

RSPB Bexley Group Field Trip – River Shuttle/Bexley Park Woods – Tuesday 16th May 2017

Fourteen members/friends joined us for this walk along the River Shuttle into Bexley Park Woods. Good to see a few new faces. Weather was forecast a little unsettled with showers but in the end we were discarding layers in favour of the warm sunny conditions that accompanied us.

Beginning our walk adjacent to Love Lane allotments to the sound of BETHS school boys practising Track and Field and cricket gave little chance of delicate bird song – a chaffinch and distant chiffchaff were picked out.

Crossing the Shuttle bridge by the playing fields we confirmed the route of the river and our walk and then moved into the narrow path under leaf laden trees which rather hampered visibility of any nearby bird. The song of wren was the overriding sound as we made our way, occasional blackcap, robin, blackbird and dunnock heard above the A2 traffic noise – how we become immune to such noise until trying to listen to the sounds of nature. A jay was seen feeding a young bird. No river birds seen but a common whitethroat turned up in just the habitat we expected and eventually showed itself very well.



photograph Brenda Todd



photograph Donna Zimmer

Avoiding treading on a couple of Scottie dogs and pausing to thank a very large dog that had decided against confronting us we emerged out of the wooded area into the open grassland of Riverdale Road – a sparrowhawk flapped and glided overhead as did a few herring gulls and 4 or 5 swifts – after that absolutely no aerial activity was observed. A couple of moorhen flashed their white tail feathers and disappeared up river but still no wagtails or kingfisher despite both being usually present.

Crossing Bridgen Road into Bexley Park Woods we were once again under the canopy of a wonderful variety of trees with the large old oaks looking particularly splendid. The bluebells had all but gone over but a small family group of long-tailed tits caught our attention. Through the woods it was wren, robin and blackbird that were most noticeable until we reached the area where group member Duncan Devine has erected many nest boxes – one pair of blue tits was very active at box number 15. Given that each chick might eat 100 caterpillars a days we could appreciate just how busy the parents were, returning to the box seemingly every few seconds.



photographs Brenda Todd



photograph Ralph Todd

Continuing around the woods very few birds showed themselves, blackcaps became more noticeable through their lovely song; ring-necked parakeets became more irritating and grey squirrels more numerous.

A pair of stock doves were a welcome addition and a mistle thrush fed on the ground near the 1st Bexleyheath Scout memorial plaque (www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/memorial/121295).

Approaching the end of the woodland walk two song thrushes showed briefly and a nuthatch was heard. At this point some members took the bus whilst others retraced steps along the Shuttle into Love Lane. Possibly a little disappointed at the lack of birds, