

# BIRDING IN SOUTHWARK PARK



FREE

With  
John & Janet Cadera



J. & J. Cadera

**With thanks to the Southwark Park Association 1869,  
Southwark Council and Rotherhithe Consolidated Charities.**

J & J Cadera



Blackbird

This little booklet is written for beginners in mind with an intent to encourage an interest in local wildlife. It is presented as a walk, about 1 hour minimum, starting at the Ada Salter Garden taking you around The Lake and then along the Nature Woodland areas up to Jamaica Road where you have an option to go across to King's Stairs Gardens and the River Thames.

Southwark Park is an ideal place for a budding birder and, depending on season and weather, over 20 species can be seen in a very short time. With a bit of patience and luck you can find the elusive Goldcrest or turn up something scarce or rare.

For a large busy city, London has many green spaces with easy access via buses and tube. Some, like the Royal Parks, have been established for hundreds of years and have mature woodland and meadows, while others have only been growing since the major redevelopment of London in the 1980s.

Rotherhithe Peninsula has two valuable sites: Russia Dock Woodland & Stave Hill Local Nature Reserve established in the 1980s, and nearby is Southwark Park, opened to the public in 1869.

We are local and, like many residents, regularly use Southwark Park for recreation. It has become an interesting local patch and since 2016 we have recorded some 71 species within or over the park, with an average trip list of 25 species.

We record all our finds and after each visit our information is uploaded to Bird Track, the online resource that looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland.

There have been over 120 species recorded in Rotherhithe over the years. Many are common regulars, while a few have been one-of-a-kind rarities, such as Common Scoter and Aquatic Warbler. Some species used to breed on the abandoned docklands and have long since disappeared while a few others are now locally scarce.

Common Starling and House Sparrow are no longer seen in the great numbers of the 1970s and 1980s. Eurasian Kestrel, once a common sight in the area and breeding in many of the churches and disused wharves, is now a local rarity.



J & J Cadera

Woodpigeon

We are pleased to have worked in conjunction with Southwark Park Association 1869 on this guide, and hope it adds to your pleasure when you visit the park.



Heron

J & J Cadera

## A Walk Through Southwark Park

### Ada Salter Garden & The Lake



Moorhen

J & J Cadera

This well-tended garden, overlooking the lake, is an excellent place to start your birding trip. It is by far the most productive with at least 20 species heard and seen in a very short time. The mature trees and shrubs around the Garden are worth checking for songbirds, especially in spring and autumn. A pair of Stock Dove are seen regularly in this area.

The lake has hosted a decent variety of duck species over the years, including a few scarce visitors: female Common Scoter, a drake Mandarin (both firsts for Rotherhithe), Red Crested Pochard, Gadwall and Teal. Common residents include Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Mute Swan and Canada Goose. Egyptian Goose has bred in the past and is a regular visitor either on the lake or grazing on the sports field. The lake is home to a pair of Little Grebe which can be elusive but are worth searching for. Grey Heron is also a regular visitor.

## The Playing Field (The Oval)

This is not a very productive area as there is a lot of human disturbance and activity. The most common species are Carrion Crow and Feral Pigeon. Occasionally, geese can be seen feeding in this area. It is worth taking note when crows are being especially active and noisy, they may be mobbing a bird of prey or, as in March 2019, a Short-eared Owl. Goldcrest can be found in the conifer on the left of the path as you head to the Surrey Quays exit and in winter look out for Redwing feeding on the ground amongst the large trees.



## The Nature Area

The old, now disused, children's playground has been set aside as a nature area and can only be accessed with permission from Southwark Council. You can follow the fence line toward Albin's Memorial Garden. There is plenty of cover for small birds such as Robin and Wren as well as mixed tit flocks in winter.

The small wood area opposite the Nature Area has an accessible path through it and is worth a check, especially in spring and autumn. Great Spotted Woodpecker and Blackbird are regular here and occasionally Collared Dove.





Ring-necked Parakeet

## The Bandstand, Bowling Green & Tennis Courts

There are many mature London Planes in this area, and you can usually hear and see Ring-Necked Parakeets. It is always worth checking the hedges around the Bowling Green for Robin, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Great Tit and Blue Tit.

