
Coal tit	5	3	1	1	0	0
Dunnock	5	9	4	3	3	4
Goldfinch	19	34	19	29	30	37
Great tit	31	27	14	20	6	16
Greenfinch	0	0	1	0	4	4
House sparrow	14	9	8	8	0	0
Jay	1	0	0	0	0	1
Magpie	17	11	14	7	7	3
Ring-necked parakeet	2	0	0	0	0	0
Robin	11	15	7	13	17	8
Starling	0	0	1	0	0	0
Wagtail, Grey	0	1	0	0	0	0
Woodpigeon	20	17	7	28	15	24
Wren	4	4	3	6	1	3
Others	12	3	2	9	0	9
<b>Total species</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total individuals</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>155</b>

**Fig 2: Observations from each garden 2021 – 2023**

\* Gardens with feeders

	2023 species	2023 birds	2022 species	2022 birds	2021 species	2021 birds
Barbican – Wildlife garden*	8	27	6	14	7	15
Barbican - Speed House	5	9	4	6	1	2
Barbican - Thomas More*	13	23	8	21	9	16
Bunhill*	9	24	9	19	7	22
Christchurch Greyfriars	5	9	4	5	0	0
Church Entry*	6	14	5	9	4	7
Cleary*	7	12	8	17	9	19
Finsbury Circus	5	9	5	13	2	2
Golden Lane Estate	4	12	5	9	12	19
Noble Street	1	1	2	2	1	2
Portsoken	0	0	6	9	0	0
Postman's Park*	6	9	6	12	2	3
Smithfield Rotunda*	11	16	5	10	0	0
St Andrew Holborn	2	7	6	7	3	5
St Bartholomew the Great*	6	11	4	3	1	1
St Botolph Bishopsgate*	5	10	8	17	1	2
St Dunstan in the East*	4	7	7	3	4	6
St Mary Aldermanbury	1	1	2	2	5	6
St Mary Staining	0	0	0	0	3	4
Seething lane/St Olave's	1	2	0	0	1	1
St Paul's Cathedral*	3	5	4	5	3	9
25 Cannon St	0	0	NA	NA	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>141</b>

**Fig 3: Water birds - observed on the Barbican Lakes 2018 - 2023**

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Black-headed gull	7	1	11	1	3	0
Coot	3	3	0	1	1	2
Mallard	22	13	6	2	3	5
Moorhen	5	3	5	2	3	2
<b>Total species</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Total individuals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

We record all the results of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch on the GiGL (Greenspace Information for Great London) database. We also monitor breeding success each year when we clean all the bird boxes in the City. See Nest box Cleaning Reports <https://friendsofcitygardens.org.uk/biodiversity-surveys/>.