

## **Danson Park – Ring-necked Parakeet Roost**

A couple of years have passed since I last viewed the Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) roost in Danson Park when the estimate of birds roosting was c2,200.

We believe the parakeets arrive from many miles away using areas en route as “pre-roosts”. They then arrive in Danson Park in larger groups: again, pre-roosting in trees to the north, south, east and west of the lake/roost site.

In previous years the birds have used the Poplar trees on the lakeside, below the Charter Oak (not those adjacent to the Bog Garden/Wet Woodland).

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November – bright, clear blue sky, little or no wind – sunset 16.26.**

I positioned myself about 80 metres to the north of the lake, north east of the Poplars at about 16.10 noticing some birds already gathering in the trees in Diana Wood (north of the park). By 16.20 birds were gathering in trees to the east of the park south west of the Boat House. 16.25 birds began flying from the north pre-roost trees, in flocks of 20-80 into the trees immediately to the east of the poplars and other nearby trees but not the main roost site. I was beginning to think the Poplars had been abandoned. Up to this point I had not seen any birds arriving from the south but I was looking into the setting sun.

The largest movement took place between 16.45-1650 when I estimated c2,100 had flown either directly from the northern pre-roost into the Poplars, or from the pre-roost trees nearer the lake into the Poplars. By 16.55, there was no further movement of parakeets – all were roosting in the Poplars making an incredible sound which was still strong when I left at 17.00.

I had not been aware of any birds arriving from the south of the lake –unlike previous years’ visits. I undertook to return.

As an aside – despite this being the first day of “lock-down 2” there were not many people present and species seen on or near the lake between 15.30-16.00 were: 122 Canada geese, 12 Greylag Geese, 3 Mute Swan, 35 Egyptian geese, 6 Gadwall, 33 Mallard, 1 Pochard, 3 Tufted Duck, Water Rail, 32 Moorhen, 193 Coot, 1 Great Crested Grebe, 128 Black-headed Gull, 9 Common Gull, 18 Herring Gull, 2 Lesser-black Backed Gull, 18 Cormorant, 1 Grey Heron, 7 Magpie, 5 Jackdaw, 14 Carrion Crow, Wren, c200 Starling – possibly roosting nearby, 2 Blackbird, Song Thrush and Robin. This is only of interest when compared with my next visit on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November when there were 100’s of people walking around the lake.

### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November – bright, clear blue sky, little or no wind – sunset 16.22.**

Today I positioned myself on a seat to the south east corner of the lake, between the Bog Garden (Wet Woodland) and the brick building (railway shed I believe). This gave excellent views across the length of the lake to view any birds arriving from the south.

At 16.20 I could hear the parakeets to the north of the lake but very few birds flying in/around the Poplar roost site. I was aware of some parakeets in some trees to the south of the lake but hadn’t seen any arrive. It wasn’t until 16.34 that flocks of birds began arriving from the south with the larger flocks (c80-140) arriving at 16.42 – I estimated 1,600 birds arrived from the south between 16.34 and 16.48 by which time all flights were over.

The birds continued to make a great sound until three large firework bangs which resulted in total quiet – for about 30 seconds – then off they went again.

From the south east corner vantage point I didn’t see any birds arriving from the north although I could see those birds moving from the trees nearby to the roost. However, my

earlier visit, given my northerly vantage point, obscured as it might have been by lake side trees and looking into the sun I didn't see any birds arrive from the south. Tonight I would say that all estimated 1,600 parakeets arriving from the south, flew directly into the roost site without alighting in any of the other trees to the north of the lake. It is therefore quite possible I wouldn't have seen most or any of the birds arriving from the south on my earlier visit.

Perhaps we could therefore deduce there might be as many as 3,700 parakeets roosting in the Poplars at Danson Park. I would strongly suggest not – there will undoubtedly have been some duplication of arrivals on my part or perhaps birds didn't arrive from the south on Thursday – very highly unlikely. The weather for both days was identical.

However, I would suggest that perhaps the total number of roosting birds might be nearer 3,000 than 2,000 as previously thought.

Future surveys might include multiple observers covering different angles of the park and perhaps in different weather conditions. Does wind or wind direction have any bearing on where the birds pre-roost? Have the birds changed their in park pre-roost trees from all points of the park to just those trees to the north and those immediately to the east/close to the lake?

Comparing other species on/near the lake, observed between 15.10 – 16.20 when there were hundreds of people present: 109 Canada Geese, 6 Greylag geese, 3 Mute Swan, 16 Egyptian Geese, 6 Gadwall, 24 Mallard, 9 Tufted Duck, 25 Moorhen, 211 Coot, 4 Little Grebe, 2 Great Crested Grebe, 36 Black-headed Gulls, 1 Herring Gull, 19 Cormorant, 3 Grey Heron, 1 Kingfisher, 8 Magpie, 7 Carrion Crow, 2 Wren, c70 Starling (single flock). Gull numbers and to a lesser extent, geese were considerably reduced. Also of note, whilst sitting in the gloom watching the final parakeets arriving I was being closely scrutinised by a number of bats, feeding near the lake. The stream running into the Bog Garden from the west was full of fish, 1000's of them – identity to be confirmed.

Ralph Todd  
November 2020