

Wormwood Scrubs Take a walk at the 'Scrubs' – an unexpected urban gem.

Words: David Lindo

SITE GUIDE	
	
How to get there	Easily reached via the A40(M) Westway at White City, bearing north onto the A219 Scrubs Lane.
Where to park	Head north on Scrubs Lane, and park in the pay-and-display car park on the left hand side, 100m past North Pole Road.
Distance and time	To do the complete circular route from the car park, allow around 1.5 hours.
Terrain	Although there are some tarmac roads along the southern edge, the remainder of the site can be wet in places.
Accessibility	The park is open daily.
Facilities	None on-site, though there is a pub on North Pole Road.
Public transport	The nearest tube station is White City (0.5 mile away) on the Central Line. It's situated on Wood Lane, which adjoins Scrubs Lane from the south. The 220 bus services Scrubs Lane.
Sites nearby	London Wetland Centre, Kensal Green Cemetery, Regents Park, Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens.
	



David Lindo

Deep within west London lies the oasis known as Wormwood Scrubs. The Scrubs, as it's affectionately known, may not look the sort of place to attract birds.

Covering 183 acres, it's encircled by a thin band of woodland, with half the central area taken up with football pitches.

A small grassland at the western end is home to possibly the nearest colony of Meadow Pipits to central London. Despite the surrounding urbanisation, the site's appeal to nature is astounding, thanks to the attention of local conservation groups.

The scrub and woodland hold good

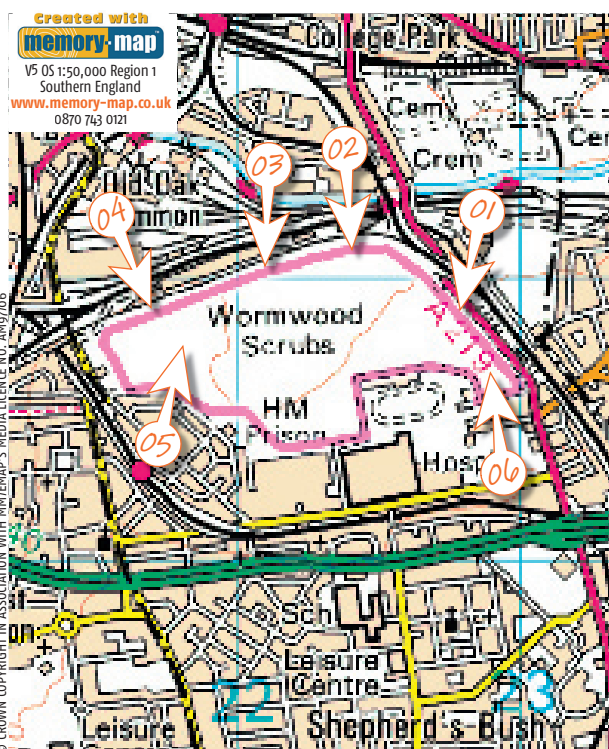
TOP TIP
Early morning visits are best, to avoid dog-walkers and model enthusiasts.

numbers of breeding warblers, including Lesser Whitethroat – a London scarcity – a few pairs of Bullfinches and up to ten pairs of Linnets. Spring and autumn can

be very interesting, especially along the northern edge of the site. Regular migrants include Redstarts, Wheatears, Yellow Wagtails and our autumn signature bird – Whinchat.

Short-eared Owl, Dartford Warbler and Nightingale have all been recorded here, but the chance of a real rarity such as Richard's Pipit, Wryneck and Ortolan Bunting can make regular visits even more rewarding.

■ David Lindo is TV's Urban Birder and a regular contributor to *Bird Watching*.



1 Search eastern edge along Scrubs Lane Wood for woodpeckers, Bullfinch and other finches.

2 The north-eastern corner of Scrubs Lane Wood through to Chat Paddock can be productive for migrant warblers, as well as wintering thrushes. Spotted Flycatchers favour the trees here.

3 Chat Paddock is worth checking in any season. Aside from breeding warblers, scarcities like Nightingale, Dartford Warbler and Ring Ouzel have all been found here.

4 The Embankment has attracted marauding Hobby, Cuckoos and overflying Whimbrel. Linnets and Whitethroat breed here.

5 Grassland can sometimes be teaming with birds; Meadow Pipits all year, Stonechat in winter with the odd Sky Lark. Whinchats and Goldfinches in late summer.

6 Martin Bell's Wood for breeding Lesser Whitethroat.



Oliver Smart

TARGET BIRD
Bullfinch

USEFUL INFORMATION

Organisations

London Natural History Society, website: www.lnhs.org.uk/
Groundwork West London, website: www.scrubs-online.org.uk/

County recorder

Rob Innes, e-mail: robinnes2004@yahoo.com

Maps

OS Explorer 173, OS Landranger 176.

Latest sightings

Birdline South East, tel: 09068 700 240.