

*The London Bird Records are being transformed from historic paper cards to an accessible digital dataset. London Natural History Society (LNHS) and Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC (GiGL) have launched 2 projects to enable volunteers to help us bring these records into the 21st Century. The projects don't require any specific bird knowledge and involve transcribing the historic cards. Find out below how you can get involved.*

[Click here to access the London Bird Records Zooniverse Project](#)

[Click here to email the London Bird Record 50 Project](#)

## The history of the London Bird Records



Carrion Crow (c) Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

The London Bird Records were first compiled in 1908 for London north of the Thames, (retrospectively from 1887), and in 1914 for London south of the Thames (from 1902). After these dates observations of birds were compiled annually. They were originally published in the London Naturalist, but from 1926 onwards published separately as the London Bird Report. The first set of records up until 1943 was compiled on foolscap sheets. In 1943 they were recompiled as part of the data collection for the publication of "Birds of the London Area since 1900", which covered observations up to 1950 and was published in 1957. These records were also on foolscap sheets. From 1951 until 1987 submitted observations were recorded on 8x5 record cards. These cards were filed first by year, then species, then by vice-county. These records are hosted by GiGL, which is London's LERC (Local Environmental Records Centre) and are the data custodians of the LNHS.

## What we want to find out



Sparrowhawk (c) Gehan de Silva Wijeyeratne

The main goal of this project is to recover historic species data so that the information can be used by ecologists, conservationists, decision-makers and anyone else who is interested. This will improve knowledge of bird populations and distribution in London, and allow historical bird data to be made available for scientific research.

LNHS and GiGL have been working on these record cards so they can be added to our dataset of species in London. This collated dataset of information from hundreds of people informs decisions affecting wildlife in London and ultimately the conservation of species and habitats in the capital.

Most of these record cards haven't been examined since they were first written by the original recorder, so you might discover something surprising!



Rose-ringed Parakeet (c) David Howdon

The LNHS recording area covers a 20-mile radius from St Paul's Cathedral and the recording landscape has changed many times since the first record card was created.

Having transcribed the record cards covering the 1980s it was estimated it would take approximately 70 years to digitise all the cards without getting volunteers involved, so we need your help to discover what birds these 20th-century bird watchers were spotting.

We'd love your help to transcribe this data and interpret the diverse and idiosyncratic handwriting that only human beings can read and understand effectively. The transcription of these record cards will provide a huge contribution to the field of natural history, and particularly to conservation in London and surrounding areas of South-East England.

## London Bird Records Zooniverse Project

The record cards have been scanned and indexed by year, species and vice-county. This gives very basic access but it takes a great deal of work to extract usable information. The data for the 1970s and 1980s have been transcribed already, and the Zooniverse project is now working on the 1960s.

The Zooniverse website will show participants a scanned version of a record card (as demonstrated in the image below) and ask if there are any records in the image, before asking the participant to transcribe the data into an online form next to the record. The same card may be shown to multiple participants to verify the transcriptions. The project has been a huge success to date, and over 2,000 volunteers have participated to the project and completed over 5,000 classifications in total.

[Click here to get started on the London Bird Records Zooniverse Project](#)

The screenshot shows the Zooniverse interface for the London Bird Records project. At the top, there's a header with the project name "London Bird Records" and navigation links: ABOUT, CLASSIFY, TALK, and COLLECT. The main area displays a scanned handwritten record card titled "GRADWALL" and "FIDDX 1970". The card is a table with columns for location, date, count, and observer. The transcription form on the right asks "Does this card contain any records?" with "Yes" and "No" buttons. Below this, it says "NEED SOME HELP WITH THIS TASK?" and "Non-Typical Card (skip)". At the bottom of the form are "Done & Talk" and "Done" buttons.

| LOCATION            | DATE                | COUNT | OBSERVER      |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------|---------------|
| FIRST PART OF YEAR  | JAN 11              | 3     | M. COATH      |
| KING GEORGE IS RES. | MAR 18              | 12    | A.R.J. PAINNE |
|                     | MAR 15              | 2     | M. COATH      |
|                     | MAR 17              | 388   | A.R.J. PAINNE |
| STAINES RES.        | JAN 24              | 1     | M. COATH      |
| QUEEN MARY RES.     | JAN 24              | 1     | M. COATH      |
| BRENT RES.          | MAR 31              | 2     | IAN DODD      |
| KEMPTON RES.        | JAN 25              | 1     | G.C. GORE     |
|                     | FEB 15              | 1     | D. CHARRIS    |
| COLNEBROOK          | FIRST half of year  | 7     | A. PARKER     |
| LATHEL PART OF YEAR | JUL 28              | 1     | N. MARSHALL   |
| BRENT RES.          | AUG 26              | 12    | L.A. BATTEN   |
|                     | SEPT 13             | 9     | G.V. BEETTER  |
|                     | DEC 28              | 7     | A. PARKER     |
| COLNEBROOK          | Second half of year | 4     |               |

## London Bird Record 50 Project

| SURREY          | 1952      | GT. CRESTED GREBE                          | 370                           |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Godstone.       | 1 July.   | Pair with 4 young on Town pond.            | A. J. Holcombe & H.E. Pounds. |
| Richmond Park   | 9 April.  | Pair nesting.                              | Mrs. J. Westcott.             |
| ..              | 16 April. | First young hatched; unusually early date. | R.W. Hayman.                  |
| Godton Park.    | 6 July.   | 3 pairs <del>seen</del> BRED; possibly 4.  | H. Bertham.                   |
| Godstone.       | 9 June.   | 1 pair with 4 young.                       | A. J. Holcombe.               |
| ..              | 16 March. | 1                                          | G.R. Mann.                    |
| Ham Gravel-pit. | 16 March. | 20                                         |                               |
| ..              | 26 April. | 1 pair with 3 young.                       | R.S. Hatch.                   |
| Wimbledon Park. | 13 Aug.   | 1 ad feeding juvenile (well-grown).        |                               |

The London Bird Record 50 Project involves transcribing card scans of cards from the 1950's onto an Excel spreadsheet so you should find comfortable working with that (any compatible spreadsheet can be used so long as it can open and save in Excel format). Volunteers will be e-mailed batches of 20 card scans, an Excel spreadsheet with the required fields for transcription, and a set of instructions, all in a zipped folder.

20 cards should generate around 200 entries in the spreadsheet. Some spreadsheet fields are validated (you can only enter pre-set values) to help with consistency of entry across the project, and there are lists of names of sites and observers to help with illegible entries.

[Click here to email the London Bird Record 50 Project for a trial pack of 10 cards](#)

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Date Published: 20/09/2020