



# South Park Gardens Birds



## Birds in South Park Gardens

In South Park Gardens there are at least twenty-three kinds of birds to be seen. They fall into several categories, but in this trail leaflet they have been grouped into big, medium sized and small. There are other ways of describing them, such as the type of food they eat and whether they are birds that migrate during the winter.

### Big Birds

Big birds include carrion crows, magpies, jays, wood pigeons, ringdoves and feral (wild or untamed) pigeons.



Carrion Crow



Magpie



Jay

### Carrion Crow

These are usually all black and will eat almost anything mainly the remains of dead animals (ie: carrion) They are here all the year and can be seen almost every day looking for things to eat on the grass. Their call is a distinctive 'Caw'.

### Magpie

These birds are black and white and have long tails. They chatter a lot and like to pick up all sorts of things from the ground. They have big domed nests made of twigs and lay a lot of blue green eggs with brown mottling.

### Jay

These are the noisiest birds in the park but their song is not pretty. They like to romp through the trees screeching loudly. If you get close to one they have a beautiful blue patch on each wing, chestnut coloured shoulders and, when they fly away from you, a white backside called in bird language a rump!



Wood Pigeon



Ring Dove



Feral Pigeon



Ring-neck Parakeets

### Pigeon

The biggest pigeons in the park are called wood pigeons. They look plump with short legs and clear white marks on either side of its neck. They graze on the ground looking for worms, spiders, and grass seeds. They also eat berries on trees and bushes. They have a distinctive call.

### Ring Dove

Sometimes you can see a pair of ring doves, also called Barbary doves, either on the ground like the wood pigeons looking for food or in the trees when it is easier to hear them making a gentle cooing sound. These are beautiful birds that are close relatives of the wood pigeon but smaller, neater and more shy.

### Feral Pigeon

The feral pigeons are probably the most numerous birds of the pigeon family to be found in the park. They are originally from birds called turtledoves that were taken from the wild and used as homing pigeons or as carrier pigeons to carry messages. They have a great variety of colours and are often quite pretty. They are unpopular with those who have to look after public places because of the mess they can make. They also can carry a nasty disease, called cryptococcosis, caused by a fungus that does not seem to harm the pigeons but it can harm some people.

### Ring-neck Parakeets

With emerald green feathers and rose red beaks, ring-neck parakeets are an exotic addition to suburban London. Originating from the Himalayas, they are noisy but very pretty.

## Medium Sized Birds

### Great Spotted Woodpeckers

These birds are more usually heard than seen. They make a loud click sound with a second or so between each click. When you hear them look up to the tops of the trees and sometimes you will see a bird on the side of a branch. The young birds have a red cap. Sometimes in the early summer the great spotted woodpecker makes a very rapid drumming noise with it is beak on dead boughs the tree trunk.

### Mistle Thrush

A pair of mistle thrushes has tried to nest in the park for the last few years in a holm oak tree in the North West corner but probably each year the squirrels have taken all the eggs. The birds make a dry rasping chatter. Once you have heard it there is no mistaking it. Mistle thrushes are handsome birds with bold markings on their chests. They are a bit bigger than song thrushes.

### Song Thrush

Sometimes you can see a song thrush or so looking for worms on the grass. They are smaller than their relatives, the mistle thrushes, and make a much nicer song. They are not as common now as they used to be twenty years ago and nobody seems to know why.

### Starling

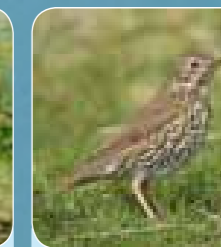
Flocks of starlings are common in the park. The adult birds have a most fantastic collection of coloured feathers. In the evenings starlings assemble in huge flocks called 'angels' and may roost in particular places such as the bridges over the Thames. The collective noun for starlings is a murmuration and if you listen to a flock chattering to each other you realize how apt this word is.



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Mistle Thrush



Song Thrush



Starling



### Blackbird

There are nearly always blackbirds in the park looking for worms particularly when it has been raining. The male is very black with a yellow beak. The female is brown, smaller and much quieter. Male blackbirds like to sing in the tops of trees particularly in the early morning when they are a big part of the dawn chorus. They are saying 'Here I am' to females and 'This is my tree' to males.

### Redwing

Redwings visit the park between January and March most years from Scandinavia. They browse in small flocks on the grass, foraging for worms and spiders. They are not very shy and it is usually easy to see their 'eyebrow' and the reddish patch under their wings which is much more prominent when they take off to fly. They look rather like thrushes.

### Small Birds

#### Gold Finches

These small birds are quite common in Wimbledon and are attracted to bird feeders. The sexes are broadly similar, with a red face, black and white head, warm brown upper parts, white under parts with buff flanks and breast patches, and black and yellow wings.

#### Greenfinch

There are usually some greenfinches in the park, particularly in the spring and summer, but they are shy and not easy to see. The males like perching on the tops of trees and singing the day away. They sometimes flock in small trees.



Blackbird



Redwing



Goldfinch



Greenfinch

### Chaffinch

There is often a pair of chaffinches on the west edge of the park and they have tried to nest there some years but again the squirrels have probably taken the eggs. The male is a handsome bird. The female is much duller. They build beautifully constructed nests of moss and tiny twigs.

### House sparrow

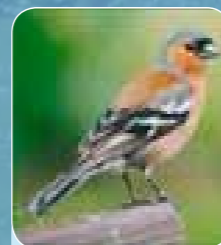
House sparrows used to be one of the most common birds in London but they are now far less common – perhaps our houses have fewer nesting holes! Males have bolder colours than the female. Sparrows tend to be in flocks often in particular bushes. House sparrows can be seen in the park but not often. They like to eat sunflower seeds.

### Hedge Sparrow

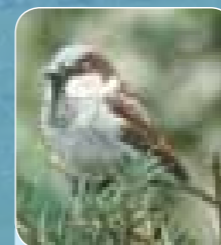
This inconspicuous bird, is sometimes called a dunnock but more appropriately a hedge accentor because of the beautiful song it can produce and also because it belongs not to the sparrow family but to the family of accentors (prunellidae). It is common in the Gardens but is not easy to see. Unlike a house sparrow it has a small sharp beak more suitable for picking up small insects than cracking seeds.

### Robin

The robin is a much-loved bird. There are always several in the park. If you hear a beautiful bird song from one of trees or bushes it is probably a robin and if you stop and look for it in the nearby shrubs you will usually be able to see the red breast. Robins have a very wide range of songs and an alarm' cry like a very rapid series of clicks.



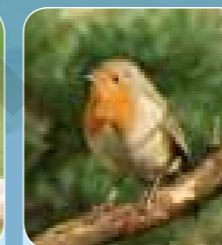
Chaffinch



House sparrow



Hedge Sparrow



Robin

### Great Tit

In the spring and summer there are nearly always great tits in the Gardens. They have a lot of songs to sing and they often flock with the other tits. All the tits are sometimes referred to as titmice because of the mouse like squeaks that they make but the great tit song is not at all squeaky. It is a very pretty bird and one of the most handsome in the Gardens.

### Blue Tit

Small flocks of blue tits are usually to be found in the Gardens. They often flock with the other tits and like browsing on trees looking for small insects. They are not often seen on the ground. In the trees they make a noisy chatter that is quite typical and you will soon be able to learn what is making the noise.

### Long-tailed Tit

Flocks of long-tailed tits are commonly to be found in the park usually in the summer and autumn. They make a big din and really deserve to be called titmice. The individual birds show a wide range of colours, as the young birds and the older ones differ. The flocks are quite distinctive and they flit from tree to tree following each other.

### Coal Tit

This handsome bird, the coal tit is a bit smaller than a great tit with which it is easy to confuse. Look for the white patch on the nape of the neck. They are not easy to see but they have a unique song. They do flock with blue tits and great tits but they are not as common as either of these other members of the tit family.



Great Tit



Blue Tit



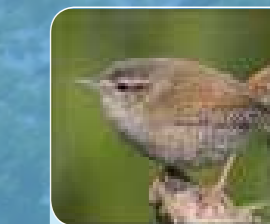
Long-tailed Tit



Coal Tit

### Jenny Wren

The jenny wren is a tiny little bird, which almost always has its tail cocked in the air. It makes quite a noise involving sometimes a lot of very rapid clicks. They are not common on the Gardens but, with care, you can see one from time to time. They like lurking in the bottom of bushes and looking for tiny insects among the leaves. These are best found by spotting the movement in the undergrowth where a wren is foraging.



Jenny Wren



Gold Crest

### Gold Crest

This lovely little creature – the gold crest – is probably the most difficult of all the birds in the park to get a good look at. Listen for a tiny little cheeping particularly in the fir trees on the west edge of the Gardens. In the late summer there is often a small family of them.

### Pied Wagtail

Pied wagtails often gather in the trees in front of Centre Court on early autumn evenings. They sometimes visit the park too. Their feathers are grey/black above and white below, with black throat and top of head. They like to forage on hard surfaces where they can see and pursue their prey.



Pied Wagtail

This is one of a series of trail leaflets that have been produced for South Park Gardens as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund restoration project. These leaflets will help visitors to the Gardens explore a wide range of flora and fauna and will also help to interpret the history of the local area.

#### The others include:

- Tree Trail Walk
- Local History of South Park Gardens
- Wildlife in South Park Gardens