

## **Birds of Bexley – Draft March 2021 – Wildfowl to Auks**

**Contents:** not necessarily in final order or complete

- Introduction in draft
- Acknowledgements – to be completed
- About Bexley – some general information, size, population, possible geographical data, changes between GLC/GLA/KCC, habitats – to be completed
- Birdwatching, Birdwatchers and Bird Recording in Bexley – including RSPB/LNHS/LBR and possible Friends Groups – to be completed
- Map of major sites – to be obtained
- Glossary of major sites identified within this report (including location/access/any facilities) – in progress
  - River Thames Foreshore – Erith – Belvedere
  - Thamesmead including former Golf Centre and Ecological Study Area and foreshore
  - Southmere Lake/Park
  - Crossness Nature Reserve, foreshore and Southern Marsh
  - Crayford Marshes – including Landfill, Howbury, Jolly Farmers and foreshore
  - Thames Road Wetland
  - Lesnes Abbey Woods
  - Franks Park
  - East Wickham Open Space
  - Martens Grove
  - Hall Place North, South and Gardens
  - Crayford Rough
  - The Warren
  - Bexley Park Woods
  - Foots Cray Meadows including Five Arches and North Cray Wood
  - Upper College Farm including Kelsey's Farm
  - Joyden's Wood
  - Chalk Wood and Gatton's Plantation including Honeydale Farm
  - Lamorbey Park including the Glade and Sidcup Golf Course
  - Danson Park including the Lake.
  - The Rivers Shuttle and Cray
- Species Accounts including – in progress
  - Glossary of abbreviations (eg LBR/DRG)
  - Status – resident/migrant/breeding, common/rare etc..
  - Systematic list
- Appendices:
  - Ringing Recoveries – information to hand
  - Escapes
- Index? to be completed

### **Introduction (for reviewers of this draft at this time)**

The aim of this book is to take a snapshot of the status and occurrence of birds in the London Borough of Bexley primarily covering the 85 years from 1935 to 2020 based on records from the LNHS London Bird Reports (1935-2018), along with records supplied by individuals both to me or via the London Birders Wiki-forum where daily sightings are posted. Additionally there have been records posted via RSPB Bexley website plus my own personal observations.

If there are omissions it may be the record wasn't submitted. I would welcome any significant additions for inclusion. It is hoped it will stimulate other observers to review what is published and to make corrections/additions where appropriate and equally to encourage future observers to submit all their records to allow an ongoing analysis of the status of birds in Bexley. It is also hoped that an awareness of the variety of birds seen around the Borough in the past will be the impetus for more observers to concentrate their birdwatching skills and time to more local patch watching and to those who are unaware of the richness of habitats and species in Bexley to protect, improve and enjoy them for future generations.

I have also included historical references from the Birds of Thamesmead (Nigel Wheatley LBR 55 1990), and Birds of the Kentish Inner River Thames Marshes to 1990 (John F Burton LBR 81 2016) – both of these reports refer extensively to the works of R Ruegg: (1816-1881) and W J Davis (1857-1917). The Wheatley paper, in addition to historical (Ruegg:) references, covers the period 1968-end of March 1991 and Thamesmead refers to an area from Woolwich Bay through Crossness Sewage/Water Treatment Works and Belvedere Power Station and the adjacent stretch of the River Thames. Woolwich Bay held large numbers of wintering wildfowl until it was developed in the mid-1970s. The Thamesmead estate took over large parts of the marshes.

A Bexley Library Archive Document “An Alphabetical List of the Birds of Bexley District as observed and noted by Thos.B Andrews and William A Carter for the ten year period from 1905 to the outbreak of the European War on August 1914 is also quoted. (not yet complete)

The records relate to the current London Borough of Bexley boundaries. There are two areas that present some confusion as they cross boundaries. Joyden's Wood - all records included as there is no way of knowing which area the record originates from. More recently Chalk Wood/Gattons Plantation are referenced. There are many references to Thamesmead – I will detail the development from the Thamesmead, Crossness and Erith Marshes in a glossary of sites. However, where a record has been identified as being within the Greenwich Boundary i.e. Tiprock and Galleons Reach or West Thamesmead Lake these have not been included. Otherwise I have included Thamesmead generally. I have also only included those records observed from the River Thames on the Bexley side and excluded those on the north side i.e. Barking Bay/Creek. Woodlands Farm, Bostall and Oxleas Woods and Ruxley Gravel Pits are not included as falling outside the London Borough of Bexley. I am aware that some observers who maintain a “Bexley list” will possibly have reported birds seen on sites outside Bexley boundary (Bob Dunn/University Way/Dartford Marshes/Rainham/Barking) I cannot be the judge of that and have had to include in the site as reported to the local recorder.

**In the text I have referred to some large sites generically – e.g. Danson Park includes the lake, park and woodland; Foots Cray Meadows includes North Cray Wood, Five Arches and the river Cray; Lamorbey Park includes The Glade; Upper College Farm includes Kelsey's Farm on the west side of the Cray. Do you consider this satisfactory as long as an explanation is included in the glossary of sites?**

**For the purposes of this first draft I have followed the systematic order of the Birds of London (Andrew Self – 2014) for ease of cross referencing. However I am aware the London Bird Club have since adopted the British Ornithological Union (BOU) 9<sup>th</sup> Edition order. I would welcome views on which should be adopted – although it might be tedious for me, my own view is to now change to the recognised BOU order so as to ease cross referencing with annual reports and potentially any future Birds of London.**

It is probably worth noting that in the most recent (c20) years there are a higher number of records, most notably from the Thames Marshes. I would suggest there are a number of reasons for this – social media/on-line wiki forum have enabled a greater number of sightings to be shared. This in turn has generated more observers into the field and with regards to Crossness, the designation and management as a nature reserve has attracted more bird watchers.

It remains the case that most observations/records are generated by a very small number of active birdwatchers.

I would be interested to know if, as a result of reading any of this data, there is any more specific information you would like on any specific entry – not that I guarantee I'll have the answer.

In an earlier draft I gave a large number of detailed records with full dates applied to them. In this edition I have reduced the number of actual dates, often referring only to a month. Where I have given actual dates it is usually for rare or very rare records or where comparisons might benefit today's reader – e.g. early arrival/late departure dates for migratory species. The number of specific dates is still considerable – do you think these could be reduced to months only or removed/reduced altogether? Do you have a view on this – suggestions welcomed?

I would welcome your views of the following: How would you like to see each species listed?

- All in black print or the main species and/or Latin name in a different colour – as in this draft?
- Both main and Latin species in bold the Latin in italics only
- In the main body of text for each species that the location be highlighted in bold lettering (as is the case (mostly) in this draft) and/or underlined, or a different colour? Or, none of these. I would anticipate only the major sites (see list under Contents) be in bold if that is the decision. Irregular street/place sightings would not be highlighted.
- Text style (use of capitals, hyphens, numerals, dates etc.) follow the notes for Contributors to London Bird Report.

#### Species Accounts:

	LNHS current Status and Breeding Definitions
<b>Very Rare</b>	<b>Occurred less than 5 times in total</b>
<b>Rare</b>	<b>Occurred 5-25 times in total</b>
<b>Scarce</b>	<b>Occurred more than 25 times in total – not seen annually</b>
<b>Uncommon</b>	<b>Annual, seen at some sites in small numbers</b>
<b>Locally Common</b>	<b>Annual occurs in reasonable numbers - restricted to certain areas</b>
<b>Common</b>	<b>Annual, seen many sites in reasonable numbers</b>
<b>Very Common</b>	<b>Annual seen in good numbers at almost all sites</b>
<b>Resident</b>	<b>Present all year round</b>
<b>Winter visitor</b>	<b>Present in winter months and on passage</b>
<b>Summer Visitor</b>	<b>Present in breeding season and on passage</b>
<b>Passage migrant</b>	<b>Mainly seen on passage</b>
<b>Partial migrant</b>	<b>Some resident, some migratory</b>
<b>Visitor</b>	<b>Occasional visitor</b>
<b>Vagrant</b>	<b>Accidental visitor</b>

LBR = London Bird Report, LNHS = London Natural History Society, DRG = Dartford Ringing Group. I have not, within the species list, included individual names/initials of observers but will make reference to journals and individuals in the Acknowledgements/Bibliography

#### Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*

Locally common breeding resident.

Commonly seen on most areas of large open water and on the **River Thames**.

It was not unusual for large numbers on the **River Thames** on the **Thamesmead-Crossness** section up to the late 1970s, peaking 377 in January 1973 and a non-breeding flock peaking 262 June 1973. In the 1980s numbers declined to 60-80. By the early 2000s numbers barely reached double figures.

**Southmere Lake** is home to a large number with 79 (64 adults/15 juveniles) June 2017 being largest count. Great Breech Lagoon at **Crossness** has also held larger numbers – 30 in April 2006. In the late 1940s it was not unusual for there to be up to 12 present (adults/immatures) on **Danson Park Lake**, during the “big freeze” of December 2002 - 18 were reported there on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

Regular breeding records **Crayford Marshes** (Howbury Moat). **Crossness** – breeding recorded since 1971 with maximum of three pairs (from 1988), up to two pairs on the nature reserve with another on the **Southern Marsh**. A pair most years at **Danson Park**, **Foots Cray Meadows** (Five Arches), and irregular at **Lamorbey Park**. Also on large golf course lakes – including **Sidcup Golf course**.

Wilful disturbance has been the cause of many breeding failures. In the early 1970s a female was shot at **Foots Cray Meadows**. A young female introduced to replace her failed to breed for the next two years. Annual breeding resumed in 1973/4 with occasional vandalism and attacks by dogs affecting success in more recent years

#### **Bewick's Swan**

*Cygnus columbianus*

Very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: states “usually seen in hard weather - generally scarce”.

Only four records with three being on the **River Thames**. A single on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1985 off **Thamesmead**, two off **Crayfordness** in December 1996 and 27 (25 adults/2 juveniles) 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010. An inland record of 22 flying high over Longlands Road **Sidcup** at 3pm on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2013 (same number reported over Walthamstow 30 minutes later).

#### **Whooper Swan**

*Cygnus Cygnus*

Very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “seen in hard weather, generally scarce”.

Wheatley: **Thamesmead** up to 1900 “regular”,

A most unusual record was three birds inland between 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 1956 moving between the **River Cray North Cray, Danson Park Lake and Sidcup Golf Course**. Other more usual records are of five adults flying over **Crossness** towards Rainham (where they roosted) 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010, an adult flying down river at **Crayford Marshes** 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012 and two over same site 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

#### **Bean Goose (Taiga)**

*Anser fabalis*

Very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “seen in hard weather, generally scarce”.

Wheatley for **Thamesmead** up to 1900 “regular”.

A species liable to be feral or escape and probably accounts for one bird reported from **Lamorbey Park** on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1989.

Of more note are those in 2010: two east off **Belvedere** 21<sup>st</sup> January, 12 east off **Crayford Marshes** 21<sup>st</sup> September and two flying (with 70 Pink-footed Geese) east along the **River Thames** near **Belvedere** on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Eleven (Tundra *Anser rossicus*) were seen flying east from **Crossness** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2012 (subsequently seen at Rainham Marshes).

#### **Pink-footed Goose**

*Anser brachyrhynchus*

Very rare winter visitor.

Only four records, all from **River Thames**. A flock of c40 flew north west over **Thamesmead** 28<sup>th</sup> January 1997, 71 (plus two Bean geese) north east over **Belvedere** 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010, eight east over **Crayford Marshes** 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and 60 over same site 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011.

#### **White-fronted Goose**

*Anser albifrons*

Rare winter visitor.

Only inland record was a flock of c20 calling over Blackfen flying west 7pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1955. 8 flew west along **River Thames** at **Thamesmead** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1995, three north west over **Crossness** 29<sup>th</sup> March 2009 from where two further records of 20 on 8<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December 2011. Twenty eight seen over **Crayford Marshes** on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010, with six on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and 12 on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012. A single bird (coinciding with an influx to Kent/London) was reported mixing with Canada and Greylag geese between 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Sadly the five seen on Dartford Marshes (from Crayford) on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were not recorded on the Bexley side. An immature bird with Canada Geese by **River Cray** at **Bexley** on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1993 almost certainly an escape but unconfirmed.

### Greylag Goose

*Anser anser*

Locally common breeding resident – naturalised population.

In the 1960s semi-domesticated Greylags were being kept at a number of places south of the **River Thames**. Now seen all year round in small flocks on open grassland, often with Canada Geese.

Peak numbers on the ground: **Crossness** 95 October 2016, **Crayford Marshes** 280 September 2010, **Hall Place** 35 March 2016, **Danson Park** 33 January 2017, **Southmere Lake** 31 August 2015, **Foots Cray Meadows** 13 February 2012 and **Lamorbey Park** three March 2011.

First recorded breeding record was one pair **Bexley** in 1995. Now regularly breeding **Crossness Nature Reserve**, three or four pairs. A pair have nested occasionally at **Danson Park** and **Lamorbey Park** (2015 and 2011 confirmed respectively) and in most recent years at **Hall Place Gardens** up to five pairs.

### Canada Goose

*Branta canadensis*

Locally common breeding resident.

Population derived from escapes. Admitted to the British List in early 1950s when UK population was between 2,200- 4,000 birds. In 1980s London population exceeded 2,500 and by early 1990s the figure had doubled. A common feature of municipal parks/lakes. Also regular on the **River Thames** and adjacent Marshes. The most familiar of the local geese.

Peak counts: **Crossness** 210 November 2016, **Southern Marsh** 100 October 2008, **Danson Park** 192 January 2004, **Hall Place** 170 November 2001, **Sidcup Golf Course** 120 December 2001, **Crossness Southern Marsh**, 100 October 2008 and off **Thamesmead Golf Course** 100 January 2014, **Crayford Marshes** 99 August 2017, **Foots Cray Meadows** 61 November 2012, **Lamorbey Park** 60 February 2012. Flocks of 20+ regularly seen in flight over Bexley/Sidcup commuting between various sites in the Borough. First reports originate from **Danson Park** in March 1979 when up to 4 were regularly seen with first breeding record in May 1994. A pair bred on/near the river at **Upper College Farm** in 1984 but eggs didn't hatch. A pair then bred **Foots Cray Meadows** in April 1995. In 1996 a pair with four young were constantly harassed by the resident Mute Swans.

Breeding continued with pairs at **Crossness**, **Danson Park** (two pairs) and **Lamorbey Park** (four pairs 2018), five pairs were also recorded **Sidcup Golf Course** 2003.

### Greylag/Canada Goose – Hybrid

*Anser sp.*

A number of single bird records of hybrid Greylag/Canada Goose, with one exception when two birds were seen at **Lamorbey Park** 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Long staying singles at **Crossness** February 2012 through to March 2015 and **Danson Park** January 2016 to July 2017. This could have been the same bird.

### Barnacle Goose

*Branta leucopsis*

A very rare winter visitor – occasionally from self-sustaining population outside London Area.

Single bird **Thamesmead** 24<sup>th</sup> March 1974, 16 on the **River Thames** by the Darent 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2002 (observed from Essex side of river). Three flew north-east over **Crayford Marshes** 20<sup>th</sup> December 2010. All other records are of a single bird – all presumed escapes. **Crossness** December 2013/January 2014 same bird

at **Lamorbey** on 21<sup>st</sup> January. Another bird was wandering between **Danson Park** and **Hall Place** between January- March 2017 with it finally being seen at **Crossness** on 11<sup>th</sup> April.

### Dark-bellied Brent Goose

*Branta bernicla*

Scarce winter visitor.

Ruegg: “seen in hard weather, generally scarce”.

Although wintering on the North Kent Marshes in “immense numbers” they were rare in London in 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Not until the 1950s did they begin to appear along the **Lower River Thames**. Birds occasionally seen flying along **River Thames**, sometimes making brief visits to the Marshes at high tide. Recorded 12 years between 1970 – 1996, 11 on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1972 the highest count. The majority of the 52 records since 2008 have occurred in October/November, many of individual birds flying up/down the **River Thames** with some notable small groups –seven 7<sup>th</sup> November 2002, eight 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008. 2010 had some high counts –seven 21<sup>st</sup> January, six 17<sup>th</sup> February, ten 29<sup>th</sup> September (unusually early record), ten 27<sup>th</sup> November and six 2<sup>nd</sup> December; 16 6<sup>th</sup> November 2011, 16 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012, 28 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The largest group was 65 on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The latest records are of single birds from **Crayford Marshes** 5<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and 8<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> December 2020. With three exceptions (a sighting c70 over **Lamorbey Park** December 1981 and one at **Foots Cray Meadows** 19<sup>th</sup> December 2007) all records were between **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness Nature Reserve**.

### Egyptian Goose

*Alopochen aegyptiacus*

Locally common introduced breeding resident.

Originally considered an escape but after many years of successful breeding in the wild in Norfolk the population has spread with increased sightings elsewhere. Formerly accepted to British list in 1971

First reported record **Foots Cray Meadows** – one on and off from 6<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December 1998, a single at **Danson Park** on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2002 and two **Southmere Green/Lake** on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2002.

Ones and twos seen occasionally during early 2000s (**Danson Park/Foots Cray Meadows** and **Southmere Lake**) with first reported breeding confirmation at **Lamorbey Park** in 2007 producing six young. A third adult joined this group. Since 2009 birds reported from the **Thames Marshes/Southmere Lake** and inland sites with pairs at **Foots Cray Meadows**, **Danson Park** and **Lamorbey Park** from 2010 and successful breeding confirmed at latter two sites from 2011.

Three pairs bred **Danson Park** in 2018. With egg clutch size up to 12 it is no surprise the species is expanding in number and range with breeding taking place at most if not all suitable wetland sites in the Borough.

Whilst two or three pairs is often the peak at any one site and up to 14 being seen post breeding season at any one site, the count of 69 at **Danson Park** on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 was exceptional.

### Shelduck

*Tadorna tadorna*

Passage migrant, winter visitor and occasional breeding resident.

Rare before 1950 and now mainly winter visitor to **River Thames** and adjacent marshes. Breeds in small numbers. Breeding: **Thamesmead** – two pairs bred in 1983,1985,1987,1992. A crèche of 16 young noted on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1996. **Crayford Marshes** four pairs bred 1985, one pair 1992, no other records until a pair in 2016 and a pair with two young on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017. **Crossness** – a pair with five young 28<sup>th</sup> July 1982 – possibly originated from Rainham Marshes where breeding known to occur. Probably bred at **Crossness** from 1984 with two pairs in 1990 and 1991. **Crossness** area seems to be the main breeding site with some notable figures including eight pairs 2000, a pair with 15 young in 2007, 2009 five broods, 2010 22 downy young. One or two pairs breed on various Foreshore superstructures along the **River Thames Erith/Belvedere**. Peak numbers: an unusually high number of 1,000+ on **River Thames** at **Belvedere** winter 1969. In January-February 1970 a maximum count of 1,600 gradually dropping to 400 in the **Crossness/River Thames** area. From the 1980s numbers have reduced with 200 plus being recorded on only 20 occasions since 1996 all from the **River Thames/Crossness** area. Highest counts include: 304 August 2009, 275 June

2010 and 320 November 2017 and in 2018, 167 on 5<sup>th</sup> July and 163 9<sup>th</sup> December.

Some monthly peak count comparisons for **Crossness/Thames Foreshore** over past 48 years

<b>Crossness</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
1972	42	154	56			67
1990	156	80	80	135	215	210
2010	115	158	201	91	97	200
2018	116	153	144	37	147	163

Uncommon inland but the occasional records include singles at **Lamorbey Park** 29<sup>th</sup> December 1985-20<sup>th</sup> January 1986, **Foots Cray Meadows** March and August 1986, February/March and occasional other dates during 1987. Three birds **Lamorbey Park** 4<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and four flying over **Sidcup** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

### **Mandarin Duck**

*Aix galeericulata*

Rare visitor - from naturalised population.

Officially accepted to the British list in 1971. First known record from **Thamesmead/Southmere Lake** on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1983. Possibly the same bird seen in **Lamorbey Park** 13<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September 1984.

A male **Foots Cray Meadows** 9<sup>th</sup> December 1995. A male moved between **River Cray** in Crayford town centre, **Hall Place** and **Foots Cray Meadows** between 29<sup>th</sup> December 1997 and 18<sup>th</sup> April 1998. Another (possibly same bird) returned to **Hall Place** between October 1998 and April 2000, probably same bird popped over to a garden in Baldwyns Park Road on 18<sup>th</sup> April.

**Hall Place** was the favoured location of the long staying male, recorded from 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2001 to 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004, last seen on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2006. A pair in the Rock Pool at **Danson Park** on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010. A male flew west along **River Thames** at **Crossness** 7<sup>th</sup> May 2011. A male at **Lamorbey Park** on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013, seen again at **Crossness** on 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Most recent records are of a single bird at **Crossness** on 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and another in March 2019 which appeared at both **Foots Cray Meadows** (26<sup>th</sup>) and **Lamorbey Park** where it was joined by a second male on the 27<sup>th</sup>. A male at **Lamorbey Park** on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 but wasn't there the next day to start the 2021 list.

### **Wigeon**

*Anas penelope*

Uncommon autumn/winter visitor.

Ruegg: "formerly more frequent than in 1847. Of the duck species the most plentiful in the pools and brooks are the mallard, teal and wedgeon (sic)".

An annual visitor to the **River Thames** in small numbers most often recorded off **Crayford Marshes** or **Crossness/Thamesmead**. Average winter month count for **Crossness** is 11 (some exceptions being 50 overhead December 2008, 58 January 2016, 100 November 2017). For **Crayford Marshes** the average is 20 (with exceptional counts 130 January 2012 and 207 Feb 2015). There have been only three other 100+ counts (all from **Crayford Marshes**) 150 November 2010, 108 December 2012, and 243 January 2017. The creation of the RSPB Rainham Marshes across the river has seen a marked increase in the number of wintering Wigeon which may explain the gradual increases on the Bexley side of the river. January 2018 Rainham recorded the highest London number of Wigeon – 1,100.

Since 2001 the mean average last date of winter departure up to 2012 was 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Since then it has been 9<sup>th</sup> April with earliest departure being 13<sup>th</sup> March 2005 and latest 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Winter arrival mean average is 19<sup>th</sup> September with earliest 3<sup>rd</sup> in 2012 and latest 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2009.

Occasional summer sightings with eight on the **River Thames** at Crayford on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017, two recorded on **Crossness Southern Marsh** 17<sup>th</sup> August and on the **River Thames** at **Crossness**.

Inland sites: There was a male at **Foots Cray Meadows** from December 1990 to January 91 and another 16<sup>th</sup> January to 4<sup>th</sup> February 1996. An exceptional record for this site was 41 including three males between 15<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1997 with odd birds remaining until 15<sup>th</sup> January 1998. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century between one or two birds reported at **Foots Cray Meadows** most years and apart from two very early recorded dates of one on 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017 respectively all records have been between

November – January. Six on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011 was the highest count.

**Lamorbey Park** hosted a single male in January-March 2013 and another in January-February 2014.

Only other inland records include a male **Danson Park** 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December 1947, with a pair at this site on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1999, a single female 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003 and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2009 and single male 27<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Seven further records from the park between 2009 and 2018 included a pair staying for two weeks between 25<sup>th</sup> September - 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014, - an early date compared to the norm for the **River Thames**. Three birds at the end of March 2018 was the latest date and largest count for the park.

## Gadwall

*Anas strepera*

Locally common, rare breeding resident, winter visitor.

A rare winter visitor in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Between 1965-1970 many were released by wildfowlers at Sevenoaks Wildfowl (now Wildlife) Reserve. By the early 1970s London's population exceeded 100 birds. Bred for first time at nearby Ruxley Gravel Pits in 1971. By 2000 the London wintering population had risen to about 2,500 (an increase from 100 30 years earlier).

In Bexley, Gadwall is recorded every month. Largest concentrations at **Crossness Nature Reserve** and on the adjacent **River Thames** – especially by the outfall where numbers increase from late November to March with c300 being recorded on a few occasions, 100-200 not unusual in winter though a few present in any month. In excess of 100 have been recorded on the reserve – 135 on West Paddock 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011, 150 Lagoon field March 2013. Groups of 20 plus are often seen around the Great Breach fields.

Snapshot annual high counts for Gadwall since 2006 at **Crossness Foreshore**:

Crossness	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	17	40	86	-	-	-	-	12	15	20	13	114
2007	150	100	75	-	-	-	-	24	50	20	10	50
2008	136	136	116	-	-	-	-	16	3	19	81	81
2010	247	190	64	88	17	10	13	2	18	19	140	200
2011	270	270	90	2	26	45	10	1	1	26	56	100
2012	145	230	109	35	18	41	21	8	4	13	46	151
2013	170	360	250	120	25	75	20	1	9	18	50	130
2014	210	150	140	55	10	22	4	2	12	22	27	126
2015	118	65	70	56	45	30	6	25	250	18	54	74
2016	100	55	90	70	60	24	11	29	9	10	58	51
2018	100	90	100	166	52	72	12	26	6	9	100	66

**Southmere Lake Thamesmead** – eight records between 1997 (62 on 18<sup>th</sup> January) and 2017 with 16 on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and 14 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Otherwise rarely more than four present.

**Breeding:** First recorded at **Crossness Nature Reserve** in 1998 with two pairs each with ducklings. In 2008 a brood of eight was seen 31<sup>st</sup> May - in each of the subsequent years breeding has been confirmed with up to six pairs present in nesting habitat in April 2017. One pair confirmed in 2018.

A pair were reported breeding **Southmere Lake** on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

**Crayford Marshes/River Thames** – in contrast to Wigeon, numbers of Gadwall are much lower with an average count of eight although the highest counts were 104 on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010. There are no records for July and August although two pairs have been recorded in June 2017 so breeding was possible.

Small numbers, maximum 11 have been recorded in the **Belvedere/Erith** stretches of the **River Thames** and four winter records have been noted at **Thames Road Wetland** with nine on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010.

**Inland sites:** recorded September to May (one record of two birds June 2014) at **Danson Park** where 30 on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2001 and 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002 remains highest count with 23 in Decembers 2002 and 2003. Six is usually the peak for wintering birds. Rarely more than one or two birds April and September.

**Foots Cray Meadows** (though being a much smaller body of water than **Danson Park**) seems much more attractive to Gadwall where probably the islands and overhanging vegetation provide greater shelter/protection. An exceptionally high count of 103 recorded 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011, 30 in December 2010,

25 January/February 2004, 2005 and 2012 are amongst other high counts. December-February are consistently the peak months with 17 on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019 the most recent highest count. Numbers are lower here now than 20 years ago, possibly coinciding with the subsidence of the islands. Gadwall are well known for staying in pairs year round but a pair present 11<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and three in May 2020 raised hopes of breeding but nothing confirmed.

One or two birds have been recorded from **Lamorbey Park** between 2010 and 2014 with a pair together in April 2013, no breeding confirmed. Up to two pairs present in autumn 2020. Only one record from **Hall Place**, a single on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The most unusual record was a single gadwall on the small pool in **Joyden's Wood** 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013, and another **Lesnes Abbey Woods** 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

## Teal

*Anas crecca*

Locally common winter visitor, uncommon resident, rare breeding.

Ruegg: "with the mallard, the most plentiful of the ducks here, "lurking in the morasses and pools and breeding the swamps", although less numerous than formerly".

Recorded every month along the **River Thames** from **Crayfordness** to **Thamesmead**, highest numbers September to March with **Crossness** and particularly the outfall having the highest numbers. Cold weather movements impact on local numbers e.g. late 1970 c1500 on the **River Thames** between **Crossness** and **Woolwich**. After the winter of 1974/75 there was a large decline in wintering numbers on the **River Thames**. This has been reversed in recent years around **Crossness**, the Outfall being a significant factor. The **Erith – Belvedere Foreshore** particularly **Crabtree Manorway – Mulberry Way** and **Corinthian Manorway** usually hold a few dozen birds, rarely above 70 with 83 on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016 being highest count. A pair noted breeding **Belvedere Sewage Farm** 4<sup>th</sup> June 1965.

**Crayford Marshes**: Small numbers recorded on the **Howbury Farm** meadows most months, 62 on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2015 the highest count. Along the **River Darent** depending on tide levels up to a 100 can be seen. The **River Thames** and **Foreshore** has recorded up to 200, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The mean average count for this part of the **River Thames** is 30. Pairs have been recorded into April but no ducklings or evidence of breeding confirmed. A few records from **Thames Road Wetland** and adjacent **Stanham Farm** with minimum 11 on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012 being best count

Present on both **Crossness Nature Reserve** and on nearby **River Thames** all year.

There have been two reports of 1000+ counts: 1258 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 and 1068 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010. Peak count for 2017 was 928 and for 2018 700 on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Snapshot annual high counts for Teal since 2006 at **Crossness Foreshore**:

<b>Crossness</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2006	51	300	40	-	-	-	-	40	80	410	26	220
2007	500	250	450	-	-	-	-	225	270	300	100	625
2008	850	840	570	-	-	-	-	240	500	350	500	410
2009	750	640	630	-	-	-	-	125	450	414	320	940
2010	990	1068	603	-	-	-	-	153	440	500	690	450
2011	300	960	-	-	-	-	-	160	350	422	30	515
2012	-	300	-	-	-	-	-	137	300	420	300	500
2013	500	627	860	550				310	600	478	500	203
2014	500	600	620	100	-	-	-	150	652	600	415	630
2015	735	600	550	350	-	-	-	350	725	803	300	500
2016	700	350	680	200	-	-	-	210	1254	410	526	390
2017	475	250	500	250	-	-	-	156	928	826	600	500
2018	450	452	700	387	-	-	-	175	400	681	350	600

Only small numbers, mostly single figures, seen on **Crossness Nature Reserve** May to July. At other times small numbers of loafing/feeding birds seen in suitable areas. Island Fields (up to 30), Wader Scrape

(average of 10 though c100 on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2005 and 60 on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2008 were unusually high). Great Breach Lagoon/Fields are heavily used with over 200 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> October 2006 and over 100 25<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> August 2008, otherwise the average is 23.

**Crossness Southern Marsh** has only ten records mostly single figure sightings, 30 on 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> November 2011 being highest count.

Given their year round presence, breeding could be assumed, however only records of ducklings were on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2014 (pair plus two young on River) and 2017 was a good year for seeing broods, a female on the Wader Scrape with two ducklings on 14<sup>th</sup> June, an adult with 6 ducklings on 21<sup>st</sup> June: on the Great Breach Lagoon/Fields a pair with six young 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017, perhaps same pair with three young 29<sup>th</sup> July. A pair bred successfully on **Southern Marsh** in 2017.

Many of the April/May records suggest female birds – with adult males moving into eclipse plumage there might be some confusion but worth further research to understand if females do stay longer than males. Only three records from the more exposed open **Southmere Lake** with two pairs on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2018 with one pair remaining until 9<sup>th</sup> April.

Three on **River Cray** near **Crayford Rough** between 3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2017 with one remaining until 20<sup>th</sup> February was the only and most unusual record for the **Hall Place** area.

**Foots Cray Meadows** – two on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2006, one on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and six 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020 are the only records outside September to March. Six have been recorded on three January/February dates with four/five on a further six dates, otherwise one or two are the norm – birds generally only stay for a few days at most. A single male on the **River Shuttle** in **Bexley Park Woods** on 9<sup>th</sup> January and 25<sup>th</sup> February 1998 was an unexpected record. Whilst not an annual visitor to **Lamorbey Park/Sidcup Golf Course** a few birds do turn up with average higher numbers than Danson Park or Foots Cray Meadows. Between two and nine wintering birds present between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017 and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018 with an exceptional 16 on the 4<sup>th</sup> March. **Danson Park** – one or two birds recorded most years. All records between September-March, rarely more than three with ten on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017 being unusually high.

### Green-winged Teal

*Anas carolinensis*

Very rare vagrant.

A male was present in 2003 off **Thamesmead Golf Course/Crossness Engines** on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and seen at **Belvedere** on 16<sup>th</sup> April. A longer staying male seen by many observers between 12<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> and on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

A male hybrid with Eurasian Teal reported on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2007.

A report from **Crossness** for May 2001 noted a single bird (origin/sex unknown).

### Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

Common breeding resident and winter visitor.

Ruegg: “with the teal the most numerous of the ducks breeding in the morasses, pools and swamps from which their eggs are not infrequently taken by the farmer and hatched by hens”

Breeds at all sites with water including one or two larger gardens with ponds. By the beginning of the 1990s the number wintering in the London area had significantly reduced, especially on the **River Thames**. This is reflected in local counts.

Counts for **Crossness** during the 1970s/80s were generally higher than the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 1986 LBR noted “226 on 8<sup>th</sup> October well down on previous years”. Some January peak counts were 700 - 1970, 430 - 1984 and 600 - 1985. In December 1998 120 was noted as “highest count in sector” although 190 in August 1999 was higher. 2018 peaks were 160 and 145 August/September respectively. In recent years 100+ counts have been recorded at **Danson Park** (110 January 1997, 134 August 2004, 142 February 2014), less often **Crossness Foreshore** (160 August 2018), just one 100+ record from **Foots Cray Meadows** (102 January 1997).

**Crossness Nature Reserve** rarely records more than 60 birds and fewer are recorded at **Crayford Marshes/Foreshore/River Darent** numbers rarely exceed 40 in total with 120 9<sup>th</sup> January 1992 then 60 on

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015 being highest count. Single figure pairs breed at each site.

A male Mallard/Gadwall hybrid was at **Crossness** during late April/early May 2011, again on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and 4<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

At **Crossness Southern Marsh** up to 25 have been recorded with one or two pairs breeding each year.

**Southmere Lake** also records up to 30 birds with one or two pairs breeding. Two or three pairs have bred **River Thamesmead Ecology Study Area** and **Thamesmead Golf Course**.

Small numbers, up to 40, usually in pairs can be seen the entire length of the **River Thames** all year round. In January 1996 106 reported off **Corinthian Manorway Erith** with 90 same location December 2015 and September 2016, all being unusually high counts.

Inland: **Hall Place Gardens/River Cray** – up to 30 birds often present (maximum 45 on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016) with up to five pairs recorded breeding 2010 and 2012.

**Foots Cray Meadows**, up to 2010 it was not unusual to see over 50 birds present between November and February (102 January 1997 and 75 January 2000 and 2002). Since then mid 30s is the average count with just occasionally numbers exceeding 50. Up to seven pairs have been recorded breeding.

**Lamorbey Park** is another site where the ducks are fed and a few pairs breed each year, raising several broods. Highest count is 81 on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 although 30 is mostly the average recorded. Also present and breeding on the adjacent **Sidcup Golf Course**.

Pairs can often be seen on the inland **Rivers Cray and Shuttle** (including **Bexley Park Woods/Hollyoak Wood Park**) where they occasionally breed. A pair regularly seen in **Beverley woods** Jan-March 1985, **Birchmere Park** (three male one duck 10<sup>th</sup> April 2008), **Danson Park** – the highest numbers generally occur in July/August (includes juveniles) then another peak October-February. An average of six pairs breed each year – 13 pairs in 1984. Two or three pairs have bred at **Lesnes Abbey Woods** with 16 being highest count 28<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

A pair bred **Joyden's Wood** pond regularly during 1970s.

## **Pintail**

*Anas acuta*

Scarce winter visitor.

Historically and in a wider London context/adjacent marshes rarely recorded in high numbers though the winter of 1967/68 saw large flocks arriving along the **Lower River Thames Marshes** with up to 130 in the Woolwich area in January 1968. By the early 1970s even higher numbers were wintering on the **River Thames** with 350 between Woolwich and **Crossness**, A count of 485 in 1973 across the river at Barking. Land reclamation at Woolwich led to a significant reduction with 80 being highest count in January 1974. In more recent years, no longer a guaranteed annual visitor and rarely above single figures usually between October and March. Those seen are mostly males or pairs.

**Crayford Marshes** – has the best record for multiple numbers. In 2010 ten in January with 13 November and 16 December. Nine in January 2012 with 14 in February. January 2013 saw the highest count for the borough this century with between 16-22 present from 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> then 16 in February. Four on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2018. Latest date recorded was three on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and earliest arrival two on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

**Crossness** – unlike Crayford mostly singles recorded on the river or nature reserve, with two in December 2010 and three January 2012 being the highest counts. Latest record here was a female on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008 and the earliest the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

Andrews and Carter record singles **Danson Park** April 19<sup>th</sup> 1906, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1910, **Lamorbey Park** and Bexley Marsh 19<sup>th</sup> December 1911. Only other inland records are: **Danson Park** Lake - single male 3<sup>rd</sup> –12<sup>th</sup> January 1997, **Foots Cray Meadows** - male 9<sup>th</sup> December 1945, three males 9<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> February 1991. **Lamorbey Park** - single male for two weeks 20<sup>th</sup> December 1996– 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1997.

## **Garganey**

*Anas querquedula*

Scarce passage migrant.

Ruegg: “we have garganey”.

Unknown in the London area until 1927. Between 1946-1952 one or two pairs were seen across the river at

Rainham and probably bred. Birds have been summer visitors to that site in recent years. Breeding has not been recorded in Bexley. Only three records from **Crayford Marshes** each of females in the Creek area commuting to the flooded fields off University Way (March 2011, May and August 2012).

**Crossness** - a pair noted on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1971 and 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> April 1975, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2001. Males 16<sup>th</sup> April 1972, 10<sup>th</sup> May 1989, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1999, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2006, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2009, a juvenile from 13<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> August 2009. Two females or juveniles on the Great Breach Lagoon from 29<sup>th</sup> August to 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009, one still present on 9<sup>th</sup> and probably remained as a female or juvenile was recorded commuting between the Lagoon and the **River Thames** until 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. All other records of single birds (2008-2018) between March (earliest 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014) and October (latest 5<sup>th</sup> 2011).

Only inland records are of a very late bird **Danson Park** 31<sup>st</sup> October 1953 and a female on the main lake at **Lamorbey Park** 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

## Shoveler

*Anas clypeata*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor, scarce inland and rare breeder.

By the 1930s Shoveler had become an annual visitor in the London area, mostly the west London reservoirs. Winter populations began to increase in the 1970s reflected in the numbers along the **River Thames** between **Crayford** and **Crossness**.

**Crayford Marshes/River Thames** – relatively few records from this site and mostly of single figure counts between November and February. Highest count of 19 on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010, otherwise one or two seen most years mostly on the river with occasional records from Moat Lane fields (eight on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2014).

**Crossness** January and March have the highest percentage of records (16% and 17% respectively) with October-December and February around 12% each. The highest count was c190 on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017 with all other 70+ counts in December-March. Outside these months it is unusual to see above 20. All the 60+ records are from the river. Fifty four on the West Paddock (the most favoured site on the reserve) on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2014 being the highest reserve record. Most other areas of the reserve, including the next most favoured site, the Great Breach Lagoon rarely above 10 seen at any one time. One or two birds present throughout the summer months and pairs have been seen together in the breeding season and breeding considered probable here in 2015 with three pairs and 13 ducklings seen.

Some comparison counts for **Crossness**:

<b>Crossness</b>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2015	85	119	25	18	2	-	-	2	7	6	50	33
2016	132	44	53	14	-	-	-	7	7	12	46	109
2017	190	114	42	20	2	-	2	12	1	27	50	123
2018	161	141	77	11	3	-	2	-	14	8	38	60

The entire length of the **River Thames** between **Crayford** and **Crossness** can occasionally produce good numbers. In 1984 ten between February-April; 40 in January 1985, 34 February and c40 November 1986, 95 in November and 37 December 1989.

In the 1990s peaks included 45 December 1991, 54 January and 17 March 1992, 34 January 1995 and 54 Halfway Reach **Erith** January 1997. Highest count in 20<sup>th</sup> Century is 34 February 2018.

Occasional visitor to **Southmere Lake Thamesmead**, mostly single figures with a few exceptional peaks, 57 1<sup>st</sup> January and 27 19<sup>th</sup> December 2010 (post heavy snow), 33 February 2012 and 17 February 2017.

**Thames Road Wetland** (and **River Cray** at **Barnes**) only two records. Eight were recorded on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 and a male 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2014. A single male present for a few days **Thamesmead Ecological Study area**, 29<sup>th</sup> December 1995 and 4<sup>th</sup> January 1996.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** an annual visitor in recent years, less often in the late 1990s, single birds 24<sup>th</sup> November and 7<sup>th</sup> December 1984, a male 17<sup>th</sup> December 1995 and 14<sup>th</sup> January 1997, single female 7<sup>th</sup> November 1999. Since 2000 mostly one to three birds each winter. The snow of 2010 saw December numbers increase from three to 13 (27<sup>th</sup>) with ten still present 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

**Lamorbey Park**— a rare visitor, a pair plus a female were present winter 1985/6 – and five (four males/one female) seen on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2016 otherwise just occasional records of one or two.

**Danson Park** an annual winter visitor usually in single figures. Higher numbers with harsh weather conditions. Heavy snow saw an influx of 29 on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2010 rising to exceptionally high numbers through December varying between 190+ on 15<sup>th</sup> to c78 on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Another seven years this century have recorded 40+ birds with 50+ 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011 being highest of these counts.

### Red-Crested Pochard

*Netta rufina*

Rare from naturalised population.

Ruegg: “the female figured by Gould in his *Birds of Europe* was killed out of a flock of 18 on the **River Thames** near **Erith**, prior to 1837 and was added to the collection of the Hon.W.T.T Fiennes (Morris 1850-57).

By the 1960s full winged birds raised in London Royal Parks started breeding and by the 1970s small groups were being seen elsewhere whilst breeding continued in Royal parks during 1980-90s.

Single birds on the **Thamesmead Lake** 4<sup>th</sup> October 1993, 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> October 1994.

Singles at **Danson Park** 13<sup>th</sup> February 1983 and a female 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

**Foots Cray Meadows** a tame/injured female (damaged wing) present on and off from 4<sup>th</sup> April 1995 – 1<sup>st</sup> October 1997, a leucistic female seen 6<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

### Pochard

*Aythya ferina*

Locally common resident, uncommon breeding.

Ruegg: “the most plentiful duck species on the **River Thames** in winter”

Numbers of this species increased during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the London area, mostly on west London reservoirs with cold weather movements causing greatest numbers. In the winter of 1969/70 up to 2,500 on the **River Thames** between Woolwich and **Crossness**, highest count here of 4,000 on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1972.

Cold weather in early 1979 saw 5,835 on the **Lower River Thames**, mostly at **Crossness** (largest ever London count). In recent years, (most of 21<sup>st</sup> century) winters have been generally mild resulting in much reduced numbers. State of UK Birds suggests nationally 46% reduction between 1998/99-2008/09.

In the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century the **River Thames** between **Thamesmead** and **Belvedere** regularly had over 50 wintering birds with 1,500 off **Belvedere** on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1968 being another exceptional count.

**Crayford Marshes** – a rare bird with only three sightings, two of a single bird 14<sup>th</sup> October-2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016. Single **Thames Road Wetland** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010 - only record from this site.

**Crossness** other monthly peak counts 1970 - 500 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 200 1<sup>st</sup> February, 400 March. 1972 - January 160, February 468, November 550. In line with the wider decline, numbers have dropped dramatically: although 208 in January 1997 was exceptional and the last high count of 20<sup>th</sup> century. First 20 years of 21<sup>st</sup> century numbers rarely reached double figures, 22 on the river on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012 highest count. On the nature reserve up to 16 have been recorded on Great Breach lagoon and Island Fields Lagoon where most birds are now recorded and where one or two breeding pairs has been confirmed most years since at least 2014 (two pairs 2018). Maximum of six 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017 recorded on the **Crossness Southern Marsh** lagoon where they have bred.

Sixty on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1997 at **Southmere Lake** was last of the large 20<sup>th</sup> Century counts for this site (coincided with large counts at **Crossness**) which remains an important wintering area in the Borough, mostly single figure birds during winter but numerous years double figure counts are recorded. 2009 January-February 21-68, December 2009-February 2010 13-63, 28 February 2012, 23 January 2017 and 18 March 2018.

**Thamesmead Golf Course and Ecological Study Area** occasionally register one or two birds, the former with ducklings seen in August 2014.

Inland: **Danson Park** D.F.Owen (pers J Burton) reported in January 1949, 47 12<sup>th</sup>, 60 22<sup>nd</sup> and 52 29<sup>th</sup> – these were not unusual figures in mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. On 16<sup>th</sup> January 1979 49 was the highest but not exceptional count for the later quarter of the century - double figures and 20 plus was not uncommon.

January is the month for peak counts with 25 in 2002, 16 in 2010, and 20 in 2013, ten in 2018. Otherwise rarely above ten are recorded outside the months of October-April.

**Foots Cray Meadows** – a pair recorded here on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1988 but breeding not confirmed. Apart from a female/hybrid type in June/July 1995 and a female September 2012 all other records have been between November and March with 11 over the 1995/6 Christmas/New Year reducing to eight throughout January 1996 being highest count. For the 21<sup>st</sup> century a scarce visitor with rarely more than a single bird present. This probably reflects the shallowness of Five Arches and increased silting up reducing water depth.

**Lamorbey Park** – always a rare visitor never more than one (mostly female) reported and only five records for 21<sup>st</sup> century, most recently female on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2017 – the only August record for the Borough.

### Ferruginous Duck

*Aythya nyroca*

Very rare winter visitor.

Apart from one record from just outside the borough at **Thamesmead West** (Morrisons) Lake in January 2012 the only record for Bexley was of a female at **Danson Park** from 31<sup>st</sup> January – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013, would probably have stayed longer had it not been for disturbance from the weekend canoeists on the lake.

### Tufted Duck

*Aythya fuligula*

Locally common breeding resident and winter visitor.

Became widespread on London reservoirs in early 20<sup>th</sup> century with numbers recorded on the upper **River Thames** in very cold weather. In the early 1970s large numbers on the **Lower River Thames** with up to 800 between Woolwich and **Crossness** but by the 1980s numbers had declined on the **River Thames** with an increase on the reservoirs. Just outside the Borough on the **Thamesmead lakes** November-February counts for 1982-1996 often exceeded 200 with 415 December 1998 being exceptional.

Within the Borough some typical counts: **Crossness Foreshore** 800 in January 1970 (reduced to 300 in February), two years later winter counts here rarely exceeded ten, 275 on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1997 also exceptional. Forty six on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2012 was last high count with sightings now rare and six being best.

**Belvedere** 350 on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1968 and 274 off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010 very high and unusual counts.

**Crossness Nature Reserve** – present all year with 68 between Great Breach and Island Field lagoons on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and 20 West Paddock 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017 being highest counts.

Highest count for **Crossness Southern Marsh** was up to 30 January-March 2015. Usually has two or three pairs present with ducklings only reported in 2008.

No records from **Crayford Marshes/River** with four on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at **Thames Road Wetland** being the closest and only three other records from this site of one or two birds present usually in May.

**Southmere Lake** was an important site in the past with numbers falling in recent years. Some peak counts 180 November 1983, 20 February 1995, 96 January 2009, 60+ January 2014, 2015 and 2017 and 125 January 2012 (only 12 seven days later). Rarely above 20 since 2015. Single figure birds present all year. Up to seven present **Thamesmead Ecological Study** area January 2016 though two or three are more typical.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** resident. January-February 2015 up to 36 present, 35 in February 1998 and 2000, January 2019 had peak of 32. **Lamorbey Park** present all year round, including **Sidcup Golf Course**, often in double figures in winter – 22 being highest count March 2017.

**Danson Park** resident, highest count 48 (36 male/12 females), February 1997, 41 February 2013, 34 December 1996, and 33 February 1999. 21<sup>st</sup> Century numbers of adults rarely exceeds ten.

Breeding: Until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century breeding in London was predominantly centred on those same reservoirs/inland waters. The 1988-94 Atlas showed an increase to the **Lower River Thames**.

**Crossness** – One pair bred **Erith Marshes** 1974. Now breeds in small numbers on West Paddock, Great Breach Protected area and Island Field pools. Regularly seen in breeding season at **Southmere Lake**.

Pair **Danson Park Lake** 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1959 and another pair 27<sup>th</sup> May 1965. Sixteen individuals 10<sup>th</sup> May 1993 two or three pairs bred most years during 1990s. 21<sup>st</sup> Century 35 on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012 included juveniles as one or two pairs breed each year. One pair (two broods) with 13 ducklings July 2020. **Lamorbey Park** often two

or three pairs present during breeding season with ducklings reported most recently in 2017. Occasionally reported from River Cray at **Upper College Farm** where a pair attempted to breed in 1984.

### Scaup

*Aythya marila*

Rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “probably most often in hard weather”

Regularly on the **River Thames** between **Erith** and **Crossness** in 1972, five in January and December, eight February, one in March, September and October, four in November. Another at **Erith** on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1979. At **Crossness** three 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997, a female 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2001. Two flew over on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2010. Two flew west on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011, with another off **Crossness** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2010. A male and two females reported off **Crayford Marshes** 29<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

A female off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** 8<sup>th</sup> February 1996 and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2000. One present **Southmere Lake** 5<sup>th</sup> December 1990, another 28<sup>th</sup> Oct-11 Nov 1991 with a pair 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> February 2010. Only inland record is from **Danson Park Lake** a male and female on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1948.

### Eider

*Somateria mollissima*

Very rare winter visitor.

The largest ever London count was of 35 (including at least three males) flying west along **River Thames** at **Thamesmead** 7<sup>th</sup> December 1995. Otherwise a female **Crossness** 4<sup>th</sup> September 1998, an immature male flying east along **River Thames** at **Crayford Marshes** on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010, the following day a female flew west from same observation point. Only inland record - female **Danson Park** 13<sup>th</sup> December 2002.

### King Eider

*Somateria spectabilis*

Very rare.

Ruegg: “Erith Reach: a male shot”

### Long-tailed Duck

*Clangula hyemalis*

Very rare.

One record of a single duck on the **River Thames** at **Erith** 29<sup>th</sup> October 1972.

### Common Scoter

*Melanitta nigra*

Rare winter visitor scarce passage migrant.

All records from the **River Thames**.

A male at **Thamesmead** 26<sup>th</sup> April 1995, another on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1996. A pair on the **River Thames** at **Erith** 4<sup>th</sup> January 1981. Three males (two adults and first winter) **River Thames** at **Belvedere** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The **River Thames** off **Crayford Marshes** provides all the highest counts which include 25 on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2010, 14 24<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and 39 on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018. Up to five birds have been seen here each year since 2010, most between March-August, just one record each for October and November.

At **Crossness** five on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2016 and seven 14<sup>th</sup> April 2018 are the highest counts. Additionally two male/one female seen on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010, two on March 4<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> 2013. Otherwise just one November record outside the April-September period. Twenty eight recorded flying east off the **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2010 (presumed to be the same birds as seen at Crayford later).

### Velvet Scoter

*Melanitta fusca*

Very rare.

Female picked up at **Shooters Hill** in fog on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1984 released by RSPCA in **Danson Park** on 15<sup>th</sup>. Three male and three female seen on **River Thames** at **Crayfordness** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1996 – two remained on 1<sup>st</sup> April, two other birds seen flying upriver on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1996.

