



Notes

A measure of reduced autumn emigration through Inner London

The birds of Regent's Park, Inner London, have recently been described in detail by Green (1999). In the course of that book's preparation, the thought arose of making a historical comparison between our original migrant records, from the 1960s, and those of Tony Duckett and Dave Johnson, from the late 1990s. To this end, we have assembled fully comparable samples of the early-autumn migration figures of 15 summer visitors that occur only on passage in the Park. These cover two periods (each of three years) from the 1960s, and the four years 1996-99. The comparisons are considered valid, since methods, timing of counts, habitats visited and other factors remained comparable throughout; in addition, coverage in the late 1990s, by two very competent observers actually working in the Park, was at least as thorough as that during the earlier years.

Table 1 displays the trends in migrant numbers in these periods; we have shown 1969 figures separately, in order to demonstrate the massive drop in that year (see below). Although we have used the oft-discredited quotient of 'bird-days' in the comparison, we would stress that off-passage stays, even of night migrants, in Regent's Park are almost always short, for example, 1.1 to 1.2 days for warblers (Sylviidae) in the early

1960s (DIMW, unpublished). The figures in the table are, therefore, much closer to actual numbers of individuals than are the bird-day totals at coastal observatories.

If one looks back over four decades, two events stand out. Recognised but unexplained at the time, the sudden reduction in migrant totals by almost 58% in 1969 followed the onset of the drought in the African Sahel, and the resultant population crashes of several summer visitors that winter there. It is, however, the marked overall collapse in migrant numbers over the last third of the twentieth century that is so striking. Of the fifteen species, only the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and the Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* remain apparently undiminished, and only the Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* is now substantially commoner than it was in the 1960s.

In the early 1960s, serial occurrences of recently arrived East Coast or drift migrants, such as Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, were occasionally noted in early September. It is possible, therefore, that the declines in migrant numbers reflect not only the lower total numbers of many British breeding species, but also a thinner penetration of Britain by their European counterparts.

Table 1. Trends in early-autumn numbers of 15 migrants, Regent's Park, London, in 1960s and late 1990s.

	Average bird-days per annum 1st Aug-15th Sep			
	1962-64	1967-68	1969	1996-99
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	16.3	7.0	1.0	0.3
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	7.0	5.0	1.0	4.8
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	102.3	87.5	44.0	100.0
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1.7	2.5	0.0	1.3
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	7.3	26.5	12.0	11.8
Common Redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	10.0	8.0	4.0	1.5
Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	9.7	13.5	3.0	1.3
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	24.0	19.5	4.0	3.5
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	20.3	31.0	9.0	6.5
Common Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>	48.7	57.0	5.0	7.0
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	23.7	17.5	10.0	7.3
Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	2.3	1.5	1.0	4.8
Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	51.7	69.5	32.0	97.0
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	383.0	360.0	173.0	197.0
Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	27.3	16.5	6.0	1.8
Totals (15 species)	735.3	722.5	305.0	445.5
Index	100	98.3	41.5	60.6

In summary, for every 100 migrants of the 15 species that passed over or recuperated in Regent's Park in the early autumns of 1962-64, only 61 have appeared in the late 1990s. Indeed, the figure in 1999 was only

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42, the same as that in 1969 following the drought in the Sahelian winter quarters.

Reference

Green, R. 1999. *The Birds of Regent's Park*. London.

Birds using street lights in Spain to prolong their day

In Torremolinos, Málaga province, Spain, it is not uncommon for several species of bird to prolong their day beyond sunset and before sunrise with the aid of sodium street lights. Both Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*, which winter in the town, are commonly active up to 90 minutes before sunrise, and occasionally earlier. Both species appear to use artificial lighting solely for the purpose of claiming and maintaining territories, particularly in October and November, when disputes are of maximum intensity. Blackbirds *Turdus merula* are also regularly active before sunrise in patches of artificial light, using the time both for feeding and for limited territorial assertion; in the early spring, males frequently sing before dawn. In April and May each year, Pallid *Apus pallidus* and Common Swifts *A. apus* are recorded up to 120 minutes after sunset, feeding by street lights alongside small pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus*.