Over the last few years Coal Tit has become a scarce resident and, with some practice, can be heard in the area occasionally. Once abundant, House Sparrow can be heard and seen along the hedges behind the Tennis Court. Starling is another species with greatly reduced numbers within the park.



House Sparrow



### **The Lodge**

Situated at the Jamaica Gate entrance, the garden area next to the Parks Depot has plenty of low cover and mature trees. It is worth checking for Dunnock, Woodpigeon, and the occasional Jay. We have also found Blackcap and Coal Tit here.

### **King's Stairs Gardens & River Thames**

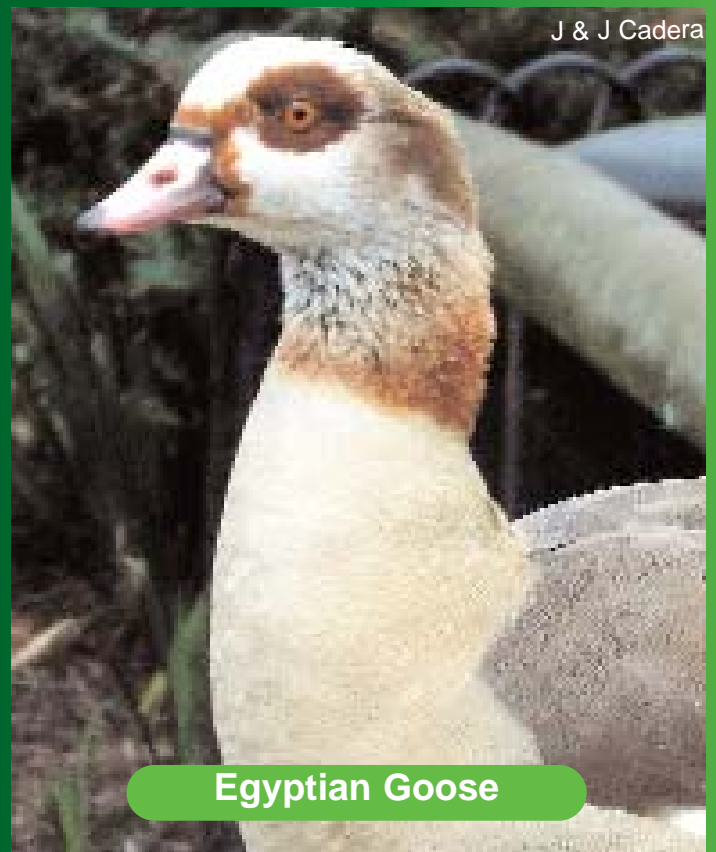
Crossing Jamaica Road at the Christchurch or Paradise gates you get to King's Stairs Gardens with its enclosed area of mature trees and open grass. Goldfinches are often in this area and in the spring, we have found Chiffchaff and Great Spotted Woodpecker. At the river, depending on time of the year, you will find several gull species (Herring, Great and Lesser Black Back along with Black Headed and Common Gulls), Cormorant and Great Crested Grebe and the occasional seal.



Stock Dove



Tufted Duck



Egyptian Goose

## Species To Look For

A note on the Check List. This is by no means definitive and is intended to give a casual birdwatcher some idea of what to look for through the year. We have chosen 50 mostly easy species with a few challenges thrown in for good measure.

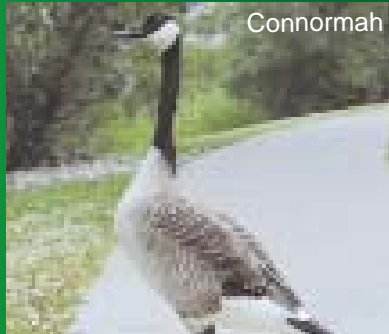


# CHECKLIST OF COMMON SPECIES

Remember to note the date and the weather when you spot the birds.

