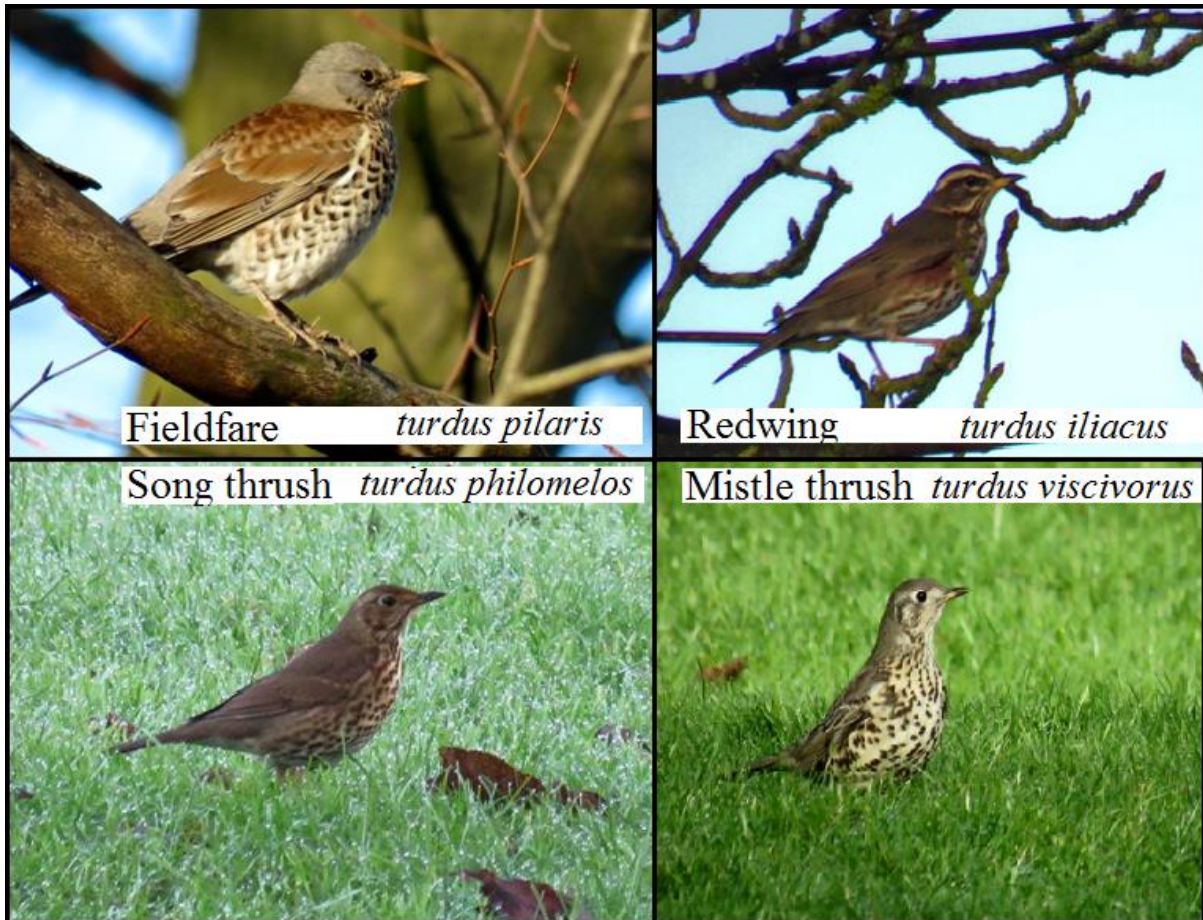


## Species spotlight: Bexley's resident and winter thrushes

Joseph Johnson.



Thrushes are well known birds all over the world and our native British song and mistle thrushes are some of our best loved birds. However in recent years there have been a serious decline in their population, so much so both mistle and song thrush are a red listed species here in Britain. In fact in many areas of the country they are still declining. This is for a variety of reasons - mainly loss of habitat particularly woodland and hedgerows. However these birds can still be found on a variety of sites here in Bexley.

Our Bexley resident thrushes (song and mistle) are joined in the cooler months by two winter thrushes: the fieldfare and redwing. These birds arrive in the UK every winter from Scandinavia many of which choose to stay here in Bexley. Many, even bird watchers, struggle to tell the four species apart. However I hope I can try and help birders and wildlife watchers identify each species.

All four species can be seen in a variety of sites here in Bexley with hot spots-being along the river Cray (particularly Hall Place, Foots Cray Meadows and Crayford rough), Danson Park, Lamorbey Park, Braeburn Park and the Thames marshes. However these birds can turn up anywhere including back gardens.



Fieldfare

Song thrushes are quite similar to mistle thrushes however they can be told apart from each other easily once you are aware of their characteristics. The song thrush is a smaller more rounded browner bird than the much larger grey/brown mistle thrush which is also leaner and taller than its smaller relative. The mistle thrush also has white tips to the tail and wing feathers as well as very rounded dark speckles on their chest whilst the song thrush doesn't. Mistle thrushes also have a habit of perching on the very highest point of tall trees.

Redwing and fieldfare are also similar looking birds however they can be more easily told apart from each other than their resident British relatives by a variety of interesting markings. Redwings are easily confused with song thrushes as they are both small rounded brown birds. However redwings have a light striped marking above each eye as well as having distinctive rusty red flanks and under wings. Fieldfare are more similar to mistle thrushes as they are both large grey/brown birds, however they can be told apart because fieldfare have a distinctive very grey/silver head and chestnut brown body along with a lighter almost yellow/ orange beak.



Redwing

The brilliant photos were supplied by fellow Bexley wildlife contributor Donna Zimmer.