The most interesting observation so far is of a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* which was seen feeding by street lights on many occasions in July and October-November 1998. Although there was a hiatus between the two periods of sightings, it seems likely that the same individual was involved. The species is a summer visitor to the area, breeding in the town, and typically present from mid May to mid September, although migrants are occasionally seen until late October. The individual in question used just two perches under one street lamp, one on each side of, and about 2.5 m above, a

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Edificio San Gabriel 2-4 °A, c/. Escritor Adolfo Reyes, E-29620 Torremolinos, Spain

busy thoroughfare. Neither perch appeared to be used during the day. In July, I saw the flycatcher feeding only after sunset; from 17th October to 11th November (an unusually late sighting), it fed both before sunrise and after sunset, but with a clear preference for the latter. In the autumn, it very seldom appeared in adjacent gardens during the day, even though the species is frequently encountered here in summer. In July, this 'nocturnal foraging' typically continued for 60-80 minutes after sunset, while in autumn the flycatcher commonly fed for up to 60 minutes both before sunrise and after sunset. It spent longer feeding after sunset up to 1st November (as much as 235 minutes after sunset on one occasion), but after this date this behaviour occurred for shorter periods and was more sporadic.

Clearly, this Spotted Flycatcher was exploiting the presence of insects attracted by the street lamps. In July, the weather was fine and warm, and there should have been no shortage of insects during daylight hours; perhaps the extra foraging time enabled the adult to remain in better condition while rearing a brood. In 1998, I did not observe fledged young until August, although they normally appear in mid July. The reappearance in autumn of what was presumably the same individual is of particular interest. Again, the weather was fine and warm, with no lack of aerial insects. A possible explanation for the behaviour at this season may be that migration was delayed for some reason, and the chance to exploit a food source without competition appeared attractive.

EDITORIAL COMMENT Nocturnal activity under artificial lighting is by no means unusual, even in Britain (see, for example, *Brit. Birds* 71: 83-84 & 88), but this sequence of observations from Torremolinos illustrates the range of species which use the opportunity to extend their natural day, and the range of behaviours employed in such circumstances.

But the measures just forced people into the hands of smugglers and illegality. Bethany Bell, Austria correspondent: The dead bodies of dozens of migrants were later discovered in the back of a lorry that had travelled from Hungary into Austria. It was a shocking moment that highlighted the issue of people smuggling and the desperation of those caught up in the crisis. The contribution to annual mortality of migrating monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) due to collisions with vehicles is poorly understood but likely significant. Recent estimates based on a study in Texas suggests that mortality during autumn migration may be of the order of 2 million per year or about 3% of the population. Mortality of Monarch Butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) at Two Highway Crossing "Hotspots" During Autumn Migration in Northeast Mexico. Blanca Xiomara Mora Alvarez¹, Rogelio Carrera-Treviño² and Keith A. Hobson^{1,3*}. ¹Department of Biology, University of Western Ontario, London, ON, Canada. ²Facultad de Medicina Veterinaria y Zootecnia, Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Escobedo, Mexico. ³Environment and Climate Change Canada, Saskatoon, SK, Canada. They passed through planning regulations as easily as knotweed pushes through tarmac, devoured smaller and independent retailers with as much reflection as the Nile perch cleansing Lake Victoria of competition. They were often introduced to provide a specific service but outgrew their habitats until their cash till song could be heard on every street corner, forecourt, round about, and out of town shopping centre. B. This question is posed by a new book, "Give Us Your Best and Brightest", by Devesh Kapur and John McHale. The authors are development economists first, football fans second (if at all). They see the emigration of African players as a highly visible example of the "brain drain". Autumn migration is experienced in a different manner across life stages: juveniles undertake their very first winter journey, whereas adults and immatures usually move towards previous wintering areas [1]. It has been demonstrated that bird migratory behaviour has an inherited genetic component, migration control being primarily based on an endogenous clock-and-compass system during the first outward journey of juveniles [1]. During. However, no study has provided a complete overview of autumn migratory behaviour across adults, immatures and juveniles concurrently in a wild population.