### Goldeneye

*Bucephala clangula*

Rare winter visitor very rare outside this period.

Ruegg: “reported here in winter”.

Five (two male/three female) on **River Thames** at **Crossness** on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012 is the highest single count. Two males on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010 between **Thamesmead** and **Southmere Lake** only other multiple count. Singles recorded on river between **Crossness** and **Thamesmead Golf Course** on nine other occasions between 1994-2017. A single bird on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011 was a most unusual record.

Two males at **Southmere Lake** on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010 with one still present until 16<sup>th</sup>.

Two males off **Crayford Marshes** 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2010 and a single male 6<sup>th</sup> December flying up river. A female on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012 were only other records for this site.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** a female/juvenile male seen December 1984, another on 25<sup>th</sup> January. 1987 and 17<sup>th</sup> February 1991. Single **Danson Park Lake** 6<sup>th</sup> December 1953 and others during February/March 1956 and winter 1957. No further records until a female between 17<sup>th</sup> January – 19<sup>th</sup> February 2002

### Smew

*Mergus albellus*

Rare winter visitor usually associated with very cold weather.

**Thamesmead** a redhead on **River Thames** 29<sup>th</sup> December 1995, a male on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

Three redheads recorded at both **Crossness** and **Crayford** on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** a juvenile/female was seen between January– April 1985, a redhead on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1988 and another late December 1996 until Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> 1997 when occasionally two birds were seen together, (probably moving between here and **Danson Park**).

**Danson Park** One on 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan.-13<sup>th</sup> February 1959. A redhead 15<sup>th</sup> January 1985. Another redhead 3<sup>rd</sup> –10<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1997 with two seen same location later in the month possibly same bird/s as **Foots Cray Meadows**.

### Red-breasted Merganser

*Mergus serrator*

Rare winter visitor – one summer record.

Ruegg: “scarce visitor, chiefly in autumn and winter”.

**Crossness River Thames** males on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1989, and 4<sup>th</sup> December 1990, another 12<sup>th</sup> January-21<sup>st</sup> February 1996, six flew upriver on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1998, a single female flew east on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2002. A female was seen on the river between **Crossness** and **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on numerous dates between 9<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011, a male seen on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2012 seen earlier at Greenhithe. Female/redhead was reported at **Crayfordness** on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1981. Further records for the **Crayford Marshes** area of the **River Thames** include a rare summer record of a female off shore 15<sup>th</sup> to at least 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Five on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017 is the highest count for the Borough. Only record of a pair is 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012 otherwise singles in November 2010, 2011 and 2012.

### Goosander

*Mergus merganser*

Scarce winter visitor.

Ruegg: “one shot that winter”.

**Thamesmead** – Three on **River Thames** 31<sup>st</sup> December 1995. **Crossness** 25 on **River Thames** 18<sup>th</sup> January 1985, one **Erith Reach** 16<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1997. A female seen at both **Crossness** and **Crayford** on 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> November 2010, another on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012, a male flew up river at **Crossness** on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and a late record was one flying down river on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

A female seen at **Southmere Lake** on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – probably same as **Danson Park** bird as it was missing from there on this date.

**Foots Cray Meadows** two males and two redheads January 1977, a redhead 15<sup>th</sup> November 1996 and 1<sup>st</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> January 1997 - likely this bird moved between here and **Danson Park**. A redhead seen on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010, again on the 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> December possibly same bird seen at **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes**.

**Danson Park** male on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1992, another male between 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> February 1994 and a pair on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995, a male on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1995 possibly stayed until mid-February 1996 with another from 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997 staying until at least 13<sup>th</sup> February. Further records are of male 7<sup>th</sup> January 2009, two redheads 26<sup>th</sup> December 2010 and a single 25<sup>th</sup> November through to 25<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

**Lamorbey Park** – single on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1996 with two redheads and three males on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1997. Two flew high/north west over **The Warren/Horsham Road Bexleyheath** on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2020.

### Ruddy Duck

*Oxyura jamaicensis*

Rare visitor, naturalised population latterly eradicated from the wild by a cull between 2005-2010.

**Crossness** single 4<sup>th</sup> January 1993 east of the sewage works and a male on the **River Thames** 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2009. Three **Erith Reach** on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1997. Single male off **Crayford Marshes** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010 was presumably same bird as seen at **Crossness** 20<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Inland: **Danson Park** male and female January 1994 and a single female on three dates between 17<sup>th</sup> November and 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1998, single female 24<sup>th</sup> December 2003. Two males and a female seen on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2002, up to three birds including one male from 24<sup>th</sup> March 2004 through to 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004. In 2005 one or two males from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 20<sup>th</sup> July.

None recorded inland since 2005 or on the river since 2010, coinciding with the Government sponsored cull of this species on its breeding grounds in the UK.

### Red-legged Partridge

*Alectoris rufa*

Very rare visitor, formerly bred.

Single bird seen **Barnehurst** 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March 1946 with further regular sightings along the **River Thames/Crayford Marshes**. Several pairs bred during late 1940s and early 1950s. Two on **Erith Marshes** 4<sup>th</sup> September 1970, one pair same location 1971 and a pair with five young **Thamesmead** 1971. Continued to be seen at this site and nearby **Crossness** most months 1971-1973. Only recorded February and March from **Crossness/Erith Marshes** in 1974.

Present and probably bred **Crossness/Erith Marshes** until 1992/3 when driven out by development.

**Crayford Marshes** – single bird 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1982, seven on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1983, one in 1989, pair bred 1990, pair present throughout breeding season 1991. Only other record here was on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013 in the paddock adjacent (Nuttall/BAM works) and two on the marshes 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

**Crossness** – one on five dates between 24<sup>th</sup> August and 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

Three unusual records: one in a Berwick Crescent Blackfen garden 1<sup>st</sup> October 1971, one **Joyden's Wood** Estate 29<sup>th</sup> March 2002 and one in a Sidcup garden May 2003. Next inland record was one at **Upper College Farm** (near former Bowling Green) 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016. From March-May 2017 a single bird wandered far and wide recorded in the most unlikely places: **Lamorbey Park** 5<sup>th</sup> March, **Danson Park** 14<sup>th</sup> March, **Lesnes Abbey Woods** 9<sup>th</sup> April and various gardens including some outside the borough in Plumstead.

More optimistic sightings were four in the **Chalk Wood/Honeydale Farm** area in the south of the Borough on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2017, two on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020.

### Grey Partridge

*Perdix perdix*

Very rare, formerly bred on the Thames marshes. Not recorded in 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Ruegg: "tolerably abundant"..

Wheatley states for **Thamesmead**, "resident, possibly breeding **Crossness Sewage Works**. Bred commonly in the 1950s when winter coveys numbered 30+ and from 1968 to 1985 when peak count was 20+ on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1985. Recent peak counts; six during winters 1988/89 and 1990/91".

**Thamesmead/Belvedere** – LBR 1972 figures for each month were: January (seven), February (two), March (five), April (two), May (seven), none June/July, August (four), September (20), October (17), November (nine) and December (13). By 1985 just singles recorded with a juvenile reported on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1993. LBR notes: Several pairs **Erith Marshes** 1971-1974 where winter records can climb to double figures. Two pairs bred **Thamesmead** area 1984, **Crossness Nature Reserve** several pairs 1971-1974 with a pair recorded breeding 1976 and 1990.

**Crayford Marshes** a few records for September and November up to early 1980s though a pair bred 1991 (probably last pair as 1992 LBR reports “No breeding records this year” and none subsequently). Only inland records are single at **Foots Cray Meadows** 12<sup>th</sup> December 1991 and 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1992 and three at **Crayford Rough** on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999. **Joyden’s Wood** (prior to housing developments) held small numbers on surrounding fields with “covey of c12” regularly reported up to late 1940s. Two pairs on adjacent fields reported 14<sup>th</sup> April 1947.

**Partridge sp.** – an unspecified partridge was present **Crossness Wader Scrape/Protected area** on 13<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

### Quail

*Coturnix coturnix*

Rare summer visitor.

Formerly bred in the **Crayford** area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Male calling **Thamesmead** 30<sup>th</sup> May 1969. A calling male was heard on **Crossness Southern Marsh** 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007 and another in the **Crossness Protected Area** on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

**Crayford Marshes** a calling male on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010, 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> July 2011, 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and summer 2019.

Otherwise only other record was of a night time migrant calling over **Sidcup** garden 27<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

### Pheasant

*Phasianus colchicus*

Uncommon Resident.

Ruegg: “Scarce due to lack of cover”.

No early records for the Borough. The 1988-1994 Atlas noted a London range expansion being most notable along the **Lower Thames Marshes**.

Earliest records made by Dartford Ringing Group in the 1970s/80s from the **Joyden’s Wood/Coldblow** and **Tile Kiln Lane** area, mostly singles with four in March 1977 the peak. Occasional records of singles throughout the 1980s and 90s in the **Bexley Mill Meadows/North Cray/Upper College Farm** area with a male seen **Foots Cray Meadows** in November 1988, another flushed from **Hall Place Gardens/Crayford Rough** in September 1992.

Bred **Thamesmead** marshes 1984/85 and 1990. First record for **Crossness** was a female 18<sup>th</sup> January 1997 where two pairs bred same year and present 1998. No further records until 2005 when they became ever present with up to three pairs breeding. A family of 12 in June 2014 and 11 in June 2013 are the highest counts. Outside the breeding season, one or two, maximum four would be the usual count.

Recorded regularly most months since 2010 **Crayford Marshes** with breeding confirmed in 2017 when peak of six birds also noted. Rarely more than four birds seen.

Singles occasionally **Crayford Rough** since 2012 with two on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017 only multiple record.

Eight birds recorded in **Foots Cray Meadows** area October 1998 with no further records until 2011 when a male seen in August. Singles seen/heard most years since with first pair reported breeding in 2013, two pairs in November 2017 and another pair in 2019. An albino was present in November 2017.

First reported **Hall Place/Gardens** in February 1998, one present all April 1998 with only three other reports, April 2001, December 2012 and December 2017.

One or two birds recorded **Upper College Farm/Kelsey’s Farm** since 2008 with three in May 2018 the highest count.

Only records from **Lamorbey Park** are of a single November 2011 and April 2017 plus one **Sidcup Golf course** on December 2001.

Plenty of unusual records of single birds in gardens, one in Preston Drive **Bexleyheath** March 1985. Another, probably same bird in Latham Road Bexleyheath and Parkhurst Road **Bexley** February/March 2017. Another single bird in **Sidcup Place** January 2012 only record for this site. Another, as told by Eric Brown – 24<sup>th</sup> March 2005 – “A cock pheasant trotted down Christchurch Road, central **Sidcup**, at approximately 1pm. It hopped over a wall into the front garden of no.33, reappearing a couple of minutes later to continue strutting down Christchurch Road in the direction of Sidcup Station.” Bred **Chalk Wood** area 2017

### Red-throated Diver

*Gavia stellata*

A very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “occasional visitor, chiefly in autumn and winter”

An exhausted bird resting on rocks at **Thamesmead** eventually did go out onto the river 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1992, also singles 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1996 and 5<sup>th</sup> Jan 1997.

One off **Crossness** – winter 1989. **Crayfordness** - occasional sightings of birds feeding offshore (one on 3<sup>rd</sup> two on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1985) and present winter 1986.

### Black-throated Diver

*avia arctica*

A very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “one obtained on the **River Thames** (Fielding 1850)”.

Occasional sightings of birds feeding offshore from **Crayford Marshes** (23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1986 and unspecified date in 1988). Only other record is of a single sub-adult **Danson Park** March 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> 2008.

### Great Northern Diver

*Gavia immer*

Very rare.

Ruegg: “one reported by Smee (1876) to have been shot on the **River Thames** here (Erith) on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1876 by one of the men engaged in the Easton Foundary (sic).”

Wheatley reports from **Thamesmead** before 1900 “the common diver visits chiefly in autumn and winter” but not recorded since.

### Fulmar

*Fulmarus glacialis*

Very rare visitor.

Three flying up **River Thames** off **Crayford Marshes** 4<sup>th</sup> September 1954. An adult found grounded on **Erith Marshes** 25<sup>th</sup> February 1968, died overnight.

A single off **Crossness** evening of 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013, still off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

### Little Shearwater

*Puffinus assimilis*

Extremely Rare Vagrant.

A single bird picked up dead in **Welling** on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1912 was accepted in LBR no.56 1991.

### Manx Shearwater

*Puffinus puffinus*

Extremely rare visitor.

A single bird off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008, another off **Crossness** 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010. One on river **Crayford Marshes** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and another resting on the river 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

### Storm Petrel

*Hydrokbates pelagicus*

Extremely rare visitor.

Ruegg: “Rare wanderer in bad weather generally to Plumstead and **Erith Marshes**”

The 1983 LBR noted the following “Crayford – a bird fluttered down onto the boot of a car on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1983, died a few hours later” this record was linked with a Leaches Petrel “wreck” –along the coast of south west England. Morris/Wright report an exhausted bird found on **River Darent** 7<sup>th</sup> September 1983 (died next day). Two flew up river off **Crayford Marshes** 12<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

### Leach's Petrel

*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Extremely rare visitor.

One found on **Crayford Marshes** on 21st September 1983, died the next day.

Another found in **Bexley** on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1984, again died next day (KOS).

A single bird observed moving along **River Thames** on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006 (also seen from Rainham Marshes) 3.30pm, also seen being mobbed by gulls 300m south east of Tower Bridge at 12.35 same day.

### Storm Petrel sp.

One off **Crayfordness** 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000.

### Northern Gannet

*Morus bassanus*

Very rare visitor.

**Thamesmead** Adult flew west on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1983.

Single adult on **River Thames** off Dartford and **Crayford Marshes** 08.55-09.30 on 4 July 2004.

Second year bird along **River Thames** off **Crayford and Belvedere** 6<sup>th</sup> October 2009, a juvenile up river off **Crayford Marshes** on 29th December 2009 and an adult west up river on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010. A juvenile west **Crossness** on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Off duty Wildlife Crime Police Officer, John Horton, provided an exceptional inland record on 26th January 2006 of an adult gannet flying over Crofton Road Bexley.

### Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*

Locally common resident.

Rarely recorded in London in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Range and numbers gradually increased from the 1940s though records mostly originate from the larger reservoirs in west, north and east London. Records for the **Lower River Thames** are scarce until the earliest observations from LBR of 20+ January–March 1984 for **Thamesmead**. Numbers increased year on year, 104 November 1991; 93 August, 83 September and 117 November 1993; 121 September and 101 October 1994, 125 September (highest ever recorded total for Bexley) 1995 and 122 August 1996 (all maximum monthly counts).

Occasionally recorded **Crayford Marshes** with 15 on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1995 remaining the only double figure count for this site and 44 at **Erith Reach** 21<sup>st</sup> January 1996 both the two highest counts away from **Thamesmead/Crossness**.

Occurs every month of the year at Crossness, mostly recorded on the **River Thames** by the Outfall.

Numbers vary in relation to tides and time of year. Not uncommon to see between six and 20 gathered.

Numbers exceeding 50 are unusual and have mostly occurred between September and February, 79 September 2009 and 80 October 2018 being highest counts. Occasionally seen on the nature reserve, only six records from the **Southern Marsh**: all between 2005-2016 with four birds in May 2010 highest count.

**Southmere Lake** - a single bird March 2008 is the earliest record with up to five seen each winter year from 2014, eight in October 2017 the highest count.

First early inland records are a single bird **Lamorbey Park** 4<sup>th</sup> February 1989, three **Danson Park** November 1991 and one **Foots Cray Meadows** February 1993. Six at **Lamorbey Park** 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001.

**Foots Cray Meadows** – an occasional visitor to this site, rarely more than a single bird and usually in the winter months. Between ten – 18 were present first four days of 1997 and nine in November 2012 remain the only high counts with four in December 2017 a recent exception.

Only one record of a single bird at **Hall Place Gardens** – January 2001. **Lamorbey Park** shows similar pattern to other inland sites with multiple numbers being mostly November-February, 15 in November 2012

remains the highest count with 13 November/December 2017 only other double figure count. Occasionally birds seen on nearby **Sidcup Golf course**. Highest count for **Danson Park** is 27 18<sup>th</sup> December 1997 (when 12-15 recorded much of the month). Total of 27 was only matched again in October 2010. Double figure counts were rare during first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century. It wasn't until 2014 that double figure counts became more frequent, with birds using the island as a resting site, then mostly between October-December.

### **Shag**

*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Very rare winter visitor.

At the end of 1990 there was a small influx including ten on the **River Thames** off Rainham on 29<sup>th</sup> December. In 1991 another flock were seen same location and peaked at 30 on 26<sup>th</sup> January with some remaining until mid-February. These were not reported from the Crayford side at the time.

**Crayford Marshes** one **Darent River** 11<sup>th</sup> May 1982. Others on **River Thames** 10<sup>th</sup> February 1991, 8<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and 30<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Only other record is one off **Crossness** on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

### **Bittern**

*Botaurus stellaris*

Very rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: "Occasionally met with – several fine specimens have been procured in the last eight or ten years" **Erith Marshes** One found dead 11<sup>th</sup> February 1963. Another seen at same site 8<sup>th</sup> March 1976. Single bird flew south east across A20 (from Queen Mary's Hospital/Sidcup Place direction) and landed in Ruxley Gravel Pits (London Borough of Bromley) 17<sup>th</sup> November 2008. One seen flying from **Thames Road Wetland** towards Stanham Farm 11<sup>th</sup> February 2013 and another short stay but well seen/photographed bird at **Crossness** Protected Area on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

### **Little Bittern**

*Ixobrychus minutus*

A rare vagrant

Ruegg: "occasionally shot and serves to grace the cabinets of our collectors"

### **Squacco Heron**

*Ardeola ralloides*

Very rare vagrant.

Just one record of a single, well watched bird at **Crossness Southern Marsh** 29<sup>th</sup> May–8<sup>th</sup> June 2007 (only the 5<sup>th</sup> London record, the 3<sup>rd</sup> since 1886 and first since 1997).

### **Cattle Egret**

*Bubulcus ibis*

Very rare vagrant.

During first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century Cattle Egret were being recorded more frequently across the UK and started to breed in the West Country. London records were still scarce. There were three records in 2007 including two at Rainham Marshes in May and October. An unconfirmed/unnamed record by the Friends of **Crossness** on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007 is only possible **Bexley** sighting.

### **Little Egret**

*Egretta garzetta*

Uncommon resident.

Earliest 20<sup>th</sup> Century London record was 1956 at Old Parkbury with the next record from Walthamstow Reservoir end of April 1972. By 1985, Little Egret still a national rarity though recorded annually with four in the London area. In the summer of 1989 there was a major influx into the country which preceded a major change of status. From 1990 birds were recorded annually in the London area.

Bexley History - a 21<sup>st</sup> century addition to the Bexley list with first record probably that of an individual on the **River Shuttle** between **Sidcup** and **Bexley** on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2002. Other sightings, probably same bird, were of one flying over **Bexley Woods** on 13<sup>th</sup> January and on **Sidcup Golf Course** on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. In

the same year one seen **Crayford Marshes** 21<sup>st</sup> December with a possible second seen in flight. The next record was of one on the **River Shuttle** near Love Lane Allotments on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2003. In 2004 a single at **Sidcup Golf Course** on the 21<sup>st</sup> January could have been the same as that on the **River Cray** in **Foots Cray Meadows** 16<sup>th</sup> February.

Until 2006 almost all records came from the **River Shuttle** through **Bexley/Sidcup** or the **River Cray** at **Foots Cray Meadows**.

The **River Shuttle** seems to be a favoured river with further records throughout December 2006 from Montpellier Avenue area, **Bexley Woods** and adjacent to Love Lane Allotments – the same bird presumed to commute to the river in **Foots Cray Meadows** (10<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>), also present on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2007. **Sidcup Golf Course** hosted singles on 25<sup>th</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006.

Towards the end of the decade birds were regularly seen along the **River Shuttle** (from Hollyoak Wood Park, Haddon Grove to **Bexley**), all along the **River Cray** and occasionally on the **River Thames Marshes**. Two were present on the **River Cray** near Maiden Lane on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2004, with five near the former Samas Roneo building on 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

Two at **Crayford Marshes** (Saltings) in December 2002 were the first for this site followed by two in March 2003. There were three more records between 2005-2008. In 2009 numbers and observations increased with five in September, 15 on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 and seven on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010, nine 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011, ten 6<sup>th</sup> August and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2012, 16 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2014 being high counts for the time.

It wasn't until August 2005 that the first was recorded flying over **Crossness Nature Reserve**. Four in April 2006 was the beginning of more regular sightings here and by 2009 it was being recorded most months of the year with nine flying south west on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2010. Double figure counts here are still rare with ten in September 2016, 12 in May 2017 and 18 on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016 being the highest. Birds are seen both on the **Nature Reserve** and the **River Thames Foreshore**, commuting between the two. Little egrets have been recorded on the **Southern Marsh** two or three times in most years since 2011 with five in July 2013 and ten July 2020 being highest counts.

By 2010 Little Egret could be considered resident in the Borough being regularly seen at all the aforementioned river and inland sites with six or seven regularly in the autumn and winter.

The highest counts for **Crayford Marshes** are ten, August/September 2012 and September 2016 and 13 in April 2016.

Up to four birds were often reported from Stanham Farm, Barnes Cray, this being adjacent to **Thames Road Wetland** where occasional records occur but also close to a known roost site on the **River Cray** where 12 birds have been seen to fly in. This roost site appears no longer active when visited in December 2020.

**Danson Park**, all records to date are of single birds, the first being on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2014, and three further dates into August, then not recorded again until January 2017, a year when a bird was reported most months. Subsequently the one present end of January early February 2018 remains the only record.

**Foots Cray Meadows** – reported annually since 2003 and monthly since 2015 when four were reported in May, being the highest count, repeated in March 2019.

One of the earliest records was from **Hall Place** in January 2004, not reported again until February 2011 and only six other records of single birds between 2015-2017. An occasional visitor to **Lamorbey Park/Sidcup Golf Course** with three on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 being highest counts. The **River Shuttle** continues to be a good hunting ground from **Hollyoak Wood Park, Haddon Grove** through to **BETHS School Bexley** where up to three birds are often present throughout the length of the river.

As at December 2020 there are no breeding records. There is a large nesting colony at RSPB Northward Hill (just 20 miles away) so it might be just a matter of time.

## Great White Egret

*Ardea alba*

Rare vagrant.

Earliest records were of single birds flying over – 13<sup>th</sup> December 2011 **Crayford Marshes** then later over York Avenue, Sidcup, others were over Abbey Hill Park Sidcup 10<sup>th</sup> November 2012, York Avenue Sidcup 16<sup>th</sup> October 2013, **Crayford Marshes** 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and **Upper College Farm** August 2019.

There was a short staying bird at **Crossness** in 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

The next record was in 2020, one commuting between Rainham RSPB reserve, Dartford Marshes and

**Crayford Marshes** between 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> August another (possibly same bird) dropping in briefly at **Crossness Foreshore** on 20<sup>th</sup> September and one flying over **Foots Cray Meadows** on 20<sup>th</sup> October.

Lamorbey Park, a bird first reported on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021 moved between the lake and Sidcup Golf Course ponds over the next few days last seen..... (still around 5th March 2021).

### Grey Heron

*Ardea cinerea*

Resident – small breeding colony.

Ruegg: “nearest known heronry to these marshes was considered by Richard Ruegg: (1847) to be at Penshurst, Kent. But, according to Nicholson, (1929) this heronry was said to have been deserted about 1810. In any case the ancient heronry at Wanstead Park, on the Essex side of the **River Thames**, at a distance of just over 6 miles (10km) is much closer. Moreover, a heronry of immemorial date existed at Cobham, Kent and this would have been nearer than Penshurst.”

“Not uncommon on the **Erith Marshes**” (C.J.Smith 1873).

Recent history - they are recorded all year round along the **River Thames Foreshore** from Crayfordness to Thamesmead.

Given the Borough's close proximity to what was Europe's largest Heronry (up to 1990's) at Northwood Hill on the Isle of Grain it is unsurprising that Grey Heron has been a regular visitor, being observed in every month of the year with higher numbers and wider distribution between September and February. The **Erith/Crossness Marshes** have regularly recorded the highest numbers 14 in June 1987, 17 November 1988, ten in July and 14 in August 1994. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 15 in June 2006, May 2007, 20 August 2008 and 24 September 2016 have been unusually high counts. Surprisingly fewer records from **Crayford Marshes** and smaller numbers with seven in March 2012 being highest count.

Inland they have been found anywhere along the **Rivers Cray and Shuttle** in such diverse habitats as **Thames Road Wetland, Foots Cray Meadows, Joyden's Wood, Upper College Farm, Beverly Woods, Lamorbey Park** and **Sidcup Golf Course**. Has a tendency to visit gardens with well-stocked fishponds throughout the Borough (one group of nine over Horsham Road August 1989). Up to six seen fishing at **Danson Park** 1989 (from where a pair attempted, but failed, to breed in a garden hedge in Danson Road). Highest counts for inland sites are **Hall Place** where one is the norm, eight on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2006 was exceptional, **Foots Cray Meadows** – rarely more than two at any one time **Lamorbey Park** four November 2012, **Danson Park** maximum numbers between 2003 and 2009 being four during the winter months. In December 2015 14 was an exceptional count with seven in January 2017 and 2018.

Breeding: Formerly bred in a small heronry (maximum 8 pairs) at **Crossness** Water Treatment works until early 2000's (three pairs in 2003). It is likely that with the loss of the trees and the erection of scaffolding to try and hold the remnants of the heronry (unsuccessfully) the birds slowly established an alternative heronry at Crossways Lake/River **Thamesmead Ecology Study Area (TESA)**. London Bird Report states five nests noted in 1996, nine in 1997, 13 in 1998 (between **Crossness** and **TESA**) – “none in 1999” no further records until “some in 2014, none previous year” and “some in 2015”. Ten nests in 2016, minimum of 12 occupied nests in 2019 and 13 in 2020.

