

Walthamstow Reservoirs

From Londonbirders

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Location

This group of various sized bodies of water lies north of Stamford Hill, East of Tottenham, south-west of Walthamstow and is bisected by Ferry Lane. The site is also sandwiched between Walthamstow Marshes [to the south-east], and Tottenham Marshes [to the north-west]. There are three reservoirs north of Ferry Lane: Lockwood, High Maynard and Low Maynard; and seven on the south side - Numbers 1-5 plus East and West Warwick.

Description

The larger reservoirs are typical in having concrete banks and, at first glance, offer little to tempt any passing migratory wader. The other lakes have the appearance of those you are left with after gravel extraction has taken place. Although a visit at any time of year can be rewarding, the site can be quiet in the summer except for the large numbers of **breeding Cormorants, Grey Herons, Tufted Ducks, Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Common Terns**. The reservoirs hold **nationally important numbers of Tufted Duck** in the early autumn during July to early September their numbers will peak at about 2000! In winter, **relatively large numbers of ducks and geese** can be present, and it is always worth checking the adjacent filter beds on Coppermill Lane for gulls. The best time for **Mediterranean Gull** is March and November for **Yellow-legged Gull**, though both have been known to overwinter. There are a number of islands, each with its own character. The island on East Warwick usually holds **breeding Lesser Blackbacked Gulls** and **Herring Gulls**, and **Common Terns** can be found on several purpose-built rafts around the site in summer; the island is also a favoured spot for **Lapwing**. Reservoir Nos.1 and 2 hold the **famous heronry**, nesting beginning in early February; No.1 island held London's first breeding **Little Egrets** in summer 2006, with two pairs in summer 2007. The island on the No.5 holds the **even more famous Cormorant colony** - the population numbers around 300 pairs, with most activity from late February to late July. If you wish to see passage waders however, it is worth visiting the site at first light, as they do have a habit of disappearing after flushing. If a reservoir is drained anything could occur. Note that during persistent rain, waders appear throughout the day.

If you fancy your chances of finding a scarce Diver or Grebe, keep your eyes open: the last Black-throated Diver crashed into pylons and landed in the Coppermill Stream, beside the Low Maynard. With this group of reservoirs lying next to the river Lea [being part of the Lea Valley Regional Park], **it is likely that birds use the river for navigation**, and therefore anything can turn up. There did used to be quite a sizable flock of Tree Sparrows frequenting the centre of the site [near the island with breeding herons], but they died out during the mid 1990s. Other small birds to keep an eye out for are Wheatears, Whinchats and Stonechats, but it is also worth grilling any pipits and larks for waifs and strays.