

Friends of the Shuttle Walk – River Shuttle and Bexley Woods Friday 22nd April 2016.

Perhaps it was the cold, grey, breezy start to the day that kept a few members absent— just four turned up for the birdwatching walk along the River Shuttle from Love Lane Bexley to Bexley Woods.

Setting off towards BETHS playing fields we soon had our first blackcap singing and giving a brief view. A pair of song thrushes disappeared before we could get onto them but wrens seemed to be dominating with their songs filling the air. That was until we joined the playing fields where lots of boys were practising their cricketing skills. We did manage some of the common species: wren, robin, blue, great tit and long-tailed tits and a singing chiffchaff eventually showed itself quite well. Emerging from the confines of the river/playing fields into the more open areas alongside Riverdale Road we were able to confirm presence of kingfisher as one darted along without stopping - the call and flash of turquoise being all we experienced. Further along a pair of grey wagtails appeared, one showing very well. Otherwise the cold conditions seemed to be keeping many birds low and quiet.

We ventured into Bexley Park Woods – another grey wagtail, a few blackcap, blue and great tits and a close stock dove but little else until we reached the upper end when three possibly four nuthatches were very vocal, one coming quite close in response to me making its call to illustrate what it sounded like. Another was seen well further on.



Nuthatch (Ralph Todd)



Long-tailed Tit (Donna Zimmer)

The return walk produced a pair of mistle thrushes and, now that the playing fields were devoid of cricketers about 140 woodpigeons.

There had not been the number or variety of species hoped for at this time of year but the weather clearly had an impact. Nonetheless it was a very pleasant and enjoyable walk in the presence of people who so love the river they spend much of their time volunteering to keep clear of litter and other debris.

If you want to know more do contact the Friends of the Shuttle on friends.of.the.shuttle@gmail.com or view the web-site <http://www.bexleywildlife.org/>

Birds Seen: Mallard, Moorhen, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove, Ring-necked Parakeet, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker (heard), Wren, Robin, Blackbird, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Carrion Crow, Magpie, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Goldfinch. (24 species seen)

Ralph Todd