

# Birds of Wakehurst Place

One of the great pleasures of a walk around Wakehurst Place is the diversity of birdlife that occurs in the woodlands, formal gardens and conservation areas. Together, the gardens and the Loder Valley Nature Reserve (LVNR) offer a wide range of habitats to resident birds and species visiting from Africa and Southern Europe for the summer and from Scandinavia and Eastern Europe for the winter.



## Kew information sheet W7

The more formally planted areas around the Mansion attract many birds typical of gardens and parks. Chaffinches, Robins and even Pheasants will feed out of visitors' hands. In the summer, tame broods of Mallard and Moorhen frequent the ponds and lawns. Overhead, on warm evenings, small parties of Swifts scream as they dash around the sky. These scythe-winged birds, which nest in the Mansion eaves, arrive in May and leave during August to winter in southern Africa. April heralds the arrival of two other aerial species: the Swallow and the (white-rumped) House Martin. The swallows fly low over the lawn above the Pinetum, feeding up for their long return migration that takes them across the Sahara. Another long-distance summer visitor, attracted North by the long days and abundance of food, is the drab, but nevertheless charming, Spotted Flycatcher. It perches motionless for minutes at a time before darting out after flying insects. With summer visitors long departed, Pied Wagtails appear on the lawns and, on winter evenings, Cormorants fly over to roost on Ardingly Reservoir while a Grey Heron may put in an appearance on the Mansion Pond.

Given the mix of mature trees and coppice at Wakehurst Place, it is not surprising that most woodland bird species of Southern England can be found on the Estate. In winter, a particularly good place to see species such as Coal and Marsh Tits and

Nuthatch is the lookout point above the Himalayan Glade, especially when food has been put out. Two winter visitors to the gardens are Redwing and Fieldfare. These thrushes cross the North Sea from Scandinavia and arrive in late autumn. They are often seen near the car park. It is also worth noting that many of the more familiar species seen on the Estate in winter such as Chaffinch and Starling may have travelled from the Continent. The Siskin, although primarily a winter visitor to the Pinetum, the alders around Westwood Lake and the LVNR, may breed on the Estate. A very welcome recent addition to the resident bird population is the Buzzard. A scan through binoculars from the northern edge of the Pinetum sometimes reveals one of these large raptors soaring on the thermals.

Perhaps the best place to see and hear migrant warblers in spring is the LVNR. The coppice is managed to encourage species such as the aptly named Blackcap, the Chiffchaff and the Willow Warbler. The latter two are most easily distinguished by their songs (the Chiffchaff repeats its name). Peak performances are from late March through to early June. The LVNR is also home to woodland species such as Tawny Owl, Woodcock and the scarce Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Many commoner species also breed there. A survey in 1999 by the Champion family revealed the following numbers of singing males / pairs in the 60

Above: **Nuthatch**  
(Stephen Dalton/NHPA)

hectare reserve: Robins, 60; Wrens, 52; Blue Tit, 40; Blackbirds, 33; Great Tit, 23 and Coal Tit, 17.

The Ardingly Reservoir and water features in the gardens attract other birds. In summer, Grey Wagtails, a local bird in Sussex, can often be seen at the edge of Westwood Lake. A recent innovation in the LVNR is the establishment of a hide next to a nesting bank for Kingfishers. This beautiful species can also be seen in the vicinity of Westwood Lake. Its presence is often first given away by its shrill call. Great Crested Grebes, Canada and Greylag Geese and Mandarin Ducks are to be seen out on Ardingly Reservoir. Common Sandpipers, Lapwings and even Little Egret have been recorded around the margins.

### Access to the Loder Valley Nature Reserve

Please remember that access is by permit issued by Wakehurst Place Visitor Services (allow at least 24 hours) – contact the administration office on 01444 894067



LIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN OR FLYING OVER THE WAKEHURST PLACE ESTATE

This list includes all 128 species recorded up to the end of May 2001. Records of scarcer species are included only if they have been published in *The Sussex Bird Report (Sussex Ornithological Society)*.

**Key to status symbols**

**R** = regularly seen resident or frequent visitor in most/all months of the year.

**r** = scarce resident or scarce visitor in various months of the year.

**S** = regularly seen summer visitor.

**s** = scarce summer visitor.

**B** = probably breeds annually.

**b** = breeds less than annually, or a probable breeder in some years.

**W** = regularly seen winter visitor.

**w** = scarce winter visitor.

**M** = regular migrant in spring and/or autumn.

**m** = scarce or rare migrant.

- Little Grebe (r) Mainly LVNR. Has bred.
- Great Crested Grebe (RB) LVNR.
- Cormorant (W/s) LVNR & flying over.
- Little Egret (r) Mainly LVNR. First 1998.
- Grey Heron (R) LVNR & Mansion Pond.
- Mute Swan (r) LVNR. Occ. Gardens. Has bred.
- White-fronted Goose (w) LVNR. Includes feral birds.
- Greylag Goose (RB) LVNR. Occ. Gardens.
- Canada Goose (Rb) LVNR. Occ. Gardens.
- Barnacle Goose (r) LVNR. Feral birds.
- Brent Goose Old record.
- Shelduck (w/m) LVNR.
- Mandarin (RB) LVNR. Occ. Gardens.
- Wigeon (w/m) LVNR.
- Gadwall (w/m) LVNR.
- Teal (w/m) LVNR.
- Mallard (RB) Breeds Mansion Pond etc.
- Garganey (m) LVNR. 1 record.
- Shoveler (w/m) LVNR.
- Pochard (w/m) LVNR.
- Tufted Duck (W/s) LVNR & Westwood Lake. Has bred.
- Goldeneye (w) 1 record.
- Goosander (w) LVNR & flying over.
- Ruddy Duck (w) LVNR.
- Honey Buzzard (s/m) Several records.
- Sparrowhawk (RB).
- Buzzard (rb) Increasing in line with a county trend.
- Osprey (m/s) Annual both passages. Mainly LVNR.

- Kestrel (RB).
- Hobby (s/m) Several seen most years. Increasing.
- Red-legged Partridge (r) Has bred. Prob. releases.
- Grey Partridge (r).
- Pheasant (RB).
- Water Rail (w) 1 record.
- Moorhen (RB) Breeds on most ponds.
- Coot (rb/W) LVNR.
- Oystercatcher (m) LVNR. 1 record.
- Ringed Plover (m) 1 record.
- Lapwing (W/s) LVNR & flying over.
- Snipe (w/m) LVNR.
- Woodcock (rB/W).
- Redshank (w/m) LVNR.
- Greenshank (m) LVNR.
- Green Sandpiper (w/m) LVNR.
- Common Sandpiper (m) LVNR.
- Black-headed Gull (W/s) e.g Mansion Pond.
- Common Gull (w).
- Lesser Black-backed Gull (w/m) Flying over.
- Herring Gull (w/m) Flying over.
- Great Black-backed Gull (w/m) Flying over.
- Common Tern (m) LVNR.
- Black Tern (m) LVNR.
- Stock Dove (rB) Regularly nests in owl nest boxes.
- Woodpigeon (RB).
- Collared Dove (Rb).
- Turtle Dove (s) Now very scarce. Has bred.
- Cuckoo (sb) Decreasing.
- Barn Owl Old records only.
- Little Owl (Rb) Mainly LVNR.
- Tawny Owl (RB) Scarce compared with 20 years ago.
- Swift (SB).
- Kingfisher (RB) LVNR & Westwood Lake.
- Green Woodpecker (RB).
- Great Spotted Woodpecker (RB).
- Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (r) Mainly LVNR. Has bred.
- Skylark (w).
- Sand Martin (m).
- Swallow (SB/M).
- House Martin (SB/M).
- Tree Pipit (sb) Scarce compared with 20 years ago.
- Meadow Pipit (w/m). Occ. small flocks.
- Yellow Wagtail (m) Especially autumn.
- Grey Wagtail (RB) Especially Westwood Lake.
- Pied Wagtail (RB/W).
- Waxwing (w) 1 record.
- Wren (RB).
- Duncock (RB).
- Robin (RB).
- Nightingale (s/m) Has bred.
- Black Redstart (w/m) Occasional on Mansion in late autumn.
- Redstart (m).
- Stonechat (m). LVNR.

- Wheatear (m).
- Blackbird (RB).
- Fieldfare (W).
- Song Thrush (RB).
- Redwing (W).
- Mistle Thrush (RB) Occasional small flocks in late summer.
- Sedge Warbler (s/m).
- Reed Warbler (s) LVNR and Reedswamp
- Whitethroat (s/m) Possibly breeds.
- Garden Warbler (sb).
- Blackcap (SB).
- Wood Warbler (m) 2 records.
- Chiffchaff (SB).
- Willow Warbler (SB).
- Goldcrest (RB).
- Spotted Flycatcher (SB) Especially Mansion.
- Pied Flycatcher (m) 1 record.
- Long-tailed Tit (RB).
- Marsh Tit (RB) As good as any Sussex site.
- Willow Tit (rb).
- Coal Tit (RB).
- Blue Tit (RB).
- Great Tit (RB).
- Nuthatch (RB) As good as any Sussex site.
- Treecreeper (RB).
- Great Grey Shrike (w/m) 1 record.
- Jay (RB).
- Magpie (RB).
- Jackdaw (RB).
- Rook (R) Nearest rookery is on S. of England Showground.
- Carrion Crow (RB).
- Starling (RB).
- House Sparrow (RB).
- Tree Sparrow Old records only incl. breeding.
- Chaffinch (RB).
- Brambling (w) Scarce.
- Greenfinch (RB).
- Goldfinch (RB/W/m) Some migrant late spring flocks.
- Siskin (W/s) Has probably bred.
- Linnet (Rb/W/m).
- Redpoll (w) Scarce for many years.
- Crossbill (s/w) Small flocks some years.
- Bullfinch (RB).
- Hawfinch (w/s). Much rarer than 20 years ago.
- Yellowhammer (w).
- Reed Bunting (rb) LVNR.

Records of new or scarce species for the gardens would be most welcome. Please send them to Bird Records, c/o Visitor Services, Wakehurst Place, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TN or write down details and hand them in at the Ticket Office. Please note that bird identification books are on sale at the Wakehurst Place Shop.