A pair nested **Danson Park** in 2017 and 2018. Important trees were cut by the local authority resulting in no further breeding.

### Purple Heron

*Ardea purpurea*

Very rare visitor.

Just two records, both from **Crossness** - first coincided with the Squacco Heron and was reported on **Southern Marsh** 30<sup>th</sup> /31<sup>st</sup> May 2007 and may have still been present on 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Second stayed for three days 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> April 2009 on the main reserve.

### White Stork

Very rare visitor.

*Ciconia ciconia*

Ruegg: suggested “it was present on these marshes (Thamesmead area) in the 1700s.

Four modern day records: the first seen over **Crossness** at 09.30 on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2006 later seen over **Sidcup** at 13.35 and over M25/Darenth at 14.00). The second record was of two birds that had been widely reported over south and east London roosting at **Crayford Marshes** overnight of 13<sup>th</sup> /14<sup>th</sup> March 2020. A single bird was reported over **Crayford Marshes** (flying from Rainham Marshes) on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020, probably same bird over **Lamorbey Park** on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

### Glossy Ibis

Very rare visitor

*Plegadis falcinellus*

A single bird **Crayford Marshes** 14<sup>th</sup> October 2012, another on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2014 (presumably same bird seen at Beddington near Croydon two hours later).

### Spoonbill

Rare passage migrant.

*Platalea leucorodia*

Ruegg: “present in Thamesmead up to 1600 at least”

**Crossness** - singles on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2010, an immature on the **Foreshore** 24<sup>th</sup> October 2010, juvenile on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2016 and one on **Foreshore** 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017. One was seen flying over York Avenue Sidcup on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014. Two flew over **Crayford Marshes** on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019. A longer staying bird was often seen feeding, mostly on River Darent (and Dartford Marshes) but also seen between **Crossness** and off Erith Pier between 11<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. Probably same bird seen on 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> September on the River Darent at **Crayford Marshes**.

### Little Grebe

Locally common breeding resident and winter visitor.

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Ruegg: “scarce visitor, generally in autumn and winter”.

LBR reports occasional breeding on the **Thames Marshes** during the 1960s-90s. with four pairs

**Thamesmead** in 1991 and several pairs **Crossness** (three pairs 1998).

**Crossness Nature Reserve** is a stronghold after good management, many suitable pools/dykes interlock providing ideal habitat. Up to seven pairs breed most years. 2006 proved a most successful year with 20 birds being recorded in May. A pair bred with four young on the **Southern Marsh** in 2013 and two pairs in 2017 - otherwise one or two birds is the norm.

**Crayford Marshes** – one or two recorded most months on the wet meadows/dykes with eight on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 being the highest count - even three or four is unusual. A pair bred in 1980 otherwise only two other records of breeding when adults with three young reported in July 2013 and September 2015.

One or two birds are often seen on the **River Cray** at **Barnes Cray** with a pair and young reported in 1995, 1996, 1997 (two pairs) 2006, 2010 and 2011. Nearby **Thames Road Wetland** usually has one or two present year round with breeding confirmed in 2011. A pair on the **River Cray** in Crayford Town Centre in March/April 1996 was unusual – successful breeding was not confirmed.

**Southmere Lake** 2014 was a peak year with between 10/18 in October/November otherwise just occasional records of one or two birds rarely outside winter months - one on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2017 being the exception.

Inland: Most 20<sup>th</sup> Century records are of wintering birds from all the most suitable sites. Eight on River Cray at **Hall Place Gardens** January 1997, ten **Foots Cray Meadows** December 1994 although anecdotally up to 13 seen in 1980s, several in December 2010. **Sidcup Golf Club** with maximum four in January 2004.

**Foots Cray Meadows** – whilst occasional spring/summer records, primarily a winter visitor with numbers reaching double figures in December-February most years in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century but only twice (12 in November 2019, ten in 2020) since 2015. A pair bred here in 1980 otherwise birds seen on nest in late

March 2019 was the only other notification of attempted breeding.

A pair were reported from the fishing lake at **Upper College Farm** in December 1991 – inability to access this site prevented further information.

Now a rare winter visitor to the **River Cray** in **Hall Place/Crayford Rough** until two were recorded in the Rough end of the river in February 2017 and January/February 2018. This compared with the nine seen in January 2003 and three or four October-February in the late 1990s. **Lamorbey Park** – a pair bred in 1980 and were recorded annually during 1980s along with another pair on **Sidcup Golf Course**. Now primarily a winter visitor with peak counts of seven April 2017 and four on six occasions in December/January 2010 - 2017. A pair bred in 2010, no further records of pairs or sightings between April-September.

**Danson Park** Thirteen 30<sup>th</sup> October 1948 and at least 20 in September 1949 remain the highest counts with numbers gradually declining in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Maximum seven on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 with similar numbers occurring for next ten years when numbers began to decline further from peak of 12 September 2004 to a maximum of three in 2007-2013. Fourteen on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 an exceptional count. The pair that bred **Danson Park** in 1967 was the first recorded for this site by LBR, up to four pairs bred until 1998, in August 2004 eight adults with four juveniles were reported, One or two pairs have bred most years since.

### Great Crested Grebe

*Podiceps cristatus*

Uncommon breeding resident.

Burton 2016: “**River Thames** between Greenwich and Gravesend: “Large flock present “some years prior to 1824””.

Majority of **River Thames** sightings are from the **Crossness** area, specifically the outfall with 14 in January 1997 highest count, only other double figure count ten in December 2011 and February 2012. September 2013 a pair with two young seen here. Otherwise one or two seen most months most years. Occasional sightings the length of the River from Thamesmead to **Crayford Marshes** though the latter has surprisingly few records (13 in all) with three birds recorded in January 2015 and March 2017.

Only ten records from the **Crossness Nature Reserve** and one from the **Southern Marsh**, three birds on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014. **Southmere Lake** usually has three or four present with pairs with juveniles in 1997, 2009, 2010 and 2017 and eight birds reported in July 2012 was the highest count and may have included juveniles.

**Thamesmead Ecology Study Area** had a pair present January 2016. Occasional breeding Thamesmead area (three pairs 1995, four pairs 1996) one or two pairs bred during 1997-2000.

**Foots Cray Meadows** one on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1985 with a pair through April/May but no record of successful breeding. Only other records are of single birds on 11<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1997, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2006 and 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012. Water levels were deeper in the 1980s/90s than now.

**Danson Park** remains a good place to see these birds year round. Double figure counts that might have included juveniles as this is an early breeding species are all pre-2010 (February 2006 April 2007 and March 2009) with 13 in March 1985 being the highest. Up to three pairs have bred **Danson Park**, ten adults/seven juveniles were seen in June 1991, eight adults/six juveniles May 1993, three pairs 1997, four pairs 1998. Breeding numbers reduced to one or two pairs since 2001 with two pairs attempting since 2015. Six reported in August 2020 included young from a second brood.

**Lamorbey Park** – occasional single bird reported during 20<sup>th</sup> Century with first record of a pair raising two young in 2007, further successful breeding years included four young in 2009, three in 2010, two in 2011. There were unsuccessful attempts in 2012-2014, 2016-2017.

Three pairs Birchmere Park **Erith** in April/May 2008 - at least one pair successfully reared one young.

### Slavonian Grebe

*Podiceps auritus*

Rare winter visitor.

Single birds at Thamesmead 27<sup>th</sup> February 1979, **Crossness** 15<sup>th</sup> January 1985 and **Crayford Marshes** 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> February 1986. One bird recorded on Gallions Lake Thamesmead on 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> February 1996 was probably same bird that appeared on **Danson Park** 20<sup>th</sup> February. Only other two records came from the **River Thames** at **Crayford** on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

### Black-necked Grebe

*Podiceps nigricollis*

Rare passage migrant.

One **River Thames**, one off **Erith** 28<sup>th</sup> October 1978. Two summer records, one on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2001 off **Thamesmead Golf Course** the other 28<sup>th</sup> August 2010 off **Crayford Marshes**. Another off **Crayford Marshes/Belvedere** on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2010. Single birds reported **Danson Park** 3<sup>rd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> January 1959 and another same location on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1997 staying until at least 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

### Honey Buzzard

*Pernis apivorus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Mostly an autumn migrant – two records from **Crossness** one south on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2000 and a pale juvenile flew over on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011, possibly same bird over Bexleyheath garden same day. One over Welling on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and one drifting over Sidcup 7<sup>th</sup> September 2013. The only spring record - one over **Foots Cray Meadows** on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015. One reported over Bexleyheath 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

### Black Kite

*Milvus migrans*

Very rare vagrant.

Two records, both from **Crayford Marshes** – the first being mobbed by a peregrine before drifting off west on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012, the second on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

### Red Kite

*Milvus milvus*

Scarce passage migrant.

Ruegg: “we are seldom without the kite”. It is thought he was referring to the early years of the period (19<sup>th</sup> century) as the red kite is thought to have disappeared from the London area by then. Whilst abundant in London in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries Red Kite had become an extremely rare species with small and declining numbers restricted to Wales until a reintroduction programme in England in 1989. Prior to this re-introduction programme there had been only one Bexley record, one flying over **Thamesmead** on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1988. There were no further 20<sup>th</sup> century records.

One drifting over Kelsey Farm North Cray Road on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2005 was the first 21<sup>st</sup> century record, the second being one east over **Bexleyheath** 7<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

One over **Foots Cray Meadows** in December 2008 was next and also an unusual winter record. (There have been only seven records in the October-December period).

April (**Crossness**) and June (**Lamorby Park**) records in 2009. By 2010 around 12 annual records were being received from sightings across the borough. Spring passage clearly being the optimum time to look skywards with 18% seen in March or April, 27% in May and 14% in June. Two were seen in March and May 2012 over **Sidcup** and five drifting one after the other over Sidcup High Street on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 was then the highest single day count (one over **Lamorby Park** same day possibly one of this group) although another five (three and two singles) were seen the next day over various parts of the borough.

In June 2020 there were unprecedented numbers (100+) recorded along the south coast from Kent to Cornwall and the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> of June proved exceptional for the borough with three being reported from **Danson Park** and **The Hollies**, six over York Avenue Sidcup surpassed by 20 drifting over **Bexleyheath**, 18 in one group, all heading south west. Some of these might have been same birds. Odd ones and twos had been reported from 23<sup>rd</sup> March through April and May from many observers and locations.

### Marsh Harrier

*Circus aeruginosus*

Uncommon though increasingly a regular passage migrant along the Thames Marshes.

Until the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a national rarity and very few records in London until the last

decade, two were reported in **Bexley**. Several sightings of presumably same bird in winter of 1971-2 on the **Thamesmead** marshes and a female/juvenile seen over **Joyden's Wood** area between 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> August 1997 were the only reports.

**Crossness** provided the first 21<sup>st</sup> century records with one on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2006. Others from this site were all females 26<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2007, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008, 1<sup>st</sup> April and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2009, 19<sup>th</sup> January, 22<sup>nd</sup> April and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2010.

**Crayford Marshes** First report of a single on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1998, one 5<sup>th</sup> September 2004, a female 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009, another 9<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2010 with two on 3<sup>rd</sup> and one on 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> December 2010. From 2010 records began to exceed ten each year and by 2015 over 60 records all from **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness**. By 2016 it was clear birds were moving between these two sites plus Dartford Marshes and Rainham Marshes across the river. On a few occasions one would venture inland and was seen at **Thames Road Wetland** 10<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016. The majority of records are of single, immature birds though adults and occasionally two birds were seen. With the exception of 1997 **Joyden's Wood** sighting only other inland records are one over The Drive Bexley on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and one through **Foots Cray Meadows** February 2021.

### Hen Harrier

*Circus cyaneus*

Rare winter visitor.

Graves (1821) wrote that this species was "not uncommon on the Kent and Essex marshes near London" Burton 2016: "In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Hen Harrier probably overwintered on the **Thames Marshes** and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century".

**Crossness** Adult male 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> January 2010 and another 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Only other record on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**Crayford Marshes** a ring-tail on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1982 was possibly the same bird seen again in April until 3<sup>rd</sup> May of the same year. During the 1980s individual birds commuted between Dartford and **Crayford Marshes**, a ring-tail on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1985 and another on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1985. The next record was of a male flying south west on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2010. A ringtail was regularly seen between 24<sup>th</sup> March and 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011, another on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

Only inland records are fly-overs from **Foots Cray Meadows** - ring-tail 20<sup>th</sup> April 1991 and another 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1995. A male flew from the west over **Sidcup** being mobbed by Peregrines 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

### Montagu's Harrier

*Circus pygargus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Ruegg: "present in the early 1800s".

Adult male flew south from Rainham over **Crayford Marshes** on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2009.

### Goshawk

*Accipiter gentilis*

Very rare visitor.

Since 2000 sightings over London have increased suggesting a probable regular passage over the capital. One circling over **Bexley Park Woods** for ten minutes 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011 is only report for the borough.

### Sparrowhawk

*Accipiter nisus*

Common Resident local breeder.

Ruegg: "abounds" is only reference.

Not uncommon in London in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century though heavily persecuted through game preservation. By the 1950s they were being recorded more widely and in greater numbers until the 1960s when the national collapse occurred due to use of pesticides. From 1963 and throughout most of that decade there was often only one known breeding record for the whole of London. With the banning of the use of DDT a recovery began in the 1970/80s and by 1990 more than 100 pairs were reported in London.

In Bexley Borough there were occasional sightings over **Joyden's Wood** (1970 and 1982) and **Foots Cray Meadows** 1988. A pair were reported over **Joyden's Wood** in 1988 but breeding was only first confirmed in 1991 when four young were raised. Further records of successful breeding continued through the 1990s (including two pairs in 1994 and three pairs 1996) and continues to date.

Throughout the 1990s records elsewhere of single birds were reported most months mostly from the wooded sites in the Bexley area – including **Foots Cray Meadows** (displaying pair in 1994, pair bred **North Cray Woods** 1998), **Bexley Park Woods** and **Martens Grove** (displaying pair 1995), **Hall Place** (pair with food 1995, displaying 1998). A pair were displaying over **Thamesmead** in 1995 and confirmed breeding in 1999. By the late 1990s early 2000s birds were being reported more widely over gardens and more regularly from north of the Borough, (**Lesnes Abbey Woods** 1997, **Frank's Park** 2003). By 2005 Sparrowhawk became the most widespread and common breeding bird of prey in the Borough, occurring in most wooded areas including parks and cemeteries and regularly taking prey from garden feeding stations.

### Common Buzzard

*Buteo buteo*

Uncommon breeding resident – passage migrant.

A very rare London bird for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with increasing passage noted during the 1990s and by 1999 three pairs probably bred. Still much scarcer south of the river into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By 2002 two pairs had probably bred, one pair close to the Borough. Nationally there was a 400% increase between 1970-2010 and this was eventually reflected in Bexley Borough sightings.

Early isolated records were of singles over Sidcup on Christmas day 1962, one circling high over **Joyden's Wood** 12<sup>th</sup> April 1948, two over the woods on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1975, one on three dates in September/October 1976 (Dartford Ringing Group) and another February 1987.

One over **Foots Cray Meadows** on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1971 (another 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1988), Dartford Ringing Group noted passage birds on 10<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October 1976 over **Joyden's Wood** and another seen 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> February 1985. It wasn't until June 2006 that the next was reported, over **Bexley Park Woods**. April 2007 one was reported from **Crossness**. A bird was watched over **Foots Cray Meadows** on four dates during March-May 2008 and another between 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> September at **Crossness**. More sightings reported during 2009, mainly from the **Thames Marshes** – mostly March/April and October/November. First year birds were reported in every month 2010, mainly from the well watched **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes** from where the then highest count of five on 21<sup>st</sup> September reflected a small passage migration, three were seen from **Crossness** same day. In 2011 birds were being reported from across the borough at all times of the year with late March into April seeing a higher proportion.

First indication of possible breeding was of a pair calling (February) then displaying March 2012 in the east of the borough. Courtship display seen in subsequent years and in 2019 and 2020 breeding was confirmed with a nest found in the same area.

Highest daily counts have mostly been from one observer studying visual migration with seven on two consecutive days in February 2016 other counts of five and (same observer) seen in March/April and August-October 2016 and eight (five in one group) April 2020

It is now possible to see Common Buzzards drifting over at almost anytime, anywhere in the borough with **Crossness/Crayford Marshes**, **Chalk Wood** (five 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012), **Churchfield Wood** and **Joyden's Wood** being the most productive.

### Rough-legged Buzzard

*Buteo lagopus*

Very rare winter visitor.

One over **Bexley** on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1974 was probably same bird as seen over Sevenoaks later same day. Only other record of one on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2018 at **Crayford Marshes**.

### Buzzard sp.

Single slowly drifting south easterly over **North Cray** 1<sup>st</sup> October 1964 and exceptionally, four together over **Bexley** on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1979.

### Osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

Rare passage migrant.

Another bird of prey much impacted by persecution becoming extinct as a breeding bird in Scotland in 1916 returning in the mid 1950s. Following much protection of nest sites in Scotland and more recently reintroduction programmes in England, Osprey is now a relatively regular passage migrant in much of England but still very uncommon in London.

The first record for Bexley was of a bird being shot in Belvedere in May 1898, fortunately all subsequent records (11 in all) have been of live birds passing through on migration.

One flew east along **River Thames** at **Thamesmead** on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1990, another record of a probable bird over Annandale Road Sidcup on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1994, flying west to north-west – it is worth noting this coincides with five birds spending the spring/early summer until mid-July at Bough Beech Reservoir near Sevenoaks. Other records for **Bexley** are of passage birds – **Thamesmead** 13<sup>th</sup> May 1996, **Belvedere** (ironically 100 years after the shot bird) 1998, **Crossness** seven sightings May and September 2006, late March and September 2010, August 2011, and two dates April 2018. **Crayford Marshes** two dates September 2010. The two inland records are from **Sidcup** May 2012 and **Foots Cray Meadows** May 2016.

### Kestrel

*Falco tinnunculus*

Formerly uncommon, now rare breeding resident.

A species whose numbers have seen fluctuations during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, never hugely abundant with relatively few pairs nesting in London up to the second world war. Numbers were in decline by the 1950s. The 1967 London survey found 98 confirmed breeding pairs and a population of 142 pairs. The breeding bird atlases showed an increase during the 1980/90s. LBR 1996 reported “decrease noted”, 1998 “numbers declining”. By early 21<sup>st</sup> century there was a serious decline, by 2010 just 56 pairs compared with 139 pairs in 2000. This mirrored a national decline.

Kestrel bred across the borough – favouring hollows in mature trees. There were breeding records from the grounds of Old Bexley Hospital (now a housing estate) and Queen Mary’s Hospital/**Sidcup Place** – (now an extension to the hospital), St. John’s Vicarage Bexley (up to 1994), **Bexley Park Woods**, **Lamorbey Park**, **Joyden’s** and **Chalk Wood**, **Foots Cray Meadows**, **Upper College Farm** and Coldblow Farm/Tile Kiln Lane, **Danson Park**, **Lesnes Abbey Woods**, **Martens Grove Park**, Hall Place gardens, **The Warren** and **Crayford Marshes**.

By 2010 breeding was reduced to **Joyden’s Wood** and **Chalk Wood**, **Crayford Marshes** (Howbury Farm area), **Crossness** (using owl boxes), **Hall Place/Crayford Rough**, **Lesnes Abbey Woods**, **Lamorbey Park/Sidcup Golf course**, **Upper College Farm**.

Whilst still seen across the borough many of the 20<sup>th</sup> century breeding sites have been abandoned/lost – in line with national decline in numbers, the breeding bird survey suggests a 37% decrease in South East London alone.

### Red-footed Falcon

*Falco vespertinus*

Very rare passage migrant.

One confirmed sighting of a first year female seen over **Crossness** on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2011 and later seen flying south east over **Crayford Marshes**. Only other record was recorded as probable over **Crossness** on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017.

### Merlin

*Falco columbarius*

Rare winter visitor.

Ruegg: “sometimes seen”

With a couple of exceptions all records are from the **Thames Marshes**.

A male at **Crossness** on two dates in April 2007 and another 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009 - all other records come from **Crayford Marshes**. First record was on 14th March 1990, a female was recorded on 12 dates between

15<sup>th</sup> November 2010 and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2011 with three January records of a single bird in 2013, 2014 and 2016. An early autumn passage bird reported 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

A female/immature bird seen over **Foots Cray Meadows** 24<sup>th</sup> October 1981 and another was trapped here on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1990. Another inland record was of one south west over **Sidcup** 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and also an opportunistic bird that flew through a flock of waxwings in Hurst Road Sidcup 4<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

### **Hobby**

*Falco subbuteo*

Uncommon summer visitor and passage migrant – scarce breeder.

A very rare breeding bird for the London area throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by 1990 there were 14 breeding pairs, by 1999 that had increased to 20 pairs and the slow but steady increase has continued through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Male over North Cray 11<sup>th</sup> June 1964 and **Foots Cray Meadows** 4<sup>th</sup> September 1983 were earliest Bexley records. There were reports of a single bird over **Thamesmead** (possibly Crossness) September 1986.

August 1986 and June 1989 were the first two records from **Danson Park**. A single sighting over a Bexleyheath garden in June 1988 followed by another sighting over **Foots Cray Meadows** in September that year and another in September 1991, one over **Lesnes Abbey Wood** in 1997 completed the 20<sup>th</sup> century records, all probable passage birds.

**Crossness** had to wait until 2005 before hobby became a regular annual sighting but it wasn't until 2007 that birds were being seen more widely and throughout the summer across the Borough. This almost certainly coincided with regular breeding in the **Joydens Wood/Chalk Wood** area with **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes** providing ideal hunting grounds, five recorded at the latter site in September 2018 is the highest count to date. Two birds together in 2006 and 2009 regularly over Bexleyheath garden, usually flying from the north to south east of the borough.

The first confirmed breeding record was from **Joydens Wood** in 1995 with occasional successes into early 21<sup>st</sup> century when a pair have bred here or **Chalk Wood** in most years since. A pair bred in **Franks Park** in 2009 and another in the **North Cray** area in 2020.

**Crayford Marshes**, **Foots Cray Meadows** and **Upper College** seem to be good places to look between May and September. Earliest recorded date is 10<sup>th</sup> April 2017, The Drive Bexley. End of September is usually when last sightings are reported with 21<sup>st</sup> October 1996 **Crayford Marshes** being the latest.

### **Peregrine Falcon**

*Falco peregrinus*

Uncommon breeding resident.

A very rare sighting in the London area throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century becoming even scarcer in the 1950s and 60s. During the 1970s numbers declined nationally due to persecution and use of pesticides – only 11 records for the whole of the London area, not recorded every year during the 80s. During the 1990s the national status changed with a marked increase in breeding pairs (due to banning of pesticides and better control of persecution (egg collecting)).

In London there were more sightings year on year and by 1995 two birds were present for most of the year along the **River Thames** in Central London. In 1996 a pair were present at nearby Littlebrook Power Station. The first reported London breeding pair was by the **River Thames** at Silvertown in 1998/99. During the 21<sup>st</sup> century the numbers of breeding pairs in London has increased to over 25 with the **River Thames** being a favoured location for nesting and feeding.

The occasional reports in the borough reflected those in the London area with just the odd single bird being reported. One at **Crayford** 21<sup>st</sup> March 1950, with single flyovers at **Barnehurst** 28<sup>th</sup> October 1960, one over **Blackfen** 1985. An adult male at **Crossness**, pursuing a dunlin on 8th March 1990, one over **Foots Cray Meadows** August 1991 and a juvenile at **Thamesmead** 24<sup>th</sup> Aug 1994. A male bird was noted on three dates October-December 1995 at **Thamesmead** with one at **Crayford Marshes** on 10th February. Two were reported at **Crossness** on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1997. There were no further reports until 2001 (**Thamesmead**) and not until July 2003 for two birds to be reported together at **Crossness**. For the next five years all sightings of mostly one, occasionally two birds were reported exclusively from **Crossness**. In 2008 a bird was reported in the Albany Park area on four dates. This was the first year a pair were also seen displaying at **Crossness**

and an adult carrying food in June of that year. Throughout 2009/10 **Crossness** and Albany Park remained the key sites where peregrines were reported with the occasional sighting also coming from **Crayford Marshes** in summer 2010. In 2011 birds were reported every month of the year. **Crayford Marshes** also became a regular haunt with a pair often seen. 2011 was also the first year a pair were confirmed to be spending considerable time on/around a now confirmed nesting site in **Sidcup** having been seen there occasionally in late 2010. The Sidcup pair have successfully bred most years since 2011 (construction work notwithstanding) and can be seen perching on pylons in the surrounding area as well as hunting in the area. There are other pairs in South East London/North West Kent and since 2013 it has been possible to see at least one, and most recently two birds perched high above **Crossness** on the incinerator chimneys that have become a 21<sup>st</sup> century feature of the local skyline. Peregrines are known to feed on pigeons and London has provided a ready source of easy food. In Bexley evidence of the breeding pair suggested Ring-necked Parakeet had become a favoured and easy source of food. The **River Thames** provides a variety of opportunities with gulls, waders, pigeons and the occasional Parakeet.

### Water Rail

*Rallus aquaticus*

Locally common, rare breeding resident, elusive winter visitor.