**Canada Goose**

*Date seen:*



**Gadwall**

*Date seen:*



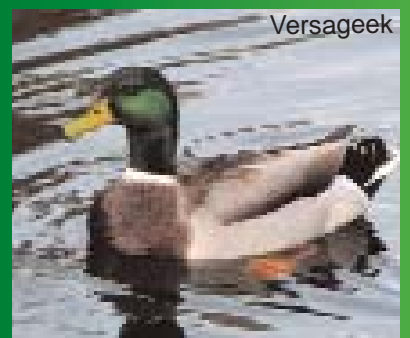
**Greylag Goose**

*Date seen:*



**Mallard**

*Date seen:*



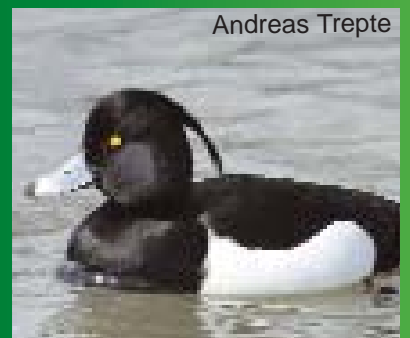
**Mute Swan**

*Date seen:*



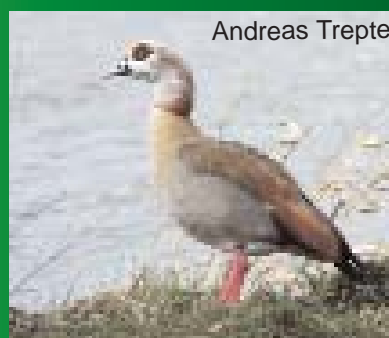
**Tufted Duck**

*Date seen:*



**Egyptian Goose**

*Date seen:*



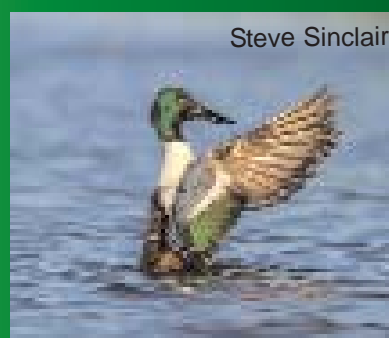
**Teal**

*Date seen:*



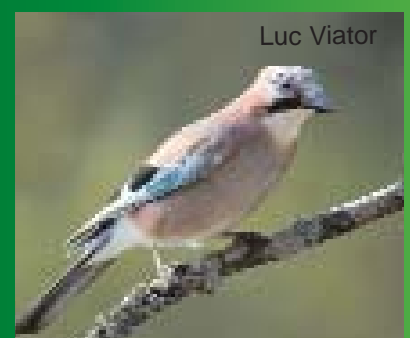
**Shoveler**

*Date seen:*



**Jay**

*Date seen:*



**Magpie**

*Date seen:*



Bengt Nyman

**Long-tailed Tit**

*Date seen:*



Francis C. Franklin

**Carrion Crow**

*Date seen:*



**Willow Warbler**

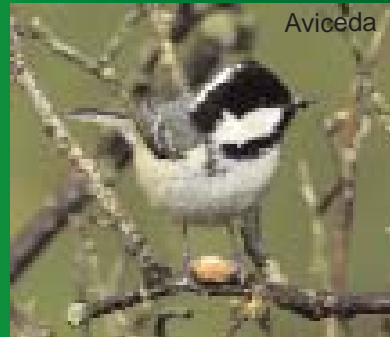
*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Coal Tit**

*Date seen:*



Aviceda

**Swift**

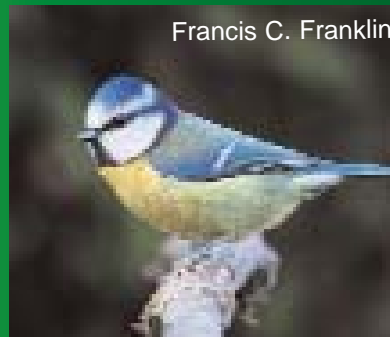
*Date seen:*



Pau.artigas

**Blue Tit**

*Date seen:*



Francis C. Franklin

**Feral Pigeon**

*Date seen:*



Pat Kingwell Collection

**Great Tit**

*Date seen:*



Francis C. Franklin

**Stock Dove**

*Date seen:*



Chris Cant

**House Martin**

*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Woodpigeon**

*Date seen:*



Tristan Ferne

**Collared Dove**

*Date seen:*



G. Lukasic

**Lesser Black-backed Gull**

*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Moorhen**

*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Cormorant**

*Date seen:*



J. J. Harrison

**Coot**

*Date seen:*



J. J. Harrison

**Grey Heron**

*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Little Grebe**

*Date seen:*



B. S. Thurner

**Sparrowhawk**

*Date seen:*



Meneer Zjeroen

**Black-headed Gull**

*Date seen:*



Hans Hillewaert

**Great Spotted Woodpecker**

*Date seen:*



Steffen Hannert

**Herring Gull**

*Date seen:*



Kulac

**Ring-necked Parakeet**

*Date seen:*



J. M. Garg

**Chiffchaff**  
*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Mistle Thrush**  
*Date seen:*



Yurly 75

**Blackcap**  
*Date seen:*



Jakub Stanco

**Redwing**  
*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Firecrest**  
*Date seen:*



Jacob Arnold

**Blackbird**  
*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**Goldcrest**  
*Date seen:*



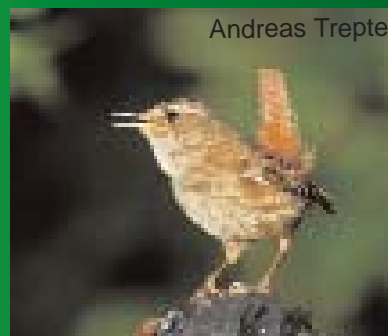
C. J. Hughson

**Robin**  
*Date seen:*



Charles J. Sharp

**Wren**  
*Date seen:*



Andreas Trepte

**House Sparrow**  
*Date seen:*



Charles J. Sharp

**Starling**  
*Date seen:*



Zeynel Stebeci

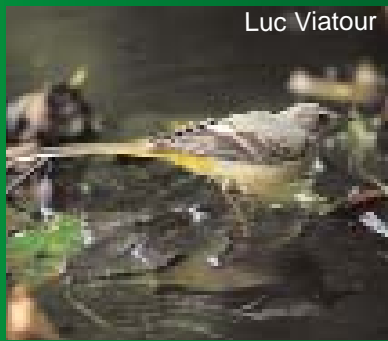
**Dunnock**  
*Date seen:*



Smalljim

**Grey Wagtail**

***Date seen:***



**Chaffinch**

***Date seen:***



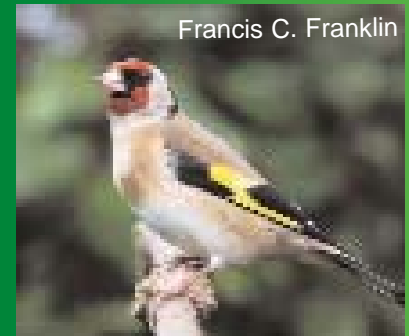
**Pied Wagtail**

***Date seen:***



**Goldfinch**

***Date seen:***



*The images on this checklist are in the public domain under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic and 3.0 Unported Licences.*

### **A Word Of Caution**

**Ducks and birds that live on water stay healthy by eating natural foods like aquatic plants, seeds, grasses and insects.**

**Many foods that humans and pets like to eat, including bread, are not good for birds and can cause serious illness.**

**Uneaten foods can also damage the ecology of the water and harm other creatures.**

**Everyone likes to feed the ducks so instead of bread try grapes cut in half, oats, birdseed and other grains.**

**Defrosted frozen peas are also well received!**

## When To Visit

Southwark Park is open 07:30 until dusk every day of the year, except Christmas Day, and there are always birds to be found; even mid-summer can produce around 25 species. Autumn through winter to spring are undoubtedly the most productive.

Autumn, especially October to early November period, is excellent for migrating Redwing, finches and pipits. Most of these will be flying over and take some practice and patience to identify.

Winter is also a good time to keep an eye on the lake for interesting ducks that may drop in such Shoveler, Tufted Duck, and the locally scarce Teal.

### Access

Buses and tube: Southwark Park has easy access from bus routes 1, 381, 188, 47, C10 and P12 from around the park.

It is also a short walk from Bermondsey (Jubilee Line), Surrey Quays (Overground) and Canada Water (Jubilee Line and Overground) underground stations.

Further Reading for Beginner Birdwatchers (to enhance your birdwatching experience):

RSPB First Book of Birds (35 most common species)

RSPB What's That Bird?

