

ISLINGTON U3A – BIRD WATCHING GROUP

SEEING RED

At this time of year (October and later) you've a chance of seeing 'red' – three types of bird with red features. They are:

- Redstarts
- Redwings
- Redshanks

Can you tell the difference?

Here is some information about each:

REDSTARTS

Redstarts are immediately identifiable by their bright orange-red tails, which they often quiver. Breeding males look smart, with slate grey upper parts, black faces and wings and an orange rump and chest. Females and young are duller. Redstarts 'bob' in a very robin-like manner, but spend little time at ground level. It is included on the Amber List of species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe where it is declining.

Redstarts are mainly found in the north and west of the UK, with the greatest concentrations in Wales. Particularly likes oak woodlands, also hedgerows, alongside streams and parkland. On passage it is best looked for in coastal scrub, thickets and woodland. Can see them on the South Downs and in Norfolk. Occasionally also closer to London. All year round. Photos: female, then male:



UK breeding: 100,000 pairs

Size: Length: 14cm, Wingspan: 20-24cm

Audio Link: <http://www.xeno-canto.org/27565>

Read more at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/redstart/#y6xFFeIEVkyIbvYE.99>



REDWINGS

The redwing is most commonly encountered as a winter bird and is the UK's smallest true thrush. Its creamy strip above the eye and orange-red flank patches make it distinctive. They roam across the UK's countryside, feeding in fields and hedgerows, rarely visiting gardens, except in the coldest weather when snow covers the fields. Only a few pairs nest in the UK. It is listed as a Schedule 1 species of The Wildlife and Countryside Act. See them in open countryside redwings like hedges and orchards as well as open, grassy fields. They will come to parks and gardens. Often they join with flocks of fieldfares. Have been seen regularly each year on Highbury Fields.

UK breeding: 13 pairs; UK wintering: 8.6 million birds

Size: Wingspan: 33-35cm; Weight: 50-75g

Audio Link: <https://www.xeno-canto.org/42438>

Read more at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/redwing/#Pgl753VfelzrTW6O.99>



REDSHANKS

As its name suggests, redshanks' most distinctive features are their bright orange-red legs. They have a medium-length bill with an orange base to match, brown speckled back and wings and paler belly. You can see them all the year round but more over winter. Generally on our shores but some move in-land over winter. Seen at Rainham and Two Tree Island.

UK breeding: 25,000 pairs

UK wintering: 130,000 birds

Size: Length: 28 cm, Wingspan: 62 cm

Audio Link: <http://www.xeno-canto.org/57914>

Read more at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/redshank/#TMIDMrS5YESw3TJX.99>