Ruegg: “we are seldom, in the proper season, without a few specimens of the water rail, and the corn-crake. The lurking habits of these birds however, render them always comparatively scarce to the casual observer” Given its skulking nature, often only located by its call it is possibly under recorded. Never a common London area species and a very rare breeding bird. Only one known pair in 1950. In 2006, 22 pairs were known, six of those at Rainham Marshes by 2018 just 12 pairs from six sites.

Early **Bexley** records were from **Crayford Creek** February 1949 and **Foots Cray Meadows** 1964.

All of the many records from the 1960s referred to wintering individuals with **Erith Marshes** (latterly **Crossness**), **Crayford Marshes** and **Foots Cray Meadows** being strongholds with November-March being prime times to see them. Higher counts for **Crossness** include four birds on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and five 12<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

During the 1970s into early 2000s it was not unusual to see two or three birds at **Foots Cray Meadows** and in exceptionally cold conditions higher numbers – eight January 1985 with an anecdotal high of 13 birds that year. With water levels and vegetation cover changing, recent years have rarely produced more than two with four in October and December 2018. Six in December 2020 was exceptional.

Occasionally seen along the **River Cray** at Water Lane end of **Foots Cray Meadows**, **Hall Place** and **Crayford Rough** with **Thames Road Wetland** usually hosting one or two most winters, three on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

First reported **Danson Park** in December 1995; one, occasionally two and very rarely three (January 2018) are found most years in the Bog Garden area of the local nature reserve.

Breeding has been difficult to quantify, a pair present in the breeding season **Thamesmead** 1990. A pair bred at **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness** in 1996. Pairs have been reported at **Crossness** in April 2003, 2006, 2008 and probably bred in 2017 with a pair seen through to August. A pair **Thames Road Wetland** May 2006 and were present March–August 2013. Breeding was confirmed at **Danson Park** in 2019 – a first known for this site.

### Baillon's Crake

*Porzana pusilla*

Very rare vagrant

Wheatley states “A small, skulking crake seen on four occasions at **Thamesmead** between 10<sup>th</sup> February–4<sup>th</sup> April 1974 was probably Baillons Crake”. Not included by Self 2014.

### Spotted Crake

*Porsana porzana*

Very rare passage migrant

Davis (1904) “Pre-1904 – Dartford “I have, at different times, had several specimens brought to me, nearly all of them, however, had met their death through flying against the telegraphs wires at **Sidcup**”

Andrews and Carter – recorded a bird at Sheldons Pond Long Lane **Bexleyheath** on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1905 and again on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1906 noting “identified by Mr C Bourne of Woolwich who found the nest and eggs on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1906”

### Corncrake

*Crex crex*

Very rare passage migrant

Ruegg: “we are seldom, in the proper season, without a few specimens of ..... the corn-crake”

### Moorhen

*Gallinula chloropus*

Locally common breeding resident.

Ruegg: “teeming as the marshes do with pools and sedgy swamps, the moor-hen, or gallinule, is a bird which is always plentiful”.

Recorded and breeds all wetland sites in the borough including those in woodland e.g. **Joyden’s Wood/Gattons Plantation, Lesnes Abbey Wood** (bred 2004 and 2007). Breeds along the length of the **Rivers Shuttle (Bexley Park Woods)** and **Cray (Crayford Rough and Barnes Cray)**.

Not as abundant at **Crayford Marshes** as might be expected, 17 being highest count around the wet meadows of Howbury where they also breed. Small numbers on the **Rivers Darent** and **Thames**.

An early report from **Thamesmead** of 100+ September/October 1985, and nine pairs bred in 1991.

Wheatley suggests for **Thamesmead** at least 15 pairs in 1989, peak count 80 in December 1989.

Very common at **Crossness** along the banks of the many dykes and ditches with 54 in January 2017 being highest count. Often seen on the **Foreshore** with 15 by the outfall in December 2018 being highest number reported. A few pairs breed each year.

**Crossness Southern Marsh** has fewer birds with eight in April 2010 and September 2011 best counts.

A few encountered along the length of the **River Thames Foreshore** from **Crayford** to **Thamesmead**.

Twenty seven 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 was the highest count for **Southmere Lake** where four or five is more usual.

Breeds and present all year round at **Danson Park** (18 pairs in 2007) where numbers increase during winter and post breeding season. Highest count was 96 in February 1997 and 70 December 1997. All 30+ counts have been between December and early March with exception of the 28 adults five young reported 26<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

Like **Danson Park, Foots Cray Meadows’** numbers increase in winter with peak count of 35 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1978 and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017. All 20 plus counts occur between mid-November and early March. One or two pairs breed often producing multiple broods with young often predated by large fish. Small numbers seen **Hall Place Gardens** all year round, more recently feeding around the bird hide/feeders. Have successfully bred.

Records back to the mid-1980s for **Lamorbey Park** and **Sidcup Golf Course** show two or three pairs successfully breeding with two broods in the park in 2016. Highest count was of 34 on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015 otherwise winter counts rarely exceed ten.

Other borough sites where Moorhen has been recorded include **Parish Wood Park, Thamesmead Ecological Study area, Thamesmead Golf Course** (15 individuals July 2014) and **Upper College Farm**.

### Coot

*Fulica atra*

Locally common breeding resident and winter visitor.

Ruegg: “occasionally seen”

Smith 1873: **Erith Marshes**, “no lack of coots in bad winters”

Burton 2016: “19th century: only a winter visitor to the **Thames Marshes** from Plumstead to Gravesend”

Commonly found and regularly breeds on all open stretches of water and riverside habitats in the borough with numbers being significantly increased in the winter months.

Surprisingly few reports of birds at **Crayford Marshes**, nine being highest count in November 2017, most records from the Howbury Moat/meadows area with juveniles reported each year, occasional reports from the **Thames Foreshore**.

The area described as **Thamesmead** in early London Bird reports provides interesting comparisons with today's figures: 252 January 1988, 185 November 1989, winter of 1991 had highest count of 325 January, 259 February and 181 March. In 1991 33 pairs bred, exact location not recorded. 20+ pairs bred in 1989. **Crossness** with its criss-cross of ditches, dykes and open pools provides far greater numbers though still far fewer than some inland sites. February 1995 saw the highest count of 46, otherwise 37 on the lagoon field in March 2018 is the only 30+ count. Two or three pairs breed each year. A few, usually no more than ten, can be found on the **Foreshore** often by the outfall. The highest count for the **Crossness Southern Marsh** of ten in April 2010 with one pair breeding. One or two can be found anywhere along the **River Thames Foreshore** from **Crayford** and **Thamesmead**, mostly in winter, not common. **Southmere Lake** has been an important winter site for Coot with 358 being recorded on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017. There have been six other 300+ counts since 2015. Counts of 100-300 in winter months from 2014 were not unusual with 232 24<sup>th</sup> August 2017 and 150 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 being unusually high summer counts. **Thames Road Wetland** one or two, **Thamesmead Ecology Study Area** seven January 2016 and **Thamesmead Golf Course** 15 numerous dates July 2014 are other sites close to the **River Thames** where birds are reported. Inland: **Danson Park** high numbers in winter with over 200 being reported on a number of occasions since 1999, 260 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2002 the highest ever count. The population clearly increases during the winter but a successful breeding season (three or four pairs regularly breed) can also swell the population – numbers varying between 120-180 August onwards includes many first and second brood juveniles. Regular records began in 1978 and until 1996 it was rare to record more than 30 birds even in winter, from then on it was rare to ever record less than 30 with over 200 not unusual between November – February. The highest count for **Foots Cray Meadows** by comparison - 66 19<sup>th</sup> January 1982 and 75 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012 with numbers rarely exceeding 30. Again, the high numbers are either mid-winter or post breeding – up to six pairs regularly breed, sometimes three or four broods with most juveniles predated by fish. Unlike Moorhen, Coots don't inhabit the **Rivers Shuttle** or **Cray** in significant numbers, if at all in some of the locations. E.g. **Hall Place** where the River Cray runs through has shown only one single record of one bird on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2004. Possibly it is under recorded. Earliest records from **Lamorbey Park** are of breeding pairs in 1984, the same year a pair were found on the adjacent **Sidcup Golf Course**. The highest counts are of 12 birds, all pre-dating 2012, two or three pairs regularly breed at both sites with young birds often seen on the golf course.

### Eurasian (Common) Crane

*Grus grus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Ruegg: for **Thamesmead** up to 1900 “this swampy territory must have been, some half-century since, the chosen abode of the crane”. Palin's statement 1872, quoted by Self (2014) that Cranes were once common around Aveley, opposite Crayford and Dartford Marshes on the Essex side of the river, prior to the area being drained, supports Ruegg's opinion (Burton 2016).

1990 LBR reported at least one was heard flying over **Crayford** at 2000 hours on 6<sup>th</sup> April, this being only the 6<sup>th</sup> record for London.

Two reported over Morrison's supermarket **Sidcup** 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010, seen 35 minutes later over East India Dock Basin.

### Oystercatcher

*Haematopus ostralegus*

Rare localised breeder, rare winter visitor – mostly passage migrant.

With the exception of two records of a bird seen/heard flying over **Bexley** 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1953 and **Sidcup** on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2012 all other records are from the **River Thames** between **Crayfordness** and **Thamesmead**, where they are usually present in single figures any month of the year.

Twenty on the **Crayford Marshes Foreshore** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and ten in March 2013 are only double figure counts from this site, with a pair together in March 2016 the only possible evidence of breeding at this site – no confirmation of success.

Two flocks totalling 22 birds flying west up river past **Crossness** on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1969 is possibly largest count with 20 also a high count at **Crossness** in January 2009 and April 2012. Almost all the double figure counts have come in February and March, up to 2013 counts of 10 to 17 weren't so unusual but 11 on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015 is only double figure count since 2013 for this site. One or two birds are occasionally seen on the nature reserve, West Paddock being the favoured location. Up to three were on the **Crossness Southern Marsh** in April 2010. With the rare exception, and not since 2015, are birds reported between October and January.

Despite regular summer sightings during the 1970s the first confirmed breeding at **Crossness** was of a pair with two eggs in 1984 (no young seen so success unknown). Further unconfirmed successful attempts were witnessed in 1985, 1990 and 1996. Thames Water workers have reported breeding on a barge on the **River Thames**. Birds were seen displaying at **Crossness** in April 2007, a pair raised at least two young in 2008 but next confirmed breeding was not until June 2010 with a pair on nest and one chick subsequently seen through July and August. An adult with five young in May 2014 (only one chick in June), a pair in 2017 and two pairs with young seen in July 2020. A pair were seen displaying at **Belvedere** in 2012.

No inland records.

### Avocet

*Recurvirostra avosetta*

Scare winter visitor, passage migrant.

Nationally, a common bird in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century becoming extremely rare by mid-century.

Ruegg: states “undoubtedly an inhabitant of these marshes until it became extinct in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century” Recolonization of the Suffolk coast began in the late 1940s and by the 1980s an expansion had begun with occasional sightings in the London area. By the mid-90s a large wintering flock was on the **River Thames** but outside the LNHS boundary. In 1995, three birds were seen on nearby Dartford Marsh.

First **Bexley** report was of a flock of eight at **Crossness** on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1987, next were of two commuting between **Crayford Foreshore** and Essex on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1992 then one or two recorded commuting between **Dartford** and **Crayford Foreshore** in the winter of 1996/7

Next **Bexley** record was of three birds on the **Thames Foreshore** off **Crayford/River Darent** in November 2000. The majority of the records for this species have originated from this site although the next report was of a single bird at **Crossness** on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2004. Four birds occurred here on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2006 with two moving between the **Foreshore** and the Wader Scrape. A couple more sightings of one and two birds in April 2007 and 2009 remained isolated records until 2010 when between up to six birds were regularly reported from **Crayford Marshes** (mostly) and **Crossness** between 21<sup>st</sup> June and late December. In 2011, 11 birds 20<sup>th</sup> February and 14 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> August at **Crayford Marshes** were high counts. Thereafter annual reports of mostly single figure counts from both sites with the highest counts being 28 on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and 36 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at **Crayford Marshes** (where all four 20+ counts come from). Fifteen at **Crossness** in December 2017 was the highest count for this site and **Erith** Pier has also produced some good sightings with 13 on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019 being the best.

Birds have been reported from the **Foreshore** at **Corinthian Manorway** and off former **Thamesmead Golf Centre**. They have been recorded in every month of the year. A rare breeder in London there have been no reported breeding records in **Bexley** nor have there been any inland records.

### Collared Pratincole

*Glareola pratincola*

Very rare vagrant.

Ruegg: “A friend of mine, an old sportsman, once saw a pair of the Collared Pratincole flying over the marshes; but he had not his gun with him, or the birds would have fallen a comparatively easy prey, as they were within gunshot. Being himself a collector, I have no doubt of the identity of the birds.” Self (2014) reports “Unfortunately no further details were given so the record cannot be accepted”

### Stone Curlew

*Burhinus oedicnemus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Just one record of a single at **Crossness** on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010 – found early morning and watched for a couple of hours before it flew south at 0930 not to be seen again.

### Little Ringed Plover

*Charadrius dubius*

Rare breeding summer visitor.

No known breeding records in the London area until 1944 when one pair bred. By the early 1960s 37 pairs were reported, by 1973 72 pairs were recorded with 39 confirmed breeding.

In the early 1970s a post breeding flock had become a feature at Rainham Marshes with a peak of 17 in 1972 rising to 75 in 1979 and highest ever London count of 92 in July 1980. There is no longer such a flock there. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century London breeding totals vary between 15-55.

In **Bexley**, first (and only) inland record was of a single bird at **Upper College Farm** in May 1972.

Pairs were seen displaying near the **Crayford Landfill** site in the 1980s but no successful breeding confirmed. A pair with well fledged young seen at the old **Belvedere Power Station** site in August 1994 were the first recorded successful breeding. Wheatley states in his report up to 1990 for **Thamesmead** “at least one pair has bred in most, if not all years, since 1968”. Pairs were recorded in April/May at **Crossness** until 1997 with no further reports until 2003. From 2006 one or two birds have been present every year with varying breeding successes (juveniles reported in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2016). The West Paddock being the most productive area though pairs were successful in the East Paddock/Cory Fields North and South. The latter site lost to proposed development in 2018.

**Crayford Creek/River Cray/Darent River** highest count of birds is eight April 4th/5th 2011 but mostly singles and occasionally pairs (some successful breeding) have regularly been reported from the flooded meadows alongside the A206 Bob Dunn/University Way – this area falls just outside the recording area, being in Dartford.

In 2012 and 2014 adults with juveniles were reported in the **Thamesmead Golf Course** area.

Earliest arrival dates for **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness** 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and latest dates 28<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2011 respectively.

### Ringed Plover

*Charadrius hiaticula*

Localised rare breeding resident, winter visitor and passage migrant.

The peak London count for this species was 250 at Rainham Marshes in 2008. On the **Bexley** side of the river there are rarely above 30 with the highest ever count at **Crayford Marshes** of 60 in September 1994. Counts of 58 and 48 at **Thamesmead** in September 1998 and January 1995 respectively were the highest counts away from **Crayford** with 30 at **Crossness** in June 2012 being best count for this site.

All 20+ 20<sup>th</sup> Century **Crayford Marshes** counts have occurred between August and February with 2010 providing the peak counts of 38 and 27 respectively. Very few records May to July.

There have been no inland records

The **Thames Foreshore** between **Erith** and **Crossness** can be very productive any month of the year with the stretch between Church Manorway and Mulberry Way **Belvedere** being much favoured with double figure counts not unusual. Twelve in October 2020 being the upper count for that year.

As with Little Ringed Plover, reports of Ringed Plover from **Crayford Marshes** might refer to the pools between the **Rivers Darent and Cray** in Dartford unless specifically stated **Foreshore**. A pair were reported on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1995 and an adult with chick in 2007.

Breeding: Up to eight pairs bred **Thamesmead** between 1971 and 1978 with one or two pairs continuing to breed during the 1980s, two pairs bred and raised young on **Erith Marshes** in 1978. Breeding records were reported from **Crossness** from 1974 with nests located in 1978. A pair were present, reacting aggressively to Little Ringed Plovers at **Belvedere Power Station** site in 1994. Two pairs were still at this site 2001.

In recent years breeding has been intermittent, one possibly two pairs have bred **Crossness** 2007, 2013-2017 (nine juveniles in 2014 and seven in 2017).

### **Dotterel**

*Charadrius marinellus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Only one record of a bird flying over York Avenue **Sidcup** on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### **Golden Plover**

*Pluvialis apricaria*

Uncommon winter visitor, occasional passage migrant.

Mostly associated with the **Foreshore** at **Crayford Marshes** between November and January, where in November 2013 numbers have reached 250+. Outside these months only exceptional high counts were also in 2013 - 110 in February, 158 in March. Amongst the handful of single figure records for August and September, 140 in August 2011 was most unusual. Three dates in January 2016 were amongst the last 100+ counts, 105, 109 and 150, with 128 December 21<sup>st</sup> 2017 the last. The high number counts often occurred around 1.5 hours after high tide.

By contrast there have been relatively few records from **Crossness** including a single in January 1997, three in the Paddocks on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1999, 11 flew north east with two by the Outfall on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012 and a peak of 20 flying west in January 2017. One record of four on the **River Thames** at **Belvedere** October 2009 and one flew over **Thamesmead Golf Course** in November 2011.

Inland: records of flocks flying over with 22 over **Bexley** on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1947, 274 over **Foots Cray Meadows** on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1963, eight over **Danson Park** 27<sup>th</sup> December 1964, 19 south west over **Hall Place Gardens** 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2005 and three and four flying over **Sidcup** in February 2012 and March 2018 respectively.

### **Grey Plover**

*Pluvialis squatarola*

Scarce winter visitor and passage migrant.

Apart from 19 over **Hall Place** 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1997 and one fly over record from **Sidcup** on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2016 the majority of records are from the **Thames Foreshore**. Unlike Golden Plover, Grey Plover can as easily be seen on passage as in winter with June-August being least likely. The highest count was of 23+ at **Crossness** on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 and a group of up to 20 lingered along the **Crayford Marshes Foreshore** during December 2010, up to 20 also reported from this site during early May 2012. On May 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> 2017 up to nine reported from **Crossness** and on the 7<sup>th</sup>, ten at **Crayford Marshes Foreshore**. Otherwise, Spring passage birds tend to be in ones or twos, eight on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011 only other high count.

One 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010 **Crayford Marshes** was an unusual summer record. There have been occasional Autumn passage birds, 12 in September 2010 at **Crayford Marshes**, otherwise all other August-September records have been of one or two birds. There have been no double figure counts since 2013. The few winter birds are most commonly reported in December and January

Whilst the majority of **Crossness** records relate to the **Foreshore**, up to five birds were on the West Paddock between 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

Away from these two sites, the **Foreshore** off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** area has hosted up to ten birds (September 1990) and eight in January 2011. One or two birds at Erith Reach in January 1996 and 1997.

### **Sociable Plover**

*Vanellus gregarious*

Extremely rare vagrant.

Only two records for whole of London, both in the **Lower River Thames**.

**Bexley** record of one bird mixing with a group of c100 Lapwing and commuting intermittently between **Crayford** and Dartford Marshes March 8<sup>th</sup> – April 13<sup>th</sup> 1985 by which time it had attained full breeding plumage. The second bird was at Rainham Marshes between 4<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 – it was also seen to make one brief visit to Dartford Marshes, but no record of it dropping down to **Crayford Marshes**.

## Lapwing

*Vanellus vanellus*

Common winter visitor, passage migrant, rare breeder.

Reported all year round though winter is when highest numbers are recorded. Seen along the length of the **Thames Foreshore** from **Crayfordness** to **Thamesmead**, highest numbers **Crossness** and **Crayford**. More often seen in the **Erith-Belvedere** area between October-February but rarely more than ten.

Lapwing is one of the earliest of autumn passage waders with numbers beginning to build up from July. At **Crossness**, seen all year round with the largest flock, c1000, seen over the West Paddock on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2012. Along the **Foreshore** 500 January 2013, 470 November 1997 and 400 January 2014 are the next highest counts. The majority of 250+ counts here are December to February. Probably the best place to look for Lapwing away from the **Foreshore** is on the Lagoon field where a few birds are often seen feeding - 65 in December 2008 was exceptionally high. On **Crossness Southern Marsh** small numbers occasionally drop in to the wader scrape with 50 on three days in January 2007 and c60 on the flooded Little Paddock in February 2021 being the highest counts.

The **Foreshore** off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** host birds from July-February with up to 100 in November 2014 being highest count. Six birds were also recorded on the Golf Course in July 2014.

At **Crayford Marshes** July figures include, 133 in 1996, 40 in 2010 and 2016, 38 in 2015. December and January remain the peak months with 1000+ recorded on six dates between 2011-2016 including 1700 on Christmas day 2012 and 1200 in November 2011. With the exception of 850 in February 2014 and 300 November 2010 all 250+ have occurred in December and January. Smaller, usually single figure numbers are found on the Landfill and Howbury Farm meadows.

Lapwing can be seen in large numbers away from the **River Thames**, winter cold weather movements have produced some extraordinary counts; 1,150 over **Foots Cray Meadows** 10<sup>th</sup> January 1987 and 800+ on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1963, 180 over **Joyden's Wood** 16<sup>th</sup> January 1983, and 100+ **Lamorbey Park** 12<sup>th</sup> February 2013. February 2021 saw a few flocks of 200-450 passing over during an exceptionally cold spell.

Most of the inland records have been of small flocks flying over. Only three records from **Danson Park**, four, 29 and 38, all February 2018. Twenty five records from **Foots Cray Meadows** between November-February were all fly-overs. It is clearly worth keeping eyes skywards as similar flocks over the years have been seen over **Lamorbey Park**, **Joyden's Wood**, various gardens, Perry Street Farm and Sidcup Place.

Breeding: A wader that has seen a dramatic national breeding decline although in the London recording area the numbers have increased in the past 20 years, between 2005-2010 about 65-150 pairs bred. Historically probably bred near the **Thames marshes** and local farmland. Ruegg: states "a few dozen couples breed in our swamps". Wheatley states "with the development of Thamesmead New Town it is declining as a breeding bird with 15 pairs in 1975, eight in 1984, four in 1989 and only two in 1990". Pairs were seen displaying at **Crayford Marshes** in May 2011 and two juveniles seen there in June 2013. At **Crossness** pairs have been seen displaying in May since 2007, a pair with eggs (later failed) in 2011 was the first confirmation of breeding with no further confirmation of breeding success until one pair bred in 2019, two pairs in 2020.

## Knot

*Calidris canutus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

An irregular visitor and invariably in single figure counts – highest counts, both from **Thamesmead** of eight "down river" 24<sup>th</sup> November 1976 and four 7<sup>th</sup> January 1995 and four **Crayford Marshes** October 2012 (where one remained off and on until 15<sup>th</sup> November). Often seen with Dunlin flocks, between one and three were present **Crayford Marshes** from end of August 2010 until 22<sup>nd</sup> September. Of the remaining 17 records for this site most are of between one and three birds in any month except April, July and December. Fewer reports from **Crossness** (nine), one was reported between here and off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** between 31<sup>st</sup> August–12<sup>th</sup> September 2008. Two in September 2009 and March 2018 are only multiple counts. Singles seen in March 2018, May 2009, 2010, 2016 and 2019, July and September 2020, a juvenile August 2008, September 2009 and 2020 are only other months recorded here. One reported flying over **Sidcup** early hours of 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

### Sanderling

*Calidris alba*

Scarce passage migrant.

Reported in any month except February and September and mostly single figure counts although occasionally seen in small flocks. May through September are more favoured than for many passage waders. Highest counts have been 14 **Crossness** 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2012, 12 **Thamesmead** January 1983 and ten **Crayford Marshes** May 2012.

**Crayford Marshes** – between one and five were around for a week in August 2010 and again May 2011. Otherwise never more than two. With exception of a single in September 2016 and June 2020 and two in July 2019 no other reports since 2013.

More records and more small flocks from **Crossness** where the **Foreshore** off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** is favoured. Up to nine present May/June 2008, eight June and two August 2009, and up to seven May 2010 and May 2011, otherwise mostly reports of single birds 8<sup>th</sup> August 1970, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1972, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1989 and 22<sup>nd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> January 1996. No reports since 2013.

### Little Stint

*Calidris minuta*

Rare passage migrant.

Records generally occur in May and again in September/October. The largest flocks were on the **Foreshore** at **Crayford Marshes** with eight birds on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1990 and eight on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1991, four **Crossness** 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1995, four on 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> October 1998 Erith Reach..

Unusually early records were 6<sup>th</sup> March 1971 **Crayford Marshes** and two **Crossness** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1973. Three were seen off **Erith Pier** 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1996. There was a single at **Thamesmead/Crossness** on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1975 and a juvenile on **Foreshore** at **Crossness** 17<sup>th</sup> September 2000. All five 21<sup>st</sup> century records were of one or two from **Crayford Marshes**, juvenile 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012, 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October 2013 and 28<sup>th</sup> September and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

### Temminck's Stint

*Calidris temminckii*

Very rare passage migrant.

Two on the **Thamesmead drainage lake (Southmere Lake** under construction) on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1971 being first record for this area of London. A single on the **Crossness Nature Reserve** West Paddock on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2003 and another single bird seen on 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> May 2004 from **Crossness/Belvedere** shoreline.

### Curlew Sandpiper

*Calidris ferruginea*

Rare passage migrant.

Majority of records occurred between April and November with most in May and September/October.

Seven records from **Crossness** all others were from **Crayford Marshes**.

Four **Thamesmead** 1<sup>st</sup> September 1970, with, in 1975, the earliest autumn report of a single bird on 27<sup>th</sup> August, another on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1997. Two on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1999 and five juveniles at **Crossness** on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010 and three **Crayford Marshes** September 2011 are the only multiple counts.

At **Crossness** there were singles on 14<sup>th</sup> May and 17<sup>th</sup> July 2000, 30<sup>th</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

A number of records from **Crayford Marshes** in 2011, singles, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, from 2<sup>nd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> September. Three on 21<sup>st</sup> followed by one 24<sup>th</sup> September-6<sup>th</sup> October. Other singles 5<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 2013, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2014, 19<sup>th</sup> September and 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

A summer plumage bird at **Crossness** on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011 might have been same bird seen at **Crayford Marshes** on 4<sup>th</sup> May.

## Dunlin

## *Calidris alpina*

Common passage migrant and winter visitor.

The highest ever London winter count for Dunlin was 22,000 at West Thurrock in February 1992 putting the maximum count of approximate 3,000 at **Crossness** in January 1971 into perspective. Around 2,000 were recorded at same site in December 2018 and from **Crayford Marshes** in December 2010, all other 1,100 plus counts occurred before 2013. Between 500- 1,000 have been recorded most years since at both **Crayford Marshes, Belvedere** and **Crossness** with all 100+ counts being reported between October-March (see table below). **Erith Reach** was reported as separate site up to late 1990's with 775 on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1996 and 500 March 1995 being highest counts. Smith (1873) states "**Erith Marshes** – our commonest wader". Peak counts for prime sites (**Belvedere** being between Corinthian Manorway and Crabtree Manorway):

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Crossness</b>	<b>3000/ 1800</b>	<b>1500/ 600</b>	<b>750/ 500</b>	<b>120/ 55</b>	<b>2000/ 1000</b>	<b>2000/ 2000</b>
Years	1971/ 2012	1971/ 2018	2015/ 2018	1975/ 2014	1975/ 2016	1975/ 2018
<b>Belvedere</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>350</b>
Year	2018	2018	2015	2016	2017	2016
<b>Thamesmead Golf Centre</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>700</b>
Years	2011/ 13/ 2014/ 15	2011/ 2013	2013/ 2014	2014	2011	2015/ 2011
<b>Crayford</b>	<b>550/ 1100</b>	<b>1100/ 500</b>	<b>100/ 600</b>	<b>204/ 300</b>	<b>1500/ 650</b>	<b>2000/ 1400</b>
Years	1989/ 2014	2013/ 2020	1995/ 2018	2012/ 2018	2010/ 2018	2010/ 2013

Peak summer counts for each site:

**Crossness Foreshore:** 40 April 2013, 11 May 2010, 13 September 2010.

**Belvedere Foreshore:** 3 June 2017, 4 September 2016

**Thamesmead Golf Centre Foreshore:** 3 May 2015 and 3 September 2016

**Crayford Marshes Foreshore:** 34 April 2015, 21 July 2015 and 40 September 2010

Inland records: one **Foots Cray Meadows** 14<sup>th</sup> December 1991 and one flew over Sidcup 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016.

## Ruff

## *Philomachus pugnax*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

The earliest ever London record was of one shot in the adjoining borough of Greenwich on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1785. Davis (1904) states **Crayford, Dartford and Stone Marshes**; "I have had several specimens pass through my hands, which had been shot in our district, but in most cases they were hen birds".

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, recorded mostly at the London reservoirs, Self (2014) noted that "by the mid-1960s they had ceased wintering on the **Lower Thames Marshes**...." and by 1973 the **Kent Thames marshes** wintering flock had "moved back to the London area at Dartford, typically 50-75 birds were seen but the peak count was 130 between Dartford and Swanscombe in 1971".

However, the largest single flock was of 120 on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1970 on **Erith** and Dartford Marshes.

The mid-1980s seem to have been the halcyon days for **Bexley** with a high count of 30-33 at **Thamesmead** during October, November, December 1985. There were 24 at same location in January 1985 declining to 17 by April. Twelve at **Crossness Sewage works** in January 1990 was the first site specific record for a high count and by the middle of this decade wintering numbers had decreased along the **Thames marshes** alongside a reduction in numbers of passage birds.

This is reflected in an absence of any records between 1992 and 2008 (exception being one bird during January 2003). Birds have been recorded every year since 2008 except 2016 and every month except May, June and July.

**Crayford Marshes:** 2010 saw a rare August record of two on the 7<sup>th</sup>, otherwise singles in January, August, September were only other records. In 2011 one bird was present on eight dates between 1<sup>st</sup> January-14<sup>th</sup> March and on 27<sup>th</sup> September. In February and March 2012 three birds were present and in April between seven and nine birds between 4<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. A bird was present during much of January – March 2013 having been reported on at least five dates (up to four birds at Rainham during the same period). Similarly, later in the year a bird was reported on numerous dates during December – possibly the same bird moving around? Perhaps the same bird was the long staying bird from January to 16<sup>th</sup> March 2014 with three on the 15<sup>th</sup> and two on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015. Five were recorded on 12<sup>th</sup>, two on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the most recent high count. There have been no inland records.

### Jack Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

Scarce, elusive winter visitor.

Whilst not limited exclusively to the **Thames marshes**, most records are reported from those areas and usually just one or two birds in December and January although birds have been seen from October to April. Largest ever count was of 12 at **Thamesmead** on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1994 with seven on 1<sup>st</sup> February. This area held two to four birds throughout January-February in most 1990s winters.

At **Crossness** the sewage works (27 on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1986) were a favoured location in the 1980s/90s, Wheatley notes “wintered regularly at **Halfway Reach Bay/Crossness** since 1983/4 when six were present in March and 17 in April”. Other peak counts for that time were 24 1984/85, 30 1985/86, 12 1989/90 and five 1990/91.

In most recent years the **Crossness Foreshore** (up to eight in April 2012 – possibly same birds from **Crayford**?) and occasionally the West Paddock (four dates 2003-2017) have hosted one or two birds. In 2010 singles reported on 2<sup>nd</sup> January and 3<sup>rd</sup> October with three 4<sup>th</sup>- 26<sup>th</sup> December being a good multiple count. In 2011, singles on 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> February and 30<sup>th</sup> April. In 2012 singles on three dates in January and February and eight birds for two days in April. A single bird reported end of January/early February 2013 (same period as the Crayford/Rainham birds), four on 10<sup>th</sup> September was a rare multiple record, then singles on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October. Singles on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2018. Records of passage birds at **Thamesmead** include singles on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1988, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1989, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1989 and seven on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1989.

Single birds have also been recorded off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on six occasions between 2011-2018.

**Crayford Marshes** has produced only six records between 1983-2015, each of a single bird. One or two are found on the **Crossness nature reserve** most winters with three in January 1997 and 2010 being highest counts. The West Paddock and Wader scrape are favoured areas, two in front of the hide in October 2020 being the best recent sighting. Birds are occasionally found on the **Foreshore**.

Upto four were present **Thamesmead/Crossness** between 2<sup>nd</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March 1995

**Inland: Foots Cray Meadows** has the highest success rate, albeit usually in harsh, cold weather conditions. Four were seen in severe weather on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1997 (when common snipe and woodcock were also present), ten other records between 1988-2010 were of single birds seen in December-February with January being the most likely. A single bird on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 is the latest record. Other inland records include a long staying bird in **Beverley Wood** 15<sup>th</sup> January-19<sup>th</sup> February 1985, one in **Parish Wood Park** January 1997 and along the **River Shuttle Bexley** and **Blackfen** December 2010 and 1996 respectively.

### Common Snipe

*Lymnocyptes minimus*

Uncommon though often elusive winter visitor and former breeder.

Ruegg: states “common, especially in winter, when flocks of up to a hundred occurred”. Ruegg: vividly described an occasion in the early part of November 1844 when he strolled down one of the manor-ways on these marshes and came upon a flooded field whose surface had become a succession of pools and bogs –

where snipe “thronged every pool and swamp. From this time till January they abounded in the marshes, filling every swamp, and rill and quagmire”.

In the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century it was not uncommon for winter flocks in/around London to be counted in 100s i.e. 400 regularly at Beddington – c600 in January 1954. Sadly, such numbers were not reported in **Bexley**. The increase and high numbers were attributed to the development of sewage farms so perhaps one of only two 100+ records that came from **Thamesmead** in 1971 might have been at **Crossness**, the other 100+ count was reported from **Crayford Marshes** on three dates in November/December 1974. All the 50+ counts came from **Crossness/Crayford** between 1971-1997 (64 on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1997 the last), the highest 21<sup>st</sup> century count was of 40 on the **Crossness Southern Marsh** on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and 30 in the **Crossness West Paddock**, December 2005, February 2010 and 2012. **Crossness** consistently reports more and relatively higher numbers than **Crayford Marshes**, though this might be attributed to better access to the suitable sites. Twelve at **Crayford Marshes** on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016 was last double figure count for this site and only one since 14 in January 1995.

At Crossness reported in every month except June-July-August with only two May sightings of four and one bird in 2005 and 2012. Up to five birds present on the reserve or **Foreshore** during winter months.

In recent years **Thames Road Wetland** has been a reliable winter site with at least one bird being reported every winter since 2012 with six on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018 being highest count.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** is best site to look, especially in harsh weather conditions, 32 were found on 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> February 1991, 12 on 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> January 1997 and eight on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018. During the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this site would always produce at least one record in the December-February period, since then only two other years, two in February 2012, one in January 2017, have birds been recorded, perhaps a combination of milder winters or increased use of the meadows resulting in disturbance.

The **River Shuttle** is always worthy of investigation, three being reported from the Wyncham Stream **Sidcup** March 2018 and ten in the area of BETHS school Bexley in February 1991 where a few records have occurred. One was on the river in **Bexley Park Woods** during January 1997 and two visited in December 2011, again, disturbance would have a negative impact on the secluded area of river.

**Beverley Woods** had birds present between 5<sup>th</sup> January (six on 19<sup>th</sup> being peak) and 16<sup>th</sup> February 1985. During the 1990s a few records from **Joyden's Wood** (in wet fields adjacent to Gatton's Plantation).

Breeding – in line with national trends breeding snipe numbers have declined drastically. In London by 1955 only five pairs were reported breeding, mostly from reservoirs and sewage farms. After the big freeze in 1963 no reports of breeding in London. A very slow recovery took place in the 1960s but still only one or two pairs were reported, mostly from the **Lower River Thames**. Historically Snipe would have bred on the **Thames marshes** but the only reported records since the 1970s are of two pairs with young on **Crayford/Erith Marshes** 1972 and 1973 and **Crossness Sewage works** 1974. Other than some displaying behaviour in March 1983 – no reports since. There have been no breeding records for the whole of the London area in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Woodcock

*Scolopax rusticola*

Scarce winter visitor.

With fewer than 80 Bexley records in total and the only records of three birds together being those on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1976 and March 1984 at **Thamesmead**, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at **Foots Cray Meadows** (reporter noted probably four birds) and then four days later at **Crossness nature reserve** and **Thamesmead Golf Course**, this is an elusive if under reported species. Apart from two birds at **Joyden's Wood**, **Thamesmead** and **Crayford Marshes**, 1989, 1997 and 2015 respectively all other reports are of single birds being seen. With one or two exceptions the vast majority of records are in December-February and equally spread across the Borough from **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness** in the north to **Joyden's Wood** and **Foots Cray Meadows** in the south.

At **Crayford Marshes** singles have been recorded on seven occasions between 2010 and 2019, two on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and an unusually early autumn bird flying west on the evening of 28<sup>th</sup> August.

**Crossness** has produced 18 reports between 2005-2017, mostly from the Protected Area and at least one from the **Crossness Southern Marsh** (5<sup>th</sup> January 2009). In the mid 1990s there were annual January/February reports from **Thamesmead** – probably **Crossness**.

Inland: **Foots Cray Meadows** has seen single birds from the 1980s through to 2010, all in January or February but none reported since.

**Joyden's Wood** is the only site where breeding has been recorded historically but in more recent years, records show it is now only a winter visitor having been recorded on odd occasions between November and February between 1951 and 1989. Between 1986-88 birds were reported regularly wintering in the Coldblow/Tile Kiln Lane area.

Only record for **Lesnes Abbey Woods** was of one on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1969 – London Bird Report noted “a first record for this site”. Other woodland records are of singles in **Bexley Park Woods** in February 1991, **Braeburn Park** January 2015 and **Churchfield Wood** February 1954, **Upper College Farm** area March 2018 and another 1<sup>st</sup> January and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Possibly the most accident prone of all birds reported: one found in a feeble condition in **Bexleyheath** in January 1979, subsequently released at Northward Hill RSPB reserve, one brought to the author in July 1982 severely injured having been mauled by a cat or fox (it subsequently died), one killed flying into a **Crayford** house window December 1998 and one brought down by a gale into St. Paulinus Churchyard October 2000. Other garden records are from Farraday Road **Sidcup** January 1997, Pembury Crescent **Albany Park** January 1988, Penhill January 1985 and a fly over York Avenue **Sidcup** January 2013.

### Black-tailed Godwit

*Limosa limosa*

Passage migrant and winter visitor.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century an uncommon visitor to the London area with very few being recorded on the **Thames Foreshore** with just one or two recorded in 1955 **Slade Green Marshes**, 1969 **Belvedere**, 1971 and 1974 **Crossness** Sewage works, 1982 and 1990 **Crayford Marshes**.

This species doesn't feature at all in John Burton's LNHS paper “Birds of the Kentish Inner **Thames Marshes** to 1990”. Wright and Morris state “A scarce visitor to the area – just 13 records of 19 birds seen in seven years since 1950”

1997 a flock of 26 at West Thurrock on 21<sup>st</sup> December seemed to herald the start of wintering flocks on the **Lower Thames Marshes**. A single bird at **Crossness** on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1998 was worthy of note then. The first significant flock in **Bexley** was of 20 at **Crossness** on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2002 although a group of four were seen here in August 2000 presumably early autumn passage. LBR 2009 first reported increasing numbers with a table including peaks for **Crossness** of 135 in January and 228 November.

Contrast the history of this species with high numbers in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a peak of 600 birds were present between **Erith** and **Crossness** 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018. There have been over 50 records of 300 plus birds, these have occurred between end of October and January with the **Foreshore** between **Erith Pier** and **Corinthian Manorway** being most likely areas to encounter such flocks. Numbers noticeably build up during October and begin to decline in February/March when most 200+ counts occur. There can be up to 200 birds outside this period but usually double figure counts are the norm in September and April. Outside these months some examples of peak passage counts include:

	May	June	July	August
<b>Crossness</b>	90 7 <sup>th</sup> 2017* 2 – 16 <sup>th</sup> 2014	11 – 30 <sup>th</sup> 2010	30 – 10 <sup>th</sup> 2010	50 16 <sup>th</sup> 2017* 18 – 13 <sup>th</sup> 2009
<b>Crayford Marshes</b>	No records	7 – 29 <sup>th</sup> 2010	34 – 13 <sup>th</sup> 2010	21 17 <sup>th</sup> 2010
	*exceptional			*exceptional

The entire length of the **Thames Foreshore** is worthy of investigation for this species. **Crayford Marshes** tends to have relatively smaller flocks but areas around **Belvedere** (Mulberry Manorway, Corinthian Manorway, Church Manorway and Crabtree Manorway) can produce very good counts in winter, 479 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 being a good example.

The vast majority of **Crossness** records are of feeding flocks on the **Thames Foreshore** however the West Paddock has produced around 20 records, mostly in early spring or autumn with 13 April 2018 and 46 in October 2018 being highest counts. There have been two records from the **Crossness Southern Marsh**, three birds in August 2010 and a single in November 2016.

Only inland records are of a quite bizarre sighting of seven alighting briefly before taking off again at **Danson Park** on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1989 and 12 flying over York Avenue **Sidcup** 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

### Bar-tailed Godwit

*Limosa lapponica*

Uncommon passage migrant, rare winter visitor.

Far fewer records than for Black-tailed Godwit and very much a spring and autumn passage migrant with the majority of counts in single figures. There were only seven records between 1973-2000.

Exceptional years across London were 2007 and 2011 with this being reflected at both **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes** with relative high counts at **Crossness** of 34 on 28<sup>th</sup> and 44 on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and 26 and 24 on 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> April 2011. In April 2011 at **Crayford Marshes** there were high counts of 16 on 28<sup>th</sup> and 31 on 29<sup>th</sup>.

The highest ever count however was of 56 birds feeding on **Crayford Marshes Foreshore** on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012. Twenty on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at **Crossness** the next high spring count.

Highest autumn count was of 14 flying east at **Crossness** on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2014 with next high count only six at **Crossness** on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Very few winter records, a single bird **Crossness** 27<sup>th</sup> January 1991 and another here 10<sup>th</sup> November 2007 and two January 2010. One bird stayed around **Crayford Marshes** for the whole of December 2010 and another was seen between **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness** for the first ten days of February 2012, another wandered between these sites 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Up to three were at **Crayford Marshes** January/February 2013 with one at **Crossness** in February 2013.

Away from **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness**, Corinthian Manorway **Erith** and off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** are favoured locations in the autumn with up to four birds in a number of years.

Inland: of note is another autumn record - a flock of at least 40 flying high over York Avenue **Sidcup** on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016

### Whimbrel

*Numenius phaeopus*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Ruegg: "occasional visits...though their numbers are annually diminishing"

Very much a spring and autumn passage migrant with 32% of records in April, 20% in May, 24% in July and 20% in August. With the exception of one bird heard flying over **Sidcup** on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there are no records for June or October-March. Of the 350 records, 65% are from the **Crayford Marshes Foreshore** with 34% from the **Crossness/Thamesmead** area.

Highest counts are from **Crossness** with 23 seen on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 11 on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and ten on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2016. At Crayford 22 flying along the **River Thames** on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011 is only double figure count though all other five plus counts have been from this location. There have been eight springtime records of one or two birds from **Crossness Nature reserve** (West Paddock/Great Breach field) and one from **Crossness Southern Marsh**.

Inland: records are all of fly over birds, mostly single, **Bexley** August 1993, **Bexley Park Woods** July 2006, three records for **Foots Cray Meadows** (April 1984 and 1985 and July 2007), there were ten south west over **Hall Place** August 1997, and Dartford Ringing Group reported occasional fly overs from **Joyden's Wood** between 1968-1978.

Nocturnal migration reported from York Avenue **Sidcup** on at least four occasions from where the earliest spring record came for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Earliest autumn record is 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007 over **Foots Cray Meadows**. Latest departure records 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1970 **Joyden's Wood** and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 **Crayford Marshes**.

### Curlew

### *Numenius arquata*

Mostly winter visitor and uncommon passage migrant.

Recorded in every month with peaks between mid-November and April. Highest ever passage count for London were the 200 seen over **Barnehurst** in two hours on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1961. Otherwise, highest counts on the **Thames Foreshore** come from **Thamesmead** – 23 flew west 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1969, 30 on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1969, (all other records from here up to 1990 were of single figure birds). There were 26 in both April 2012 and February 2013 at **Crayford Marshes**, all six ten plus counts come from this site with exception of 12 at **Crossness** December 2011 staying through to February 2012 and ten on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2011. As would be expected almost all other records originate from the **Thames Foreshore** anywhere between **Thamesmead, Belvedere, Erith and Crayford Marshes**.

Inland records are few and far between and mostly of fly overs, two over **Foots Cray Meadows** November 1986 and two over **Bexley** June 1989 only multiple records.

A single bird stayed around **Foots Cray Meadows** (where there have been three other records) for the whole of December 1984. Otherwise Dartford Ringing Group reported occasional sightings over **Joyden's Wood** between 1968-1978 and one reported over **Hall Place Gardens** on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1997.

### Common Sandpiper

### *Actitis hypoleucos*

Common passage migrant and uncommon winter visitor.

Now recorded in every month of the year, less so until 21<sup>st</sup> and latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was primarily a spring and autumn passage bird. Over-wintering birds were first noted in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century with up to three at **Thamesmead** during the late 1980s. One or two birds now over-winter every year on the **Thame Foreshore**. The **Thames Marshes** between **Crayfordness** and **Thamesmead** provide the bulk of the records with mid-April/May and late July-September being the peak months for migration. At **Thamesmead** between 1976-1995 late July-September records often reported double figure counts, 14 on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1982 and 22 in August 1995 being the highest. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1990 an unusual high spring count of 11 with seven in April/May 1994 and April 1996 also above average. **Crossness Foreshore** and reserve still report good numbers in autumn, 27 August 2009 and 15 July 2013, ten in May 2012 is the highest spring count for this site. Highest autumn count for **Crossness** is of 15 in early August 2010. Autumn passage can begin as early as mid-June. All the ten plus records from **Crayford Marsh** refer to autumn passage birds with an early high count of 19 on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015 other high counts include 30 in August 2017 and 40+ in August 2020. The superstructure of the **Darent River** flood barrier provides a high tide roosting site for Common Sandpiper (and other waders) where the majority of the high counts were recorded along with the **Darent River** itself being an important site for them. The highest ever London count is of 100 at Rainham Marshes 5<sup>th</sup> August 1982.

Highest winter count is of six on **Crossness Foreshore** 4<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

Inland records are widespread and mostly of single birds –four records from **Bexley Park Woods, Danson Park** has reported 27 sightings, all bar one being Spring passage birds with four on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 and two on a number of dates between 2013-2019. Twelve reports from **Foots Cray Meadows** between 1983-2014, mostly spring records but two autumn and two birds noted on four occasions including two in December 1996. One record from **Hall Place** of a single bird 9<sup>th</sup> February 1985, one from **Lamorbey Park**, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1985 and **Sidcup Golf Course** 1<sup>st</sup> May 2002. Dartford ringing group reported birds flying over **Joyden's Wood** between 1968-1978.

### Green Sandpiper

### *Tringa ochropus*

Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor.

Recorded in each month with highest counts during migration, mostly late March, April and August with winter peaks mostly February. Only a handful of sightings in May/June.

Unlike most waders, where the **Thames Foreshore** has a higher proportion of records, the nearby wet meadows, ponds and small rivers provide the majority of records. On migration some birds will stay around for a few days. The highest ever London Count is 70 at Rainham Marshes July 1979.

At **Crayford Marshes** most of the records are either from Darent River or the Howbury meadows to the west of the Darent. Here, seven on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2015 is the highest count with most multiple counts (three-six) being in the years 2010-2014, since 2015 more than two has been a rare count.

There is only one double figure count for the borough – ten in August 2007 at the **Crossness SPG Lagoon**. **Crossness Nature Reserve** and meadows hold most of the multiple figure counts with seven in August 2008, 2013 and 2015 being the next highest counts to the ten already mentioned. Favoured locations for multiple counts are the West Paddock, Island Field, the Tilfen Pool/Norman Road Fields and the Wader Scrape in the Protected Area. As with **Crayford Marshes** the majority of three plus counts occurred before 2015. **Crossness Southern Marsh** also has a higher proportion of records than for most waders, with three or five throughout much of July and August 2013 being a particularly good year however there has only been one record since 2016, that of three birds on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Five at **Thamesmead** on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1988 was a good count. The ponds on **Thamesmead Golf Course** have produced a few spring and autumn passage records dating between 2014 and 2016.

Inland: there are many sites with suitable habitats, especially the slow running rivers Shuttle and Cray. A single bird was reported from **Hall Place** from 7<sup>th</sup> December 1995-5<sup>th</sup> April 1996, with another turning up in 1997. The only other record was of one on 18th January 2016. There were three birds reported from **Foots Cray Meadows** in January 1985, two seen on various December – February dates between 1987 and 1997. Of the other 75 records for this site, the majority are of single birds with four records between October-April but the vast majority in December-February. Single autumn passage birds were reported 28<sup>th</sup> September 1996, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2001, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019. There have been three records for **Danson Park**, one bird in May 2010 and 2013 and one winter record December 2010.

The **River Shuttle**, anywhere between Holly Oak Wood Park and The Black Prince/Holiday Inn can produce a sighting, the majority of records come from 1985-1997 i.e. a single in Beverley Woods January/February 1985, two near BETHS in December 1996-January 1997. Singles have been seen in Marlborough Park December 2011, Willersley Park November 2016 and January 2017, Wyncham Stream/Shuttle March 2018 and between BETHS and Holiday Inn February and November/December 2020.

### Spotted Redshank

*Tringa erythropus*

Rare passage migrant and winter visitor.

With the exception of one bird that found the **Crayford Marshes Foreshore** to its liking and returned for five winters, there are few other records. At **Crossness** records of a single bird in April 1973 and 1974 and June 1974 with no further records until January 2009, May 2011, January 2012 and September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, all of single birds.

**Crayford Marshes** is the only other site for records, first being December 2010 then 29th April 2011. The history of the bird that returned for five winters (moving between Rainham/Dartford and **Crayford Marshes**) is as follows:

2011/2012 first seen on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2011 and seen regularly until 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

2012/2013 seen next 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012 to 24<sup>th</sup> January, then from 7<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

2013/2014 despite the absence through May it was next spotted 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (joined by two others 12<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> September) remaining until 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

2014/2015 next reported on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2014 until 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

2015/2016 – seen August 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 to 24<sup>th</sup> April (with two 20<sup>th</sup>- 23<sup>rd</sup> January and 20th April) 2016.

The same bird was suspected to have returned 18<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2016 but not seen again.

There have been no records since.

Only inland record is of two flying west over **Bexley Park Woods** 6<sup>th</sup> August 2002.

## Greenshank

## *Tringa nebularia*

Uncommon passage migrant – rare winter visitor.

Most often seen on autumn migration with by far the majority of birds seen in July-September. With just a few exceptions all records of two or more birds have been recorded at **Crayford Marshes**, the highest counts being of 12 on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2003, ten on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009, eight on 26<sup>th</sup> August and six 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 and 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015. Six birds were seen here in October 2013, all other five+ records were in main autumn migration period (July-September). Spring records are five in May 1978, five in April 2011, Highest count for **River Thamesmead** was eight on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1976.

The highest count for **Crossness** was of three on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2009, two on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2003 the only multiple records for this site outside main autumn migration period. At **Crossness** one was first reported on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and was then seen regularly throughout the winter being last seen on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2014. Did the same bird return to be seen on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014? If it did it wasn't seen again until 7<sup>th</sup> October and then stayed another winter where it was reported almost daily until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2015. Only other winter records are of a single bird at **Crossness** on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Early/Late arrival/departure dates:

	Spring early arrival	Spring late departure	Autumn early arrival	Autumn late departure
<b>Crossness</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2011	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	27 <sup>th</sup> June 2018	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2011
<b>Crayford Marshes</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> April 2015	21 <sup>st</sup> May (various years)	30 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2012

Only inland records are of one reported flying/calling over **Bexley** village 25<sup>th</sup> September 1953, one at **Danson Park** 27<sup>th</sup> August 1968 when one was heard calling over **Sidcup** same day, another calling and circling over **Bexley Park Woods** on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1989 (same day as nine Black-tailed Godwits dropped into **Danson Park**). Two reported **Foots Cray Meadows** 21<sup>st</sup> August 1995 and one flew south west along **River Cray** behind Whitehill Road **Crayford** on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2000.

## Redshank

## *Tringa tetanus*

Former breeding, common winter visitor, passage migrant.

Reported every month of the year with highest counts reported between October-February. It wasn't until the 1960s that wintering numbers began to noticeably increase on the **Lower River Thames**. All 150 plus counts occurred between 27<sup>th</sup> September (**Crossness Foreshore**) and 24<sup>th</sup> February (**Crayford Marshes**). It is not uncommon to find up to a 100 still present in April, especially around **Crossness**, **Belvedere** and **Thamesmead Golf Centre Foreshores**.

Highest winter count was of 510 at **Crayford Marshes** on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010, with 402 at **Crossness** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 the only other 400+ count. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the wintering population on the **Lower River Thames** was beginning to decline.

The entire length of the **Thames Foreshore** from **Crayfordness** to **Thamesmead** is worthy of a look for this species,

The **Foreshore** at **Crayford Marshes** has fewer 100+ records, mostly in October and January although birds can be seen here in every month. The River Darent also provides suitable feeding with low double figure counts.

**Erith** to **Belvedere** including Crabtree, Corinthian and Church Manorways can host up to 200 birds in the peak winter months (November – January). Sightings are rare between April and October. **Thames Road Wetland** has reported two or three birds on three dates between 2006-2010.

**Crossness Foreshore** and **Outfall** have shown a slow decline in wintering birds with the majority of 150+ counts occurring in October – December and before 2014. There are exceptions i.e. 226 and 274 October 2017 and 2018 respectively. The five 300+ counts were all between 2008-2012. There have been very few records from **Crossness Nature Reserve**, a flock of 30 on Island Field in April 2015 and 12 on West Paddock November 2014, the only double figure counts with the latter location being most favoured site on

the reserve. Only one record of a single bird on the **Crossness Southern Marsh**, April 2010. October 2013 and 2014 were only time 200+ have been recorded off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** and since 2016 only the occasional reports of one or two birds.

**Inland:** singles reported from **Foots Cray Meadows** 18<sup>th</sup> January 1987, 30<sup>th</sup> December 1996 to 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1997. **Hall Place South** 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> January 1984 when thick snow covered the ground. A lone bird on the **River Shuttle** in Hollyoaks Park on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017 was most unusual.

**Breeding:** Small numbers bred around London - by the 1930s the **Lower River Thames** was the stronghold with 16 pairs at **Erith Marshes** in 1938. By the 1950s the **Thames-side** marshes in total held at least 80 breeding pairs with three quarters of those on the south side. Habitat changes saw numbers beginning to decline again and by 1967 only seven pairs reported by the **River Thames**. By early 1990s possibly one or two pairs still bred (six on Dartford Marsh in 1992 suggest similar numbers might have been present on **Crayford Marshes** as historical numbers had mirrored each other). One pair were present **Crayford Marshes** in 2008.

LBR reported two pairs on nest at **Belvedere Sewage Farm** on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1966 - "first record for this area". **Thamesmead/Crossness/Erith Marshes** in the 1970s held territorial and breeding pairs. Between three and ten pairs were present in 1971-1975 and 1978 with up to three nests and up to two young being reported. During the 1980s up to three displaying/territorial pairs were reported with no confirmation of young being seen. April 1986 was the last report from **Thamesmead** with up to ten pairs but no confirmation of actual successful breeding.

At **Crayford Marsh** three to five pairs bred in 1985 and two pairs were seen displaying in 1989, May 1990 and March 1991, this is the last report of attempted/possible breeding.

London Bird Report peak counts since 2008 for **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes** (in brackets).

<b>Crossness</b> (Crayford)	<b>JAN</b>	<b>FEB</b>	<b>MAR</b>	<b>APR</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>OCT</b>	<b>NOV</b>	<b>DEC</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>96</b>			<b>225</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>160 (35)</b>	<b>340 (50)</b>	<b>190 (68)</b>	<b>220 (60)</b>
<b>2010</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>65 (16)</b>	<b>50 (10)</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>163 (510)</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>(20)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>120 (12)</b>	<b>402 (220)</b>		<b>199 (36)</b>
<b>2012</b>				<b>26</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>30 (238)</b>	<b>50 (220)</b>	<b>25 (110)</b>	<b>17 (15)</b>	<b>95 (48)</b>	<b>200 (100)</b>	<b>100 (200)</b>	<b>92 (50)</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>100 (64)</b>	<b>35 (100)</b>	<b>55 (101)</b>	<b>30 (60)</b>	<b>185 (30)</b>	<b>155 (100)</b>	<b>105 (52)</b>	<b>120 (36)</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>200 (56)</b>	<b>60 (50)</b>	<b>49 (25)</b>	<b>21 (27)</b>	<b>52 (40)</b>	<b>185 (100)</b>	<b>218 (100)</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>65 (30)</b>	<b>145 (17)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>62 (15)</b>	<b>167 (40)</b>	<b>50 (150)</b>	<b>126 (25)</b>	<b>75 (3)</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>110 (45)</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>64 (48)</b>	<b>65 (38)</b>	<b>25 (20)</b>	<b>207 (70)</b>	<b>181 (65)</b>	<b>100</b>

## Wood Sandpiper

*Tringa glareola*

Scarce passage (mostly Spring) migrant.

April and May by far the most common months to see this species, witnessed by all bar one of the four records for **Crayford Marshes**. Two birds remained for four days 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April 2011, another stayed for just two days 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup> April 2013. Singles on two May dates in 2010 plus an autumn passage bird on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2011. A record of one bird at **Crayford Pumping Station** on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1988 is only record for any species at this site.

**Crossness** had a bumper few days in May 2010 with up to eight birds being recorded between 6<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. Four birds were seen on the West Paddock on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> when another four were seen flying over, two or three were seen on other dates.

Earliest records for **Thamesmead/Crossness** were of singles in April/May 1978 and 1989. May 2004, 2008, and 2010 had records of single birds on a few dates and in 2011 singles on 12<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> (four birds) and 30<sup>th</sup> April. Three autumn passage birds on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1971 was noted in LBR as first record for this site, other autumn birds for **Crossness** were 13<sup>th</sup> September 1989 and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and 14<sup>th</sup> Augusts 2010.

Inland: one bird was reported **Foots Cray Meadows** on 13th April 1994 and an autumn passage bird was seen **Danson Park Bog Garden** area on 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> July 2012.

### Turnstone

*Arenaria interpres*

Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor.

Has been recorded every month. Usually single birds mostly on spring or autumn migration. Only double figure counts were of 17 upriver on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1980, 13 flying west along the **River Thames** on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011. Six at **Crossness** on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2012 next highest count. Three at **Erith Marshes** on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1950 was the first record since LBR began reporting.

A species that likes to forage amongst rocks, debris and seaweed **Crayford Marshes** has far more records (110 out of 140) than anywhere else along the **Thames Foreshore** with just a couple of records from **Erith Pier**, February and August 2019.

Wintering birds are often long staying, two reported from **Crayford Marshes** between 12<sup>th</sup> December 2010 and 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011, another between 3<sup>rd</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2013, similarly a single at **Crossness** between 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 could well have been the same bird seen at **Crayford**. A single at **Crayford Marshes** between 8<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> August 2010 was longest staying passage migrant.

There are no inland records.

### Grey Phalarope

*Phalaropus fulicarius*

Very rare passage migrant.

Just one record of a long staying bird at **Crossness** in the late winter, early spring of 2007. First reported off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** on 24<sup>th</sup> February it was seen off and on for a few days at a time, last seen off **Crossness** 21<sup>st</sup> April.

### Pomarine Skua

*Stercorarius pomarinus*

Very rare passage migrant.

Two records of one on the River Thames off **Dartford/Crayford Marshes** 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1986 was probably one of the two juveniles present at Rainham Marshes. Second record of a juvenile flying west off **Crayford Marshes** 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010.

### Arctic Skua

*Stercorarius parasiticus*

Rare autumn passage migrant.

Six flew south west over **Sidcup** 28<sup>th</sup> September 1963 is the earliest report. Singles off **Thamesmead** 6<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September 1983. One flew up river 15<sup>th</sup> October 1988 and a dark morph juvenile was off **Thamesmead** 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Two off **Crossness** 7<sup>th</sup> November 2008. Autumn 2011 was a good year, three (2 dark, 1 pale morph) flew south over **Crossness** as 12.25 on 16<sup>th</sup> September, seen over York Avenue **Sidcup** seven minutes later, another dark morph was seen along the **Thames** between **Belvedere** and **Crayford Marshes** on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011 with three dark and one pale morph west along the river past **Crayford Marshes** on 13<sup>th</sup> October, one same site flew up the **Thames** 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and last record is of one off **Crossness** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

### Long-tailed Skua

*Stercorarius longicaudus*

Very rare passage migrant.

A juvenile was recorded past **Crayford Marshes** on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

### Great Skua

*Stercorarius skua*

Scarce passage migrant.

Two 18<sup>th</sup> September 1995 on **River Thames** off Dartford/**Crayford Marshes**. One off **Crayford Marshes** on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 another on 24<sup>th</sup> September which was later seen off **Crossness** where it lingered for 35 minutes before flying off east. Mid October 2014 was a record period with a significant influx of this species across London after strong winds and very heavy rain. Along the **Bexley** stretch of the **Thames** there were at least four birds: **Belvedere** three on 15<sup>th</sup> October, **Crayford Marshes**, one on the 14<sup>th</sup> and three on the 14<sup>th</sup>. **Crossness** there were four on the 14<sup>th</sup>, two on the 15<sup>th</sup> and one on the 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Gulls and Terns:

Gulls can be the nemesis for many birdwatchers – love them or loathe them. A family of birds that has seen a number of taxonomic advances in recent years with various splits. This coupled with the variety of plumages during the aging process makes for some identification challenges. Gulls are also a family, equally at home on the **Thames Marshes/Foreshore** as well as inland sites, not only those with water bodies but also those with large areas of amenity grassland including sport and playing fields. Indeed, some gather in larger numbers inland than they do by the river. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a few keen and experienced gull watchers have discovered the **Bexley** stretch of the **River Thames** (**Crossness outfall, Erith Pier, Crayford Recycling Centre**) to be one of the best areas to study gulls, ageing them and tracking their origins as many are colour ringed. Sadly, up to this time, and continuing to a greater extent, the aging of gulls has not appeared in posted records. Something future reports of this type could benefit from. Common and Arctic Terns are often referred to as “Commie Terns” when identification cannot be confirmed, particularly when in larger flocks. For the purpose of this report only those with ID confirmed have been included.

### Sabine's Gull

*Xema sabini*

Very rare passage migrant typically in autumn.

Following the great storm in October 1987 a small number of birds were seen moving west along the Thames at **Thamesmead** with a peak of 13 (all adults) on the 18<sup>th</sup> across the river at Barking Reach. A juvenile was present on the Thames in August/September 1998, ranging between **Crossness** and Silvertown, its three week stay made it the London Area's longest staying individual. A juvenile flew east off **Crossness** at 14.50 on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1999, seen flying back west at 15.00.

There was a juvenile feeding off **Crayford/Dartford Marshes** between 07.50-12.00 on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009. A juvenile lingered off **Crayford Marshes** on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2012 and another was seen flying up the Thames off **Crossness** on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

### Kittiwake

*Rissa tridactyla*

Scarce passage migrant.

There are 13 records between 1952 and 1992 mostly of singles along **River Thames**. Sixteen flew up river off **Thamesmead** on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1977, 33 flew west on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1985 and eight adults flew east down river on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1989. First winter birds were recorded here on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1991 and 25<sup>th</sup> April 1994, a juvenile on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1995 and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004 and an adult 17<sup>th</sup> March 1996.

From **Crossness** there have been some ten reports, an adult 27<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008, an adult and first summer bird on 16<sup>th</sup> and an adult 17<sup>th</sup> May 2009, up to six were present between 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2012, the highest count anywhere is of 13 on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2012 flying east up river returning west some ten minutes later. There were four other reports of singles between 2013 and January 2014 – no reports since.

First winter seen off **Erith Reach** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2000 with a second winter off **Erith Pier** on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

It is quite probable that many of the birds seen off **Crayford Marshes** will be those also seen off **Crossness/Thamesmead** as the highest counts are of 13 9<sup>th</sup> April 2012, seven 9<sup>th</sup> January 2012 and four 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Eight further records of single birds occurred in the month of January between 2011 and 2014 with the latest report being of two on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

### Bonaparte's Gull

*Chroicocephalus Philadelphia*

Rare vagrant.

A first winter bird was first reported amongst the Black-headed Gulls off the **Crossness Outfall** on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and remained until the 29<sup>th</sup>. Extraordinarily a second, a first summer bird, was seen on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> May. In 2013, an adult appeared same location for two days, 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> July. A gap of three years before another first summer bird was seen on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and intermittently until the 20<sup>th</sup>. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2018, same location another was reported, remaining until at least 4<sup>th</sup> July. A winter record occurred off **Erith Pier** on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2019, seen off and on until 3<sup>rd</sup> February when a second bird was also seen.

### Black-headed Gull

*Larus ridibundus*

Very common winter visitor and passage migrant. No breeding records.

Historically the most common of the gulls seen in the area. The sewage outfalls and landfill sites have encouraged an increase in numbers. Today it remains the most common, numerous and widespread of all the gulls seen in **Bexley**, not only the length of the **Thames**, parks with open water but also on school playing fields and large areas of amenity grassland. Ringing recoveries suggest that most wintering Black-headed Gulls in the London area originated overseas: Estonia, Germany and Sweden with later recoveries in Denmark, Finland, Holland, Poland and Switzerland amongst others. Ringing has also shown that many Black-headed Gulls stay loyal to their chosen wintering location.

Numbers begin to build up along the **River Thames** in mid-summer, with a couple of exceptions, all 500+ counts occur between July and February. Very few records in April-June though c500 in April 2007, May 2011 and 800-1000 June 2013 prove the exception. High numbers can be observed in August/September feeding high on flying ants. The majority of birds are adults or non-breeding with very first summer birds. Some peak counts:

**Crossness:** 3000 November 2012, 2000+ August 1985/2008 and September 1994/2014, 1500+ September 2008/2015, August 2012 and July 2013, 1000+ between June-November over many years.

**Thamesmead Golf Course Foreshore:** c1000 August 2016,  
**Southmere Lake** 450 March 2018.

**Erith Marshes:** c4000 January 1984 and over 2000 (mainly first summer) July 1987.

**Erith Reach:** 1600 January 1995, 2050 November 1996

**Crayford Marshes** (which may include the recycling area/landfill): 3000 December 1993, 1500 January 2016, February 2021, 1200 January 1995, 1000+ in January and July 2016 and February 2017.

**River Thames** Corinthian-Crabtree Manorway – 100-250 January February 2016

**Crayford Rough:** 300 February 2017,

**Foots Cray Meadows:** 300+ October 2015, 220 January 2005, c200 in December 2010, 2011 and 2017.

**Hall Place South** (primarily the football pitches/flood plain): 3000 December 1993, 2000 January 1995, 1500 February/December 1995 and March 1998, 300-800 December-February many years 1995-2018.

**Lamorbey Park:** 100+ January 2013, February/December 2107 and November 2016.

**Danson Park:** 800-1000+ December 1996-January 1997, 500+ December 2002, 200-500 most years November-January.

Inland sites: **Foots Cray Meadows**, **Hall Place**, **Lamorbey Park** have had no birds reported in May or June and **Danson Park** has very few records and most of those are of only two or three birds.

### Little Gull

*Larus minutus*

Rare passage migrant.

The passage of Little Gull is very much dependant on weather conditions and within the London area most records from the West London reservoirs though there is the occasional passage up the **Thames**.

The majority of records originate from **Crossness** where the outfall is the major attraction and have been recorded every month except November. Highest count was of 13+ (12+ adults, one first winter) on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 and all adults on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2011. Five on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012 was next best, all other records (c45) were of between one and three birds in any month.

Over 50 were observed moving west of **Thamesmead** on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1987 (after the great storm). This area produced a further 15 records between 1992-98 of mostly one or two birds.

One individual was observed at **Southmere Lake** on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**Crayford Marshes** has far fewer records but proportionately higher numbers, 12 (eight adult/four first winter) on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012 is the highest with between six and eight in early February 2012, five in August 2011 and four October 2014 (when the annual London peak was 68 at Rainham Marshes), another eight records of one to three birds.

Two inland records, ten (parties of eight and two) over **Bexley** 21<sup>st</sup> October 2017 and one **Danson Park** 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1980.

### Franklin's Gull

*Larus pipixcan*

Very rare vagrant

The only London record was of a second summer bird at **Crossness/Thamesmead Golf Centre** for four days 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> April 2000. The same bird had been seen at Weymouth, Dorset from February to early March then made its way across country via Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset in mid-March, Bristol on 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> April before arriving at **Crossness**.

### Mediterranean Gull

*Larus melanocephalus*

Uncommon but regular visitor.

Self (2014) suggests London status is "uncommon winter visitor" however **Bexley** records suggest it is uncommon but an all year round visitor with 50% of records over the years split equally between November-April and May-October with July reporting the largest number of records with age groups spread through most months.

A species that has probably been overlooked amongst the larger flocks of Black-headed Gulls particularly at inland sites. Incredibly the first record for London and UK was one shot at Barking Creek in January 1866, specimen in the British Museum. It wasn't until the mid-1960s when the number of sightings in London began to increase and by the start of the 1980s records became annual. In 1995 around 80 were seen representing the largest increase and for the first time several groups were seen with six at **Erith Reach** on 1<sup>st</sup> February being of significance. It wasn't until 2006 this gull became an annual visitor to **Bexley** when first records were in 1973, one off **Crayfordness** on 6<sup>th</sup> February with another flying west up river off **Thamesmead** on 25<sup>th</sup> April. The highest count was of 19 at **Crossness** on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019, ten were also seen on the 21<sup>st</sup> over **Crayford Marshes**.

**Crossness:** Reported every year since 2008, rarely more than four and of various age groups. Two thirds of the reports are from the summer (May-September) period suggesting the outfall is a major attraction at this time with juvenile, first and second summer birds making up a high proportion of these records.

**Thamesmead:** A second winter bird present on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1979, a second summer on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1992 and a first winter 15<sup>th</sup> February and 4<sup>th</sup> March 1994 were early records for the borough..

**Erith Marshes:** First winter 19<sup>th</sup> May 1989 then six here in February 1995 remained the highest 20<sup>th</sup> century count. With increased gull watching from **Erith Pier** since 2019 it isn't surprising that one or two birds have been reported on at least ten occasions, mostly split between February and July-September.

**Crayford Marshes:** after the 1973 record the next report was one on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1991. One or two birds reported most years since 2010 and with a higher proportion in the November-April period. Despite presence of the nearby recycling centre, most birds are reported from the **Thames**.

**Hall Place:** First reports amongst the large flock of gulls were in 1995 with up to six different birds between 3<sup>rd</sup> January and 12<sup>th</sup> February with three (adult, first and second winter) being seen on 24<sup>th</sup> January. There were 14 reports between 1995-1999, usually between November-January, again of various age groups with three (an adult and two first winter) on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1995 being highest count.

**Foots Cray Meadows:** 1988 provides the first records from this site- a second winter bird seen on 10<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> April, with an adult present same site from 30<sup>th</sup> October 1988 until 18<sup>th</sup> March 1989 with another turning up on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. In 1990 an adult on 4<sup>th</sup> March and 16<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> December. An

adult on several dates in 1991 between 5<sup>th</sup> January and 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Last report a single 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018.

**Lamorbey Park:** A second winter bird was reported 10<sup>th</sup> December 1995. Three more sightings during February and November 2017 and February 2018 were all from the adjacent Hurstmere School Sport fields.

**Danson Park:** First reported on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1999 with no further records until January 2006 when a first winter bird was reported on 8<sup>th</sup> January. There have been a further nine reports between December 2006-December 2015 and all between November-January, except an adult on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008. Two on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 is only multiple count.

There have been occasional sightings of birds flying over across the borough.

### Common Gull

*Larus canus*

Common winter visitor and uncommon passage migrant

Historically a rare visitor to London in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the turn of the century they seem to follow the pattern of Black-headed gulls in using the River Thames as a route into the London area. By mid-20<sup>th</sup> century they were regular winter visitors. Ringing recoveries suggest many originate from continental populations including Denmark, Finland and Norway.

Sightings in **Bexley** are split between the river (40%) and inland (60%) sites with the high numbers mostly from the inland sites, 80% of records are in the October-March period (60% December-March). It is probable this is an under recorded species as many wintering birds will be found on school/sports fields and other amenity grassland parks not generally watched by birdwatchers. Sightings are rare in May-July and usually of one or two birds. **Danson Park** 27 in June 2008 was an exception.

**Crossness:** Most records from the **Thames Foreshore** and rarely above ten reported. Some exceptions, 59 April 1980, 500+ between January-March 1985, 100-200 September-December 1985. When reported from the Nature Reserve numbers can be higher, 20 January 1996 and 20 West Paddock January 2005 with numbers increasing to an exceptional 130 in February. Reported every month of the year but rarely more than one or two in May-July. Birds are generally absent from the **Thames** between **Erith** and **Crossness** between April-July. **Southmere Lake** 47 March 2018 is the highest count for this site where there have been very few records.

**Crayford Marshes:** rarely records above single figures with 100+ in February 2011 by far the highest count with 20 in February 2014 next highest count. Birds are mostly absent May-September.

**Foots Cray Meadows:** Ninety percent of records are in November-March period with none in May/June and four for April/July/August. There hasn't been a double figure count since the 80 in January 2002 and 12 in January 2001. Ninety on February 1995 highest count reported.

The football pitches and open grassland of **Hall Place** (South) were regularly watched in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and produced some of the highest counts for the borough – thought to be post roost flocks it was not unusual to find many hundreds of gulls in the winter months. The record is 643 on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1997 with between 225-585 reported on twelve occasions between 1995-1999. The highest 21<sup>st</sup> century counts are 217 February 2000, 205 January 2004, 59 December 2008 and 48 March 2015. Otherwise, rarely in double figures.

Generally absent from **Lamorbey Park** between April-August, numbers rarely exceed ten with highest count of 12 November 2016 and ten September 2017 an unusually early high number.

**Danson Park** provides 35% of all records and 62% of inland sites. Reported in every month with majority between October-March. April-September numbers rarely exceed single figures. There have been no records for this period since 2017. Highest count was of c360 on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1998 and c300 in January 1997 and 1998. All 100+ counts occurred in December-February and, with the exception of January 2007 and February 2015, all in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Any inland area of open grassland is worthy of a visit during the winter months – some examples: 4 King Georges Park January 2015, 10 Hollyoak Wood Park March 2008/2012, 12 Loring Hall Foots Cray April 2015, 30 Northumberland Head February 2012, 35 Penhill Park January 1986 and an amazing 300 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014, 20 Sidcup Place January 2015, between 10-25 regularly The Warren in 1990s.

### Lesser Black-backed Gull

*Larus fuscus*

Uncommon resident in small numbers

Like many of the gull species numbers increased in line with development of landfill and recycling sites. Reported in every month in small numbers both on the **Thames** and inland. Highest count was 216 off **Erith** Reach on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1998, highest inland count was 195 **Hall Place** 14th June 1995. Only 15 100+ counts in total, eight of those from **Hall Place** between 1995-2002. As with most gull species, very few records state age of the bird.

**Crossness:** Found both on the foreshore and nature reserve numbers rarely exceed 30 with the majority of records reporting ten or less. Only three 100+ records each in September 2009, 2011 and 2015. Fifty on Lagoon Field January 2005 is highest count for a specific site away from the foreshore. Twenty on **Crossness Southern Marsh** 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010 is one of only six reports from this site, all others single figure counts only.

**Thamesmead**, off the **Golf course** to **Crossness Foreshore/Outfall:** This stretch of the **Thames** has birds in any month mostly in August and January-March 26 in November 2017 amongst highest count here.

**Southmere Lake:** Very few records from this site with four being highest count in March 2018.

**Crayford Marshes:** Most records here are listed as Crayford Marshes but given proximity to the recycling centre many might originate there. Highest counts 65 February 2021, 50 in October 2016. Very few records exceed 20.

Inland sites account for 27% of records.

**Hall Place:** Some of the highest counts in the borough particularly during the 1990s. Small numbers found in any month of the year, 195 June 1995 being highest count with a further eight 100+ counts all in the June-November months, 1995-2002. Winter month counts rarely exceed 40.

**Foots Cray Meadows:** Seen any month of the year, rarely more than four at any time, mostly one or two with ten in June 1987 the only double figure count.

**Lamorbey Park:** not reported every year and never more than two, it is presumed some of these records will be of birds on the adjacent Hurstmere sport field.

**Danson Park:** Accounts for 15% of all records and 60% of inland records. Rare May-August, and between two and four the usual count for the winter months with 14 being the highest count on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012, 12 January 2001 only other 10+ count.

As with Common Gull, any inland site of amenity grassland or sport/school playing field might have gulls of any type present.

## **Herring Gull**

*Larus argentatus*

Common resident and winter visitor.

A relatively uncommon bird in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a few records of birds being shot along the **Thames**. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century became a regular winter visitor with numbers building up along the **Thames** and associated reservoirs, by 1950s some 10,000 were roosting on these reservoirs. Numbers significantly increased during winter months when resident birds are joined by Scandinavian birds.

Distribution in **Bexley** is split between the **Thames** marshes and foreshore and the inland sites with **Crossness** accounting for 44% and **Danson Park** 26% of all records. Only nine 100+ records split between **Crossness** and **Crayford Marshes**/recycling and reported mostly in months of June-August.

**Crossness:** An even spread of records throughout the year with birds being reported in every month with all 20+ figures occurring between October and June with none in July-September. The majority of records do not specify exact locations, stating only **Crossness** but where specified it suggests the nature reserve holds significant numbers of feeding/roosting birds with low tide loafing being centred on the outfall area.

**Crossness Southern Marsh:** Very few records from this site, mostly single birds with six in April 2015, 14 May 2010 and 25 October 2014 only multiple records.

**The Foreshore** off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** is a regular site between October and April with up to 20 birds present, 50 in April 2014 was exceptional.

**Southmere Lake:** Surprisingly only three reports of one, three and seven in October 2017, March 2018 and February 2016 respectively

**Crayford Marshes/Recycling Centre:** The majority of records do not specify **Thames Foreshore**/marshes or the Viridor Recycling Centre (or possibly the site known locally as The Jolly Farmers waste ground off Thames Road Crayford). All five 100+ counts in July/August 2016, 120 on 20<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> July being highest and noted as “Viridor roof”. Counts of this species are undoubtedly under reported since the recycling centre has been active, c1000 birds on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 is likely to be a more representative figure for recent years. Numbers seem to have been dependant on the activity of the Rainham Landfill Site. The old landfill site/horse pasture hosts any number of birds during the year, 60 January 2016 and 70 August 2018 not exceptional. Foreshore winter counts, tend to be lower, rarely more than 30. The Jolly Farmers was reported in August 2017 with 70 birds present.

The **Thames Foreshore** between **Erith** and **Crossness** hosts a few birds mostly in winter months and rarely above single figure counts.

**Hall Place South:** A few birds present amongst the mixed gull flocks most months though rare May-September, 80 flying to roost in June 1994 was exceptional. Numbers above ten are unusual with 16 in October 2015 the only multiple count in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Foots Cray Meadows:** One or two present, on or over this site any month of the year. High counts are rare and usually associated with the Loring Hall playing fields adjacent to the meadows, 61 June 2012, 80 June 2013, 42 May 2015 and 39 April 2016 being only counts over 15.

**Lamorbey Park:** Counts for this site might also include birds seen on adjacent Hurstmere Sports Field, this was the case for the highest counts, 30 in April and 44 in May 2016 and 22 July 2017. Very few records reported with one or two birds seen on or over in any month of the year, apart from aforementioned no reports of more than two birds.

**Danson Park:** Birds present all year round with December-March reporting most often and also highest counts, all 20+ counts except 28 in May 2017 and highest site count reported, 70 in September 1978. The majority of reports record less than ten birds and these, along with higher counts, very rarely above 30 are spread across all months.

### Yellow-legged Gull

*Larus michahellis*

Regular autumn passage – recorded smaller numbers winter.

The yellow-legged Herring Gull (thought to be of the *omissus* subspecies was first noted in London in the 1960s/70s. However in the early 1970s Herring Gulls of the *michahellis* subspecies had become regular along the **Thames** in Kent, numbers increased during the 1980s with Littlebrook and Stone Marsh reporting high numbers in the summers of 1986/1987.

Wright & Morris state: “Occasional winter visit along the Thames marshes with one summer record from **Crayford**. During 1980s when Stone Tip was active a more common visitor”. The closure of the Stone tip resulted in numbers along the Lower Thames declining.

First reported in **Bexley** from **Thamesmead** on 1<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August 1983 and March 1986 from **Erith**. No further reports until August/November 1990, again **Thamesmead**. Three records from **Crayford Marshes**, August 1991, July/September 1992 were only other records until 1995 when birds became more regular during the summer months also being reported inland amongst resting gull flocks at **Hall Place**, four reports of single birds during July/August. 2007 saw the first of regular annual sightings along the Thames and occasionally inland.

**Crossness** accounts for 45% of all records though numbers are generally less than for **Crayford Marshes** with only a handful of double figure counts, 34 in August 1999 being the highest and 20 in July 2020 the highest 21<sup>st</sup> century count. There are numerous records for each month with April-June seeing lowest number of reports and birds. August has the highest number of records.

There were only two other 20<sup>th</sup> century records, each of one bird in July 1996 and January 1997. The next records were of two birds July 2000 and a single in November 2006. It wasn't until 2007 that birds were beginning to be reported more often with five in August the peak for that year. Annual counts thereafter are interesting to compare with **Crayford** below, (I have also produced a table – see which is best) Seven in August, 2008, 11 November 2009, seven in July/December 2010, seven November 2011, ten August 2012, four August 2013, three August 2014, four January/August 2015, four August 2016, five August 2017, eight

December 2018 and 20 July 2020. Birds are rarely seen on the nature reserve and no records from the Southern Marsh. One or two occasionally reported from the **Belvedere** Manorways stretch of the Thames between August-January. The foreshore off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** - four in November 2003 remains one of the higher counts for this section, with two in November 2018 confirming the value of looking here. February 2019 saw the discovery of a gathering gull flock around **Erith Pier**, probably always been there. Closer studies showed Yellow-legged gulls in higher than expected numbers – five in February 2019 was of note but it was the summer numbers (in parallel with those from **Crayford/Crossness**) that proved most interesting with 45 in 21<sup>st</sup> July with three further counts of 25, 30 and 35 during August proving this to be an exceptional location. Up to 35 in August 2020 reinforced this.

**Crayford Marshes** accounts for over 40% of all records, as with other gull species it is unclear whether records originate from the foreshore, recycling centre or the Jolly Farmers although it is known summer assemblages do occur on the foreshore around **Crayfordness**. There were eight reports 1995-1998 and no more until 2008 when two were reported in November. Eight reports in 2009, mostly September/October then from 2010 reports were being made most months though the majority were from July, September and November with any number up to 12 being observed. Eight in January 2011 was the highest winter count to date with birds then being reported every month except April/May, 18 in October highest count for the year. Similar patterns continued each year onwards, 36 in August 2012, 20 July 2013, 41 August 2014, 27 September 2015, 20 August 2016, 40 August 2017 and 20 September 2018 being the annual peaks (see also table). This shows July-September to be the peak months for numbers, also mix of adult, first/second and third year birds. In winter there appears to be a higher ratio of adults to young birds. February 2012 14 is the highest winter count. Of the few reports identifying either Jolly Farmers or the Recycling centre it would appear they do not account for many or high number with just one or two birds reported at any one time.

Year Peak	Crossness	Crayford Marshes
2008	7 August	
2009	11 November	3 October
2010	7 July/December	12 August
2011	7 November	16 August
2012	10 August	36 August
2013	4 August	20 July
2014	3 August	41 August
2015	4 January/August	27 September
2016	4 August	20 August
2017	5 August	40 August
2018	8 December	20 September
2019		
2020	20 July	

**Hall Place** was the first inland site to report Yellow-legged Gull with one on 2<sup>nd</sup> and two on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1995. LBR reported each year between 1995-1999 their presence usually in June-August or October/November. Eight in June 1997 and July 1998 and six August 1999 were exceptional counts. Sadly, only one other report made, that of an adult in January 2004. Closer inspection of the annual gull flocks is clearly required. Six on the Loring Hall Sports field in April 2015 again strengthen the case for checking all gull flocks. First reported, as single, **Danson Park** on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1997 followed by three further reports of singles November/December 1997, 1998 or 1999. One hung round during January/February 2001 then no further reports until 2013 since when one, very occasionally two birds have been reported each year. Whilst November-January remain the most notable months birds have been recorded every month except May. Two in September and December 2015 and February 2018 the only multiple records.

## Caspian Gull

Uncommon visitor, mostly winter.

*Larus cachinnans*

Considered a sub-species of Herring Gull until recognised by BOU in 2007, giving it full taxonomic species status. Previously thought to winter no closer than the Middle East, the extension of its breeding range north and west from the Caspian Sea has also seen its winter range expand. LBR 1998 acknowledged difficulties and controversy surrounding reports of Caspian Gull and stated “it seems sensible to publish all records that we are aware of as “showing characters of Caspian Gull”, rather than ignore”. “Their publication does not imply acceptance either by the LNHS Records Committee or the British Birds Rarities Committee”. In the 2002 report, specific instructions were given to enable proper examination of submitted records. Doubt over two previous records have meant first confirmed record for London was of a bird around Twickenham/Eel Pie Island on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1998 (Self 2014). The Thames estuary and particularly the Lower Thames Marshes became the locations of regular sightings from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

First reported in Bexley, an adult at **Thamesmead** 12<sup>th</sup> December 1998, one at **Crossness** 10<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2000. **Crayford Marsh** an adult on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2004, followed by one at **Danson Park** in December 2006 and another here in November 2007. The 2009 report advised all previous records would be reviewed and required all future records (away from **Crossness**, **Beddington** and **Rainham**) to be accompanied by full description and photos if possible. As a consequence all the above records for Bexley cannot be confirmed. A first winter bird at **Crossness** November 2009 was the start of annual sightings along the **Thames** from **Crayford** to **Thamesmead** with the majority of reports originating from **Crayford**.

November to February are the peak months with an increasing number being reported in March, very few records between April and October. A difficult bird for most to identify it is perhaps not surprising that most records are of one or two birds. On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2016 **Crayford Marshes** had a record count of 14 birds (three adults, 3<sup>rd</sup> winter, four 2<sup>nd</sup> winter and six 1<sup>st</sup> winter). Twelve on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2018 at the Jolly Farmers Crayford being the only other multiple count. The Jolly Farmers and Recycling centre **Crayford** do prove good places to look for Caspian Gull with six of the nine three plus records coming from here. First reported from here were an adult and first winter on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

**Erith Pier** has become the other prominent site to watch for this gull with up to three being seen in February and August 2018 and four in February 2019.

Birds are also seen on the **Crayford Marshes** foreshore, rarely more than one and mostly December-March. First report was of a first winter January 2010 and four in January 2016 being highest count.

After the first record for **Crossness** in 2009 birds have been reported each subsequent year November-February being favoured months, only a handful of records outside that period. Three in January 2016 only reported multiple figure.

Inland, only site reporting is **Danson Park**, in addition to the unconfirmed records mentioned above singles in January and November 2012 and January 2013 are only reports.

### **Iceland Gull**

*Larus glaucooides*

Scarce winter visitor

Only records originate from the **Thames** between **Crayford** and **Crossness**, the first report being of a juvenile off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** and **Crossness** from 29<sup>th</sup> March through to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, a second juvenile was seen on at least three dates. A juvenile in late December 2010/early January 2011 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> winter bird reported from 26<sup>th</sup> March-2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012. One on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2017 was a late date for this site. A juvenile was reported from **Erith Pier** on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

First record for **Crayford Marshes** was of an adult along the river on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010. A 2<sup>nd</sup>-winter bird was reported between the river and the recycling centre between 9<sup>th</sup> January and 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012. There was a sub-adult on 12<sup>th</sup> March, adult 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2nd-winter 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> May and an adult 26<sup>th</sup> October. There were a further three January-March records in 2013/2014 with next report being one at the Jolly Farmers for most of January 2018. Two birds were reported on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018 with one still present 4<sup>th</sup> May, which, along with the bird on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012 were latest records for the borough.

### **Kumliens's Gull**

*Larus glaucooides kumlieni*

Very rare

Just one report of a single adult-type showing features consistent with the Greenland and Nearctic form of Iceland Gull at the Jolly Farmers **Crayford** on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2018

### **Glaucous Gull**

*Larus hyperboreus*

Rare winter visitor

The majority of London sightings up to the 1970s were from the West London reservoirs when a shift occurred towards the Lower Thames Marshes with Rainham Marshes being a bit of a hot-spot. First report for Bexley was of a probably 2<sup>nd</sup> year bird in December 1997. A bird seen at Rainham on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2009 eventually found its way over the river to **Belvedere/Crossness**, the only record for this site. A 1<sup>st</sup> winter bird was seen at **Crayford Marshes**/recycling centre on 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> January 2010 with no further records until 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018 when one was reported from the Jolly Farmers and a different bird end of April. Two birds, a juvenile and 2<sup>nd</sup> winter were seen between **Crayford** recycling centre and **Erith Pier** between 6<sup>th</sup> January-17<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

### **Great Black-backed Gull**

*Larus marinus*

Uncommon – mainly winter visitor

A relatively scarce bird in the London area until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, rubbish tips were probably a driver for increased numbers being seen and roost numbers of west London reservoirs reached many hundred. These roost counts have decreased into the 21<sup>st</sup> century but the Lower Thames remains a stronghold for small numbers of this large gull.

Reports in Bexley tend to increase from August, peaking in November/December and falling off to just the odd one or two during May-July. The highest count reported is of 53 from **Thamesmead** on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1995. The majority of double figure counts though rare, occur in January-March.

Earliest LBR record for Bexley is of two on **Erith Marshes** 16<sup>th</sup> June 1938 beyond that very few records, Dartford Ringing Group reported them flying over **Joyden's Wood** during the 1970s and three were reported from **Danson Park** in November 1978. From 1993 reports were annual from across the borough. As would be expected the **River Thames** and foreshore from **Crayford** to **Thamesmead** provide the majority of records though rarely more than one or two birds reported.

**Crossness** accounts for the largest number of records with the foreshore by the outfall at low tide hosting the majority of records and numbers. For much of the year just single figure counts with numbers beginning to rise end of November (ten 2011/2016) 14 in 2018, other peaks include 16 in January 2018, 11 February, 29 March 2016 and 25 August 2015. Single birds are occasionally seen on the nature reserve and three on the **Southern Marsh** in February 2017 is the highest count for that site. Twenty off **Thamesmead Golf course** in January 2011 and 21 birds from **Erith Reach** in January 1995 are unusually high counts for these sites. **Crayford Marshes**, particularly around **Crayfordness** hold the majority of records for this site with a number often gathering on the Landfill: the recycling centre/Jolly Farmers also having multiple records. Highest counts for the foreshore are 25 November 2016 and July 2017, ten on the Landfill in January 2016 is the peak for there and 70+ on Jolly Farmers 28<sup>th</sup> December 2020 is by far the highest borough count. Not reported in May and only one report from each of April (2017) and June (2015). Apart from aforementioned July 2017 count, 11 in January/February, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are the next and unusually high counts.

**Hall Place South** - all records for this site coming from a single observer during the 1990s. All relate to November-February with 8 in January 1995 being highest count, no others exceed three.

Gulls at **Danson Park** are probably under recorded, all reports relate to November-February and only three reports for 21<sup>st</sup> century. Three individuals in November 1978 and December 1999 remain highest counts.

### **Little Tern**

*Sterna albifrons*

Rare passage migrant

An annual but scarce visitor to the London area the majority of records have originated from the reservoirs with occasional passage birds along the **Thames**.

Earliest Bexley report is of six off **Thamesmead** 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1980, with further September reports of two in 1983 and five in 1984. Next records related to May passage, two **Thamesmead** 1990 and one in 1991 with nine past **Crayford Marshes** 30<sup>th</sup> May 1990. The next reports relate to early autumn passage, all August, one **Thamesmead** 1994 and 1999, two birds **Crayford Marshes** 8<sup>th</sup> August 1996. First record for **Crossness** was of one bird on 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> April 2007 followed by two adults and a juvenile on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2007/8, juvenile still present on 24<sup>th</sup>. Two further records from **Crossness**, singles May 2011 and April 2016 and two birds off **Thamesmead Golf Course** June 2008. Three records from **Crayford Marshes**, one bird in May 2011, five in August 2011 and 14 resting on the **Crayfordness** foreshore 24<sup>th</sup> August 2019. The April 2016 and August 2019 records are only two since 2011.

### **Black Tern**

*Chlidonias niger*

Scarce passage migrant

Another species encountered annually but again mostly at the West London reservoirs with occasional sightings along the **River Thames**. There have been some notable passages along the Thames, one such, took place on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1963 when five flocks totalling 108 birds were observed flying west passed Swanscombe marshes. In 1979 over 100 and 110 were observed passed West Thurrock on 8<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> August respectively, same site, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1980 saw over 300 pass. In 1992 an unprecedented autumn passage occurred in south-east England with over 10,000 passing by Dungeness in just one day. During a period of some four weeks many of these found their way up the **Thames** with 600-1000 reported in the London area in just one day, 19<sup>th</sup> August. Many would have passed along the Thames but were seemingly not seen or reported from Bexley.

Earliest Bexley record and only inland record is an anecdotal record from a birdwatcher of one flying around **Danson Park** lake in the late 1940s. Next record is of one on the Thames off **Thamesmead** in August 1972. Almost all the remaining 20<sup>th</sup> century records come from **Thamesmead** where, with the few exceptions of one or two May birds all were autumn passage with 70 on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1994 and only report from **Crossness** of 60 on September 1998 being highest counts from this end of the **Thames**. These figures were however dwarfed by one of only two 20<sup>th</sup> century records from **Crayford Marshes** of approximately 200 on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1984. Wright and Morris suggest autumn passage begins 7<sup>th</sup> July and end 30<sup>th</sup> September. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century more reports are noted, mostly from **Crossness**. There are far more reports of autumn passage than spring with just one or two in April and the majority of spring records in May. Nine on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and seven 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2010 being highest spring counts. Earliest/latest spring records are 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and 27<sup>th</sup> May 2008 respectively. Earliest/latest autumn dates are 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2010 respectively. Relatively few records (11) from **Crayford Marshes** and with exception of aforementioned 200, 14 in August 2011 is the highest count. Earliest/latest spring/autumn dates for here are 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1988/4<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 1985/20<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

There has been only one record since 2013, a single bird at **Crossness** on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

### **White-winged Black Tern**

*Chlidonias leucopterus*

Very rare passage migrant

A well watched/photographed moulting adult at **Crossness** between 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> August 2008 was the 33<sup>rd</sup> record for the LNHS recording area. A juvenile flew west at lunch time on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

### **Sandwich Tern**

*Sterna sandvicensis*

Scarce passage migrant

A bird was shot on the Thames at Greenwich around 1784 at the same time as the first specimen was obtained in the UK at Sandwich. It seems Sandwich won out in the naming stakes. Twentieth century records mostly centred on the London reservoirs with very few on the Thames, this remains the case into the

21<sup>st</sup> century though reports are declining generally. There are annual sightings off Galleons Reach, Greenwich which suggests there are birds visible from **Crossness/Thamesmead Golf Centre**. There are few than 100 records since the mid 1960s all bar one from the **Thames** with the earliest report being of one at **Crayford Marsh** on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and latest two birds at **Crossness** on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2010. Birds have been reported in each month March-October with the highest counts 18 and 20 at **Crossness** in August 2019 and 2020 respectively otherwise single figure counts the norm with rarely more than two or three together. Four is the highest number for **Crayford Marshes** and the two double figure counts above, eight is the peak for **Crossness/Thamesmead Golf Centre** area. Two off **Erith Pier** in September 2019 is only other river site report. Two at **Danson Park** on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1968 is only inland record.

### Common Tern

*Sterna hirundo*

Common summer visitor and passage migrant, rare local former breeder.

Seen mostly from April-September with earliest reports from **Crayford Marshes** and **Crossness** being ten on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and one 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010 respectively. Latest date for **Crayford Marshes** ten on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and for **Crossness**, ten on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2010. The larger flocks tend to be in July-August with highest Bexley count being c420 (including 220 moving west) off **Crossness** in August 2010 (220 August 2008) and 380 off **Crayford Marshes** in August 2011. With one or two exceptions (April 2015, May 2017) all 100+ counts have been reported in July/August, which includes many juveniles. Occasionally seen feeding over the open water on **Crossness Nature reserve** with only three reports from **Crossness Southern Marsh**, all in 2010 (two in April, four in May and two in August).

Birds can be seen off any vantage point along the Thames, 30 off **Erith Pier** September 2019 good count, off **Thamesmead Golf Centre** is another good site, 100 in April 2014 a particularly good record. Just one record from **Southmere Lake**, 2 birds in August 2017.

Very rare inland, occasionally seen during passage over the **Rivers Cray** and **Shuttle**. Single bird **Foots Cray Meadows** 20<sup>th</sup> May 1990. One feeding over **Lamorbey Park Lake** in June 2010 was unusual. Four at **Danson Park** 20<sup>th</sup> August 1989 is one of six records for this site, two early May 1990, one June 1991, two May 1998, one in June and July 2001 being the others.

Breeding: one or two pairs were reported breeding on offshore rafts at **Thamesmead** in 1994/1995, one young was successfully fledged in 1994. A report in 2007 of up to four pairs present on a pontoon off shore, pairs continued to breed on a jetty across the river at Barking Bay.

### Roseate Tern

*Sterna dougallii*

Very rare passage migrant

Just two records for this rare UK breeding tern. An adult with 1<sup>st</sup>-winter reported feeding off **Crossness** on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and an adult down river passed **Erith Pier** on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2019.

### Arctic Tern

*Sterna paradisaea*

Uncommon passage migrant.

Much less numerous than Common Tern and generally smaller numbers, mostly single figure counts and very few flocks.

Earliest/latest reported dates for **Crayford Marshes/Crossness** are one on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012 and 11<sup>th</sup> April 2009, and two on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and one 14<sup>th</sup> October 2007 respectively. Highest counts of 21 April 2010 and 25 August 2008 both from **Crossness/Thamesmead Golf Centre**. Fourteen in August 2012 highest count from **Crayford Marshes**, no further reports from this site since 2012. A minimum of 12 off **Erith Pier** in September 2019 is also the only other site from which records have been reported. No inland reports.

### Guillemot

*Uria aalge*

Very rare autumn/winter visitor

Ruegg: “occasional visitor, chiefly in autumn and winter”

The 1980s saw the peak period for Guillemot in the London area. In late 1985 unusually high numbers were being reported off the Kent coast and by early 1986 many were reported in the outer Thames estuary. Soon odd birds were being reported on the Thames in central London and by end February birds were reported off Dartford/**Crayford Marshes**, one on 26<sup>th</sup> and five 28<sup>th</sup>. One was still present on 1<sup>st</sup> March joined by another on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. All other records occurred between August and November 2009-2020.

A single bird on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2002 others on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010 all **Crossness**, other reports for this site are singles on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011, (the same bird as seen from **Crayford Marshes** same day and possibly same bird seen floating up river off Crabtree Manorway **Belvedere** on the 29<sup>th</sup>), last report of one on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

Singles have been recorded from north of Crabtree Manorway, **Belvedere** 29<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and **Erith Pier** 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

**Crayford Marshes** has produced three records (see Crossness 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011) plus 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012.

### Razorbill

*Alca torda*

Very rare autumn visitor

Ruegg: “occasional visitor, chiefly in autumn and winter”

On the same day, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011 a Guillemot was being seen from Rainham Marshes/**Crayford Marshes** a Razorbill was also seen drifting along the River Thames, the first report for London since 1996.

### Little Auk

*Alle alle*

Very rare vagrant

Ruegg: “occasional visitor”, “Specimens that Davis (1904) reported receiving from here, Darent and Bexley, “some few years back” probably referred to the influx of 1894-95” (Self 2014).

One was observed for just two or three minutes on the **River Darent** on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1998, observer thought it might have been eaten by a Great Black-backed Gull (LBR). A single off Rainham/**Crayford Marshes** on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

### Puffin

*Fratercula arctica*

Very rare vagrant

Ruegg: “occasional visitor, chiefly in autumn and winter” – “between Erith and Gravesend, one shot on the Thames on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1887 (Fortune)”.

One on River Thames off **Crayfordness** 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1985 and one flew into the side of a house in **Thamesmead** on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1992, it was taken into care and subsequently recovered and released.

### ESCAPES/HYBRIDS

#### Red-breasted Goose

*Branta ruficollis*

Very rare vagrant – only one accepted London record.

The Bexley record was of a colour ringed escaped bird.

A single bird with a yellow ring reported **Crossness** on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011. Also reported on and off during May/June, then turned up at **Hall Place** with Canada Geese on 19<sup>th</sup> August with last sighting being from **Crossness Southern Marsh** 21<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

#### Ruddy Shelduck

*Tadorna ferruginea*

Escape birds turn up occasionally – first reported bird was River **River Thames/Crossness** on 23<sup>rd</sup> January

2002, the second was also **Crossness** from 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009 on and off through to August 2010. Additionally many more records of Shelduck/Ruddy Shelduck hybrids: the first of those recorded at **Crossness** on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2012, a bird often seen through to October 2013. On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2012 3 specimens were at **Crossness** (JA) and the most recent report was of another on the **Foreshore** at **Crossness** 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

### **Marbled Duck**

*Marmaronetta angustirostris*

One on River **River Thames** 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at **Crossness**.

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