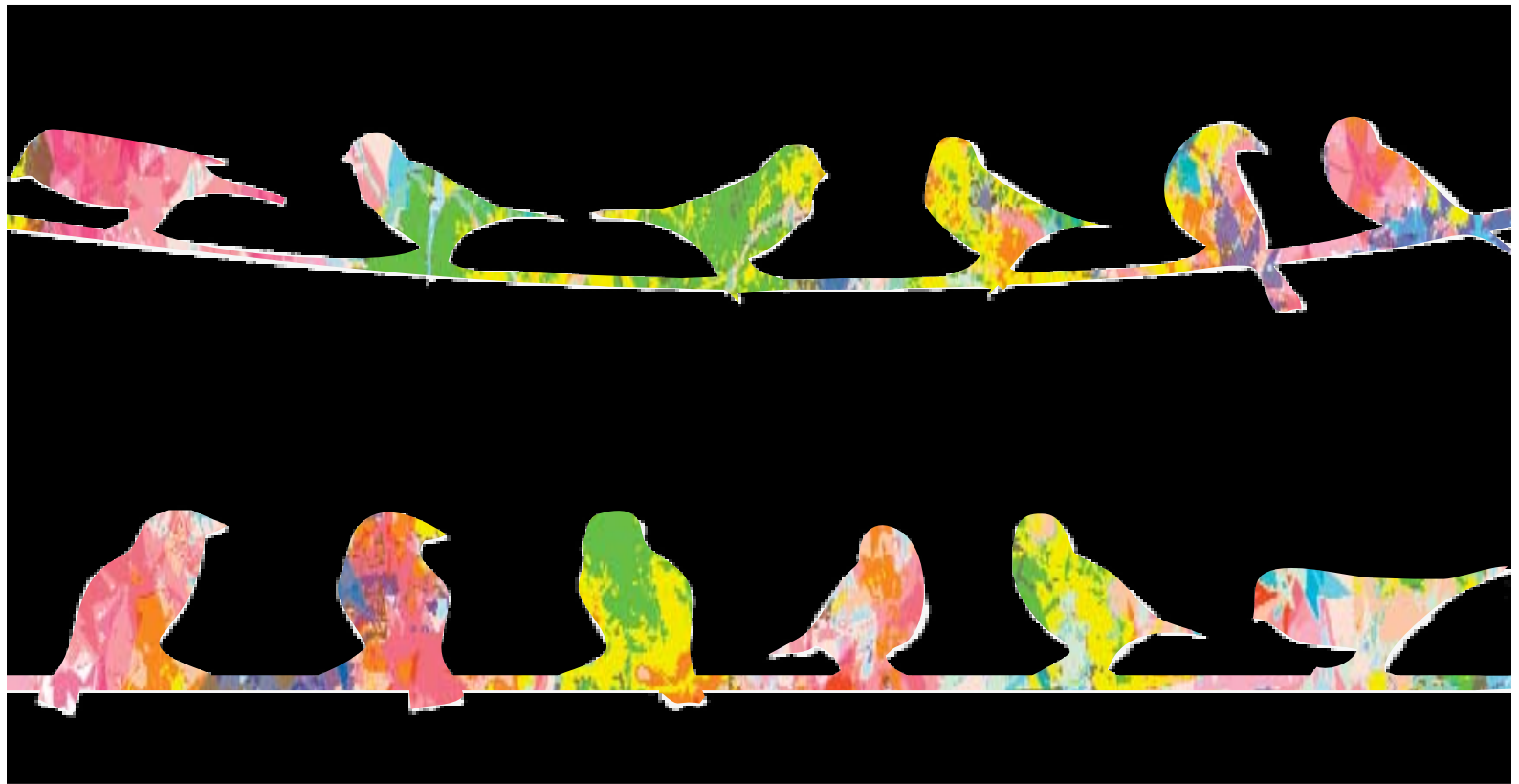
RSPB Garden birds identifier chart

RSPB Pocket Guide to British Birds

A copy of the Bird Watcher's Code can be downloaded from here:

<https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u10/downloads/taking-part/health/bwc.pdf>





Published by Southwark Park Association 1869 February 2022

