

## BIRDING IN THE DEAD CENTRE OF LONDON

I spend a fair bit of my time in churchyards, well, one churchyard to be precise, as I have the dubious responsibility for grass and hedge cutting at Christ Church. Throughout the summer months I spend many hours weaving my way among the gravestones and dodging the mounds of earth thoughtfully thrown up by the numerous resident moles. You may imagine this to be a pleasant and peaceful way to spend a few hours each week, engaged in a traditional rural occupation, communing with nature and keenly observing the activities of the wildlife.

Far from it! Gone are the days when a couple of hours gentle scything were all that was required and the lowing of distant cattle, the buzzing of insects and various bird calls were all that disturbed the the long summer days. Now the roar of the sit-on mower or petrol strimmer are the only noises that penetrate the ear-defenders I'm obliged to wear. However there's no denying that churchyards, cemeteries and even crematoria are largely undisturbed green oases where visitors and residents are generally quiet and well behaved and which have become havens for wildlife.

A couple of weeks ago we paid a long weekend visit to our younger son who lives in a far from leafy suburb in London. In fact I'd really describe the area as rather insalubrious but with London prices as they are it was the best he could do. We were there in our usual roles of cleaner and general handyman but were allowed some free time once the jobs were done. I made my escape to Lambeth Crematorium which is directly over the road from his house. I really went just for a breath of fresh air and a leg stretch but with typical birders optimism I was carrying my bins.

The first bird I saw as I passed through the gate was a Kestrel quickly followed by a Great-spotted Woodpecker and a Nuthatch! A second Kestrel soon appeared and the pair put on a display of mating flight and calls and a Green Woodpecker yaffled away demanding to be noticed and ticked. Just as I was leaving to return to my various tasks an odd call made me turn just in time to see a pair of Ring-necked Parakeets fly over. I know they are common and indeed a nuisance in some areas of the south- east and I have seen them before but it still gave me a thrill to see them.

On our way home we stopped off at Barnes Wildfowl and Wetland Centre which was less than a mile out of our way where I added a Ruddy Duck and a sleeping male Garganey to my year list.

After a pleasant lunch in the cafe we made our way home up the M40 accompanied part of the way by dozens of Red Kites.

It really is one of the great pleasures of birdwatching in that you can do it just about anywhere and you never know what's going to turn up!

Bob



### **DON'T MISS**

### **THE BIRDWATCHERS SPRING FAIR MIDDLETON HALL**

Sat / Sun 31st May and 1st June: 9.30-5.30

Free Parking: Adults £3.50. children free

Walks. Workshop. Optics. Books. Clothing. Artists. Ringing. Refreshments  
and much more

### Bits'n'pieces:

\*\*At a recent committee meeting (see overpage) the demise of outdoor meetings was discussed and it was decided that efforts will be made to resume them if we can overcome the minibus problem.

\*\*You can help our finances by providing the occasional raffle prize, bottles are always welcome of course but new books, bird food, chocs or boxes of biscuits etc would help.