

## Wildlife at Seething Wells

By Tony Quinn

Seething Wells was constructed in 1852, to draw water from the Thames, filter it, and pump that clean water up to London via Putney. It was closed a century later. Since its closure it has become a haven for wildlife, offering sometimes unique environments for wildlife to colonise and thrive.

There are many man-made features in Seething Wells: tunnels, conduits, still water, layers of sand, gravel, buildings and walls. These man-made features and the undisturbed nature of the site enabled the slow colonisation by many species. This would have started with the invasion of aquatic plants and invertebrates on the site, which in turn provide food, shelter and breeding opportunities for higher animals and birds.

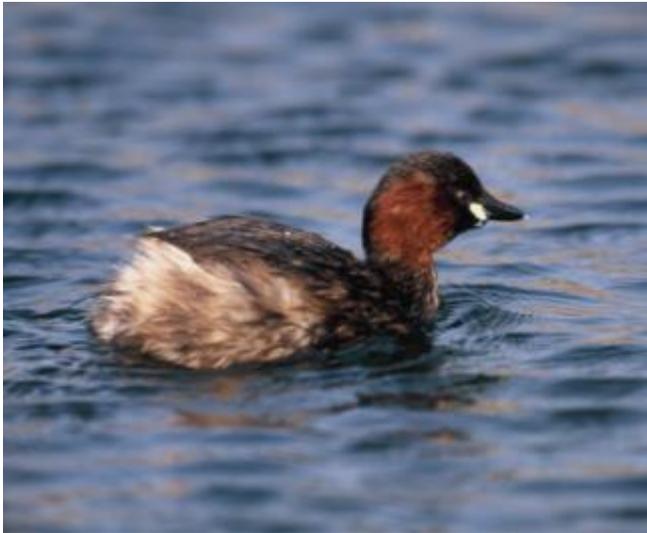


Photo by Ken Clarke

Of the birds, the Little Grebe is one that has taken full advantage of the site. It is usually present in quite large numbers for the species, with numbers of 12 or more quite usual. Young were raised in 2003, 2006 (2 broods at least), 2007, 2008, and 2009. A pair or two likely breed or attempt to breed every year. The species has declined by 25%-49% in Britain in the last 25 years and it is thus amber listed. This is an important site in Surrey and London for this attractive species.

Rather brown and uninteresting from a distance, the Gadwall has a fine vermiculated plumage when seen close to. It too is amber listed and is also a 'Species of European Concern'. It is one of two subject species of the South West London Special Protection Area. Numbers at this site have been increasing, particularly this century and we had hoped it might breed one day. The maximum number seen was 46 in 2004 but around 10 is more usual.



Photo by Ken Clarke



The Lapwing visits the site in good numbers during the winter, using the concrete walls just above water level as a safe resting during the day and believed to use the paddocks across the river in Home Park to feed at night and sometimes during the day. Up to 200 were seen in 2009 but around 100 is more usual. We have no certain records of breeding but it may well have attempted to breed. The species is Red Listed meaning that it has declined by more than

50% as a breeding bird in Britain over 25 years. It too is a 'Species of European Concern'. It is a grand sight to see a large flock of this species so close to our town centre.

The Tufted Duck is another Amber Listed species and has bred on at least 3 occasions. Normally it is present on site year round. The young are particularly cute!



All together The Surbiton & District Bird Watching Society have recorded some 75 species of bird on the site. Those that have bred are in bold.

- Mute Swan**
- Canada Goose**
- Egyptian Goose**
- Shelduck
- Gadwall
- Teal
- Mallard**
- Shoveler
- Red-crested Pochard
- Pochard

- Tufted Duck**
- Pheasant
- Cormorant
- Grey Heron
- Little Grebe**
- Great Crested Grebe**
- Black-necked Grebe
- Sparrowhawk
- Kestrel
- Moorhen**

- Coot**
- Lapwing ?**
- Dunlin
- Snipe
- Common Sandpiper
- Green Sandpiper
- Black-headed Gull
- Mediterranean Gull
- Common Gull
- Lesser Black-backed Gull

Herring Gull  
Great Black-backed Gull  
Common Tern  
**Stock Dove ?**  
Woodpigeon  
Collared Dove  
Ring-necked Parakeet  
Swift  
Kingfisher  
Green Woodpecker  
Great Spotted  
Woodpecker  
Magpie  
Jay  
Jackdaw  
Carrion Crow

Goldcrest  
Blue Tit  
Great Tit  
**Sand Martin**  
Swallow  
House Martin  
Long-tailed Tit  
Chiffchaff  
Blackcap  
**Whitethroat**  
**Reed Warbler**  
Wren  
Starling  
Blackbird  
**Song Thrush**  
Redwing

Mistle Thrush  
**Robin**  
Wheatear  
Duncock  
**House Sparrow**  
Tree Sparrow  
Grey Wagtail  
Pied Wagtail  
Meadow Pipit  
**Chaffinch**  
**Greenfinch**  
**Goldfinch**  
Reed Bunting  
Black Swan

The site also has considerable botanical interest. It is presumed that during construction a considerable amount of chalk was imported and with this a considerable variety of chalk grassland species. Included among these are pyramidal orchid, a London Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. This is a lovely flower with a lilac coloured conical flower head made of many individual flowers.