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# Juvenile Goose Count in the Wandle Valley 2017

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This report aims to identify  
and analyse the results of  
the 2017 Wandle Valley  
Juvenile Goose survey (01st  
May – 01st June)

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*A report by the Living Wandle  
Landscape Partnership Scheme*

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Canada geese at Beddington Park

## 1. Introduction

This is the third report on geese to be produced through the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme (LWLPS, 2014 – 2018). In 2015 a goose management toolkit was produced that aimed to summarise population distribution, current management controls and techniques that could be implemented to reduce Canada geese numbers across the Wandle Valley. In 2016, a moult count was conducted to monitor population numbers and distribution across the Wandle Valley during a period when Canada geese are not mobile; this report concluded that most Canada geese go to moult on the River Thames as opposed to within the Wandle catchment and therefore future counts should focus on other behaviours/activities.

This 2017 report aims to analyse population recruitment across the catchment through a count of juvenile Canada geese and numbers of associated adult pairs / crèches. This was recommended in the 2016 report as being highest priority for the next steps in understanding Canada geese populations across the Wandle Valley.

Canada geese typically breed around late March – May. The juveniles develop alongside their parents throughout May – June and are identifiable by their coloration (yellow/green) prior to their first moult in June – July. Throughout this development stage the adults / juveniles tend to remain relatively close to their nesting site. May is therefore the ideal time to count young geese; the vast majority will have hatched, they are identifiable by their colouring before moulting, and typically representative of where breeding occurred.

The LWLPS coordinated a count of juvenile geese along the length of the River Wandle and open spaces across the Wandle Valley where there are nearby bodies of water and Canada geese are known to occur. The LWLPS involved landowners and local recorders in gathering the data to help understand the distribution of successfully breeding Canada geese across the valley, whilst also taking the opportunity to record numbers of juvenile Greylag and Egyptian geese.

### Dates:

The count period was set between 01st May and 01st June 2017, however one site was opportunistically surveyed in advance on the 25th April 2017.

### Method:

Count of Canada (priority), Egyptian and Greylag juveniles and associated numbers of adult pairs along the River corridor and across the relevant open spaces in the Wandle Valley. The count excluded the River Thames and areas outside of the Wandle catchment; Battersea Park was the Eastern most extent and Wimbledon Common (Rushmere Pond) was the Western most extent of the count. The LWLPS asked for two counts of the three geese species in each location during the month of May 2017. The first count was requested before the 15th May and the second count after 15th May, leaving at least 10 days apart between each count. The aim of this was to allow enough time between counts for colour variation (of plumage) differentiating small goslings from large goslings. Numbers of small goslings and numbers of large goslings were recorded at each site on each survey, along with the numbers of associated geese (breeding pairs or numbers of adults in a crèche). The survey did not concentrate on counting nests; however surveyors were free to record numbers of nests they saw geese sitting on as anecdotal evidence of attempted breeding.

## 2. Results

The count included all green spaces with open water across the Wandle Valley and a count of the entire length of the river. Only sites hosting juvenile Canada geese are listed in Table A. below; in the appendix Table B. shows a list of results for sites surveyed, including those without any geese present away from the river. Counts for small and large young at each site have been combined into total number of juveniles counted on each survey. Counts for Egyptian and Greylag geese are highlighted in the appendix Tables C. and D. respectively. A breakdown of counts for the different areas of Beddington Farmlands is also included in the appendix in Table E.

Numbers of nests seen were anecdotally recorded where it was easy and feasible to do so. For sites in Wandsworth (Battersea Park and Wandsworth Common) an annual total for eggs pricked during 2017 has been included; these totals are cumulative across the season and not associated with the survey date specified.

Appended is a map that gives a visual analysis of the data gathered, identifying the main areas where juveniles were raised successfully. This map has been created by GiGL and can be sought from the Wandle Landscape and Biodiversity Group.

### 2.1 Table A. showing locations where juvenile Canada geese were recorded in May 2017 and the numbers of eggs pricked during 2017.

\* Annual total numbers of eggs pricked during 2017 – not specific to the dates survey was undertaken.

Site no.	Location	No. eggs pricked	No. nests seen	No. pairs raising juveniles	Total no. surviving juveniles	Comments
<b>Sites on the river</b>						
15	Carshalton Ponds		1	1	2	Adult took young to Wilderness Island
6	Morden Hall Park		1	2	5	
11	Beddington Park		2	2	8	
14	Waddon Ponds (Croydon)	Eggs pricked – no. unknown	1	0	0	Sitting on nest, no eggs
<b>Sub-Totals</b>			<b>5+</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	
<b>Sites away from the river</b>						
10	Beddington Farmlands		27+	16+	88	
9	Mitcham Common		0	3	17	
16	Wimbledon Common (Rushmere Pond)		0	1	5	
17	Battersea Park	*10	0	1	2	
1	Wandsworth Common Lake & Stock Pond	*62	0	0	0	
<b>Sub-Totals (excluding pricked eggs)</b>			<b>27+</b>	<b>21+</b>	<b>112</b>	
<b>Grand Totals (excluding pricked eggs)</b>			<b>32+</b>	<b>26+</b>	<b>127</b>	

## 3.0 Discussion

### 3.1 Canada geese

A total of 127 Canada geese juveniles were counted across the Wandle Valley associated with 26+ breeding pairs. The survey clearly demonstrates that Beddington Farmlands had the highest number of juveniles and pairs of breeding adults than any other site; all other sites had no more than 3 pairs seen with young.

Four sites in the Borough of Wandsworth have active control measures in place (egg pricking at Wandsworth Common, Battersea Park, King George's Park and Tooting Bec Common.) Waddon Ponds is known to have a relatively large adult Canada geese population (as documented in previous reports) however there were no juveniles counted in 2017. This may be due to a number of collective factors producing positive results, such as ongoing active egg pricking (which took place in Spring 2016 / 2017 and is planned for 2018), and protective cages having been established around the pond margins, preventing access to potential breeding spots. The restoration of [Waddon Ponds](#) was a Living Wandle Landscape Partnership project completed in 2016 that has created positive changes at the site by; increasing habitat variability, protecting native marginal vegetation around the ponds (from Canada geese overgrazing) for better habitat quality, and improving water quality of the ponds through nutrient absorption/filtration by marginal plants (decrease in water quality associated with nutrient overload from Canada geese droppings and incorrect feeding of them by the public.)



Canada geese at Beddington Park

As the survey focused solely on counting numbers of juveniles that survived to determine Canada geese recruitment in the Wandle Valley, we are not able to quantify the numbers of Canada geese adult pairs that attempted to breed and failed. Therefore the count tends to infer more where controls over breeding are resulting in success and indicates where controls would be helpful to limit population increase across the catchment. This can be demonstrated using sites across Wandsworth as an example of where controls over attempted breeding are having a positive effect on reducing Canada geese recruitment; although levels of attempted breeding were quite high, with 62 eggs found at Wandsworth Common and 10 eggs found at Battersea Park, the numbers of surviving juveniles was low. On the other hand, Beddington Farmlands has no controls in place and limited public access, affording Canada geese ample undisturbed opportunities to breed successfully thus resulting in the highest numbers of juveniles recorded in the survey.

The final estimate of 127 Canada geese had to be deduced from the number of juveniles seen on each visit at each site. It had been hoped to estimate survival rates but that proved impossible. Mortality was known to have occurred at some sites (Beddington Park and Morden Hall Park) and is likely to have occurred at other sites. It is considered that there was almost no double counting, except at Beddington Farmlands where double counting may have occurred but also it is possible that juveniles may have been missed there. The total of 127 is our best estimate; undetected mortality would have led to a higher total while double counting would have led to a lower total.

### 3.2 Egyptian geese

A total of 18 Egyptian geese juveniles were estimated from 6 pairs. No site had more than one pair, with 10 juveniles at Mitcham Common being the



Egyptian geese at Morden Hall Park

largest brood. Mortality was apparent at two sites so of the 18 juveniles, 4 did not reach the flying stage.

Egyptian geese have a longer breeding season than Canada geese; at Beddington Park and Morden Hall Park new broods were seen later in the summer and not recorded in this survey.

A national moult survey of naturalised geese in 2000 found just 13 geese in Greater London. There has been a large increase in Egyptian goose populations since 2000.

### 3.3 Greylag geese

Wimbledon Park Lake was the only site where juvenile Greylag geese were recorded. In the 2016 moult survey, Greylag geese were recorded at Wimbledon Park Lake and Beddington Farmlands. At Beddington Farmlands, they raised young for the first time in 2016 but no young were seen in 2017.

A national moult survey of naturalised geese in 2000 found 363 Greylag geese in Greater London; 1 Greylag was found in grid reference TQ26 and 68 found in grid reference TQ27 (which together include the Wandle catchment). Within the Wandle Valley they do not seem to be increasing as fast or occupying as many areas as Egyptian geese; however both species numbers need to be monitored into the future.

### 3.4 Limitations with survey method

- At Beddington Farmlands, which is a large and complex site, juveniles may have been missed on a visit and juveniles could move between different parts of the site between the two visits. Consequently, assumptions on movement had to be made to provide a best estimate. It was assumed that birds moved freely between the two lakes that are adjacent to each other but not between other areas. Nests were relatively easy to see on the two lakes before vegetation developed but it was not possible to determine outcome from each nest, since several broods would appear together.
- The survey concentrated solely on recording breeding in the Wandle Valley; however we know from previous surveys (Wandle Valley moult count in 2016 and Phil Belman's ringing recoveries) that Canada geese travel in and out of the catchment throughout the year. This means that a study confined to the one catchment risks missing changes that result from cross border movements of birds to breed, therefore limiting our knowledge on where Wandle Valley Canada geese go to breed.
- The methodology required surveyors to differentiate between small and large juveniles so that mortality rates could be inferred from the different counts and more accurate conclusions could be drawn about the number of individual juveniles recorded. This proved difficult as the development of the juveniles' plumage was not drastic enough in the timeframe allowed in order to easily differentiate between small (yellow/green coloured) and large (attaining adult plumage) goslings. Therefore the count results have been assimilated into total number of juveniles per site per survey, and the inference about mortality has not been possible for the majority of sites.
- As the survey offers data for only a single year, conclusions can't be drawn about whether it was a typically good, bad or average season for Canada geese breeding in the Wandle Valley.

### 3.5 Summary of population control methods in place

Borough	Sites	Land Owner / Manager	Physical Controls; e.g. egg pricking	Public information on site e.g. notices
Wandsworth	Wandsworth Common Lake and Stock Pond	Wandsworth Borough Council / Enable Leisure & Culture	Egg pricking & vegetated screens at edges of water	Occasional notices
	King Georges' Park	""	""	""
	Tooting Bec Common	""	""	""
	Battersea Park	""	""	""
Croydon	Waddon Ponds	London Borough of Croydon / idverde The Conservation Volunteers	Vegetated screens at edges of water. Controls carried out in 2017 and planned for 2018 (oiling / egg pricking)	Permanent interpretation panels
	Wandle Park	London Borough of Croydon Friends of Wandle Park	No controls	No signage
Sutton	Beddington Farmlands	Sutton Borough Council Viridor / Thames Water	No controls	No signage
	Beddington Park	Sutton Borough Council Friends of Beddington Park	No controls	Notice not to feed geese bread
	Wilderness Island	London Wildlife Trust	No controls	No signage
	Carshalton Ponds	Sutton Borough Council	No controls	Signage not to feed wildfowl/animals
Merton	Wimbledon Park	Merton Council / idverde Wimbledon Park Golf Club	Geese displacement (by golf club)	No signage
	Cannon Hill Common	Merton Council / idverde Wandle Piscators (stock pond)	No controls	Notice not to feed geese on benches via Friends Group
	Morden Hall Park	National Trust	No controls	No signage
	Mitcham Cricket Green	Merton Council / idverde MCG Community & Heritage	No controls	No signage
	Cranmer Green	Merton Council / idverde	No controls	No signage
	Mitcham Common	Mitcham Common Conservators / idverde	No controls	No signage
	Wimbledon Common	Merton Council / idverde	No controls	No signage

Ravensbury Park

Merton Council / idverde  
Friends of Ravensbury Park

No controls

Interpretation panel

## 4.0 Recommendations

Counts have now been conducted for both the moult and breeding seasons. They have proved less useful for recording moulting than breeding, although the latter needs to be extended and intensified, as below:

- Ideally Canada geese breeding controls should be put into place at Beddington Farmlands, which has proven to be the site with highest juvenile and moult counts, to limit population recruitment across the Wandle Valley. Risk assessments on an area-by-area basis will need to be made when determining the type of Canada geese breeding control to be put in place in order to limit harm to other breeding bird species.
- Breeding, moulting and wintering counts spanning several years would give a better insight into geese distribution across the Wandle Valley and help identify areas where goose management is successful and where more investment is needed. Surveys should be considered to take place every 3 years to assess the impact and effect of future measures put in place at Beddington Farmlands. The Wandle Landscape & Biodiversity Group should keep this recommendation under revision and devise a plan and appropriate methodology as necessary.
- Continued habitat amelioration through planting of emergent vegetation where feasible as delivered at Waddon Ponds.
- Continue population management and extended to include other areas in addition to Beddington Farmlands. For example, Canada geese breeding controls could be considered for Beddington Park now that the Heritage Lottery Funded project to restore the lake, creating more suitable nesting habitat for geese, is underway.
- Coordinate signage along the catchment to give a consistent informative message to visitors.
- An academic study (e.g. by a Postgraduate at UCL, Imperial or Durrell universities) may be helpful to understand recruitment into the Wandle catchment of Canada geese populations from across South London and neighbouring the River Thames. Ringing Wandle Canada geese at the point of moulting, and following up moult counts across South London and a Wandle Valley breeding survey in the following year, may lead to better understanding of recruitment into the Wandle catchment from others.

## 5.0 Thanks

The goose count would not have been possible without the support of the counters. Special thanks to Derek Coleman for all his efforts and invaluable input to this project.



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Thanks also to: Dave Dawson, Valerie Selby, Kevin Freed, Martin Boyle, Sarah Price, Andrew Dickinson, Bill Budd & Morden Hall Park Nature Group and Andrew Williams. Thanks to Sarah Perry for coordinating the project and collating and editing the report.

This report was put together by Sarah Perry on behalf of the Living Wandle Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The report is also available online at [wandlevalleypark.co.uk/2017-Canada-Goose-Report-and-Map](http://wandlevalleypark.co.uk/2017-Canada-Goose-Report-and-Map)

## 6.0 Appendix

**Table B.** Full list of sites surveyed with associated results for Canada geese

\* Annual total numbers of eggs pricked during 2017 at the site – not specific to the survey date listed.

Canada geese juvenile bird survey – May/June 2017							
Site no.	Location	Survey date	No. eggs pricked	No. nests seen	No. pairs raising juveniles	Total no. juveniles	Comments
1	Wandsworth Common Lake & Stock Pond	10.05.2017	62*		0	0	
1	Wandsworth Common Lake & Stock Pond	22.05.2017			0	0	
2	King George's Park	13.05.2017			0	0	
2	King George's Park	27.05.2017			0	0	
3	Wimbledon Park	12.05.2017			0	0	
3	Wimbledon Park	29.05.2017			0	0	
4	Tooting Bec Common	10.05.2017			0	0	
4	Tooting Bec Common	22.05.2017			0	0	
5	Cannon Hill Common	15.05.2017			0	0	6 Canada geese but no young
5	Cannon Hill Common	31.05.2017			0	0	
6	Morden Hall Park	07.05.2017		1	1	1	
6	Morden Hall Park	24.05.2017			1	4	
7	Mitcham Cricket Green	12.05.2017			0	0	
7	Mitcham Cricket Green	31.05.2017			0	0	
8	Cranmer Green	12.05.2017			0	0	
8	Cranmer Green	31.05.2017			0	0	



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9	Mitcham Common	12.05.2017		2	7		
9	Mitcham Common	31.05.2017		3	17		
10	Beddington Farmlands	08.05.2017	28+	16	66		
10	Beddington Farmlands	22.05.2017		8+	53		
11	Beddington Park	08.05.2017	2	2	5		
11	Beddington Park	22.05.2017		2	8		
12	Wilderness Island	06.05.2017		±	±	Same pair as from Carshalton Ponds	
13	Wandle Park (Croydon)	<i>unknown</i>		0	0		
13	Wandle Park (Croydon)	<i>unknown</i>		0	0		
14	Waddon Ponds	08.05.2017	<i>Eggs pricked – no. unknown</i>	1	0	0	Sitting on nest, no eggs
14	Waddon Ponds	22.05.2017		0	0		
15	Carshalton Ponds	25.04.2017		1	2		
15	Carshalton Ponds	22.05.2017		0	0	Young moved to Wilderness Island	
16	Wimbledon Common (Rushmere Pond)	01.06.2017		1	5		
17	Battersea Park	10.05.2017	10*	1	2		
17	Battersea Park	22.05.2017		1	2		
18	Ravensbury Park	01.06.2017		0	0		

Table C. Sites with positive survey results for Egyptian geese

Egyptian geese juvenile bird survey – May / June 2017						
Site no.	Location	Survey date	No. nests seen	No. pairs raising juveniles	Total no. juveniles	Comments
3	Wimbledon Park	12.05.2017		1	1	
3	Wimbledon Park	29.05.2017		1	5	Presumably juveniles missed on 1 <sup>st</sup> visit
4	Tooting Bec Common	10.05.2017		1	2	
4	Tooting Bec Common	22.05.2017		1	2	Presumably same young seen on 1 <sup>st</sup> survey



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6	Morden Hall Park	07.05.2017	0	0	
6	Morden Hall Park	24.05.2017	1	1	Disappeared after a few days
9	Mitcham Common	12.05.2017	1	7	Initially 10 in April 2017
9	Mitcham Common	31.05.2017	1	7	Presumably same young seen on 1 <sup>st</sup> survey
11	Beddington Park	08.05.2017	1	4	
11	Beddington Park	22.05.2017	1	4	Presumably same young seen on 1 <sup>st</sup> survey

**Table D. Sites with positive survey results for Greylag geese**

Greylag geese juvenile bird survey – May / June 2017						
Site no.	Location	Survey date	No. nests seen	No. pairs raising juveniles	Total no. juveniles	Comments
3	Wimbledon Park	12.05.2017		1	4	
3	Wimbledon Park	29.05.2017		3	6	Pair raising 3 young, pair raising 2 young, pair raising 1 young
3	Wimbledon Park	09.06.2017		1	3	

**Table E. Survey results for separate areas of Beddington Farmlands**

Beddington Farmlands Canada geese survey – May 2017						
Site no.	Separate areas	Survey date	No. nests seen	No. pairs with juveniles	Total no. juveniles	Comments
10a	Hundred Acre	08.05.2017	6	5	21*	
10a	Hundred Acre	22.05.2017			2	Not thought to move to lakes but a possibility
10b	Springmead	08.05.2017	2	1	5*	
10b	Springmead	22.05.2017			0	Not thought to move to lakes but a possibility
10c	Northern Lake	08.05.2017	16	3	12	Small young raised in this area - different to those on South Lake
10c	Northern Lake	22.05.2017			48*	Across North & South lakes
10d	Southern Lake	08.05.2017	3	3	11	Small young raised in this area – different to those on North Lake
10d	Southern Lake	22.05.2017			0	
10e	Storm Tanks	08.05.2017		1	6	



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10e	Storm Tanks	22.05.2017		3*	
10f	Works Pond	08.05.2017	3	11*	
<b>Totals</b> <i>(for juveniles sum of *counts)</i>			<b>27+</b>	<b>16+</b>	<b>88</b>

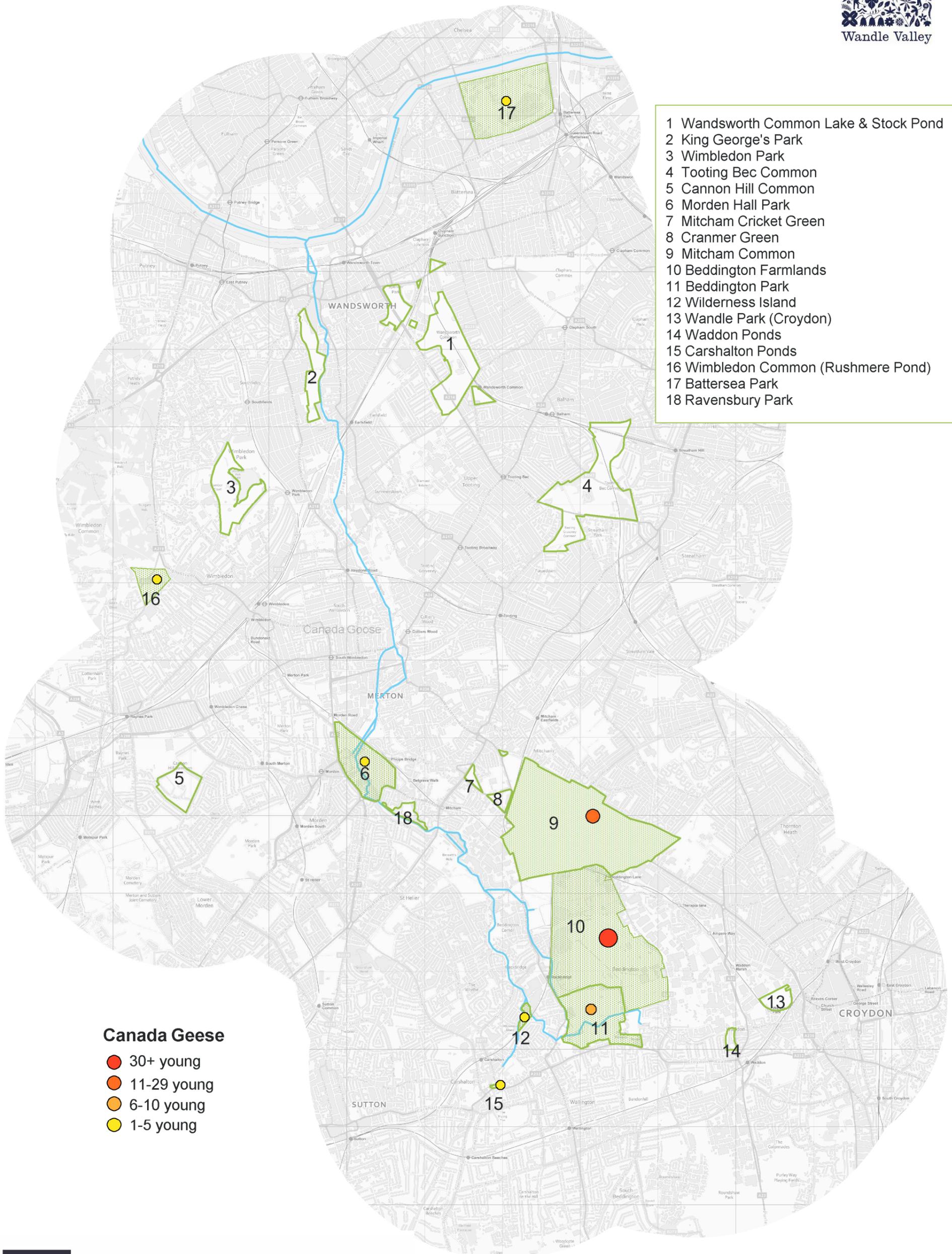
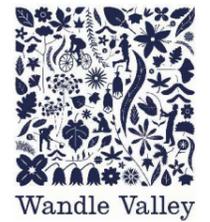


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- 1 Wandsworth Common Lake & Stock Pond
- 2 King George's Park
- 3 Wimbledon Park
- 4 Tooting Bec Common
- 5 Cannon Hill Common
- 6 Morden Hall Park
- 7 Mitcham Cricket Green
- 8 Cranmer Green
- 9 Mitcham Common
- 10 Beddington Farmlands
- 11 Beddington Park
- 12 Wilderness Island
- 13 Wandle Park (Croydon)
- 14 Waddon Ponds
- 15 Carshalton Ponds
- 16 Wimbledon Common (Rushmere Pond)
- 17 Battersea Park
- 18 Ravensbury Park

## Canada Geese

- 30+ young
- 11-29 young
- 6-10 young
- 1-5 young



**GiGL** Greenspace Information for Greater London CIC  
the capital's environmental records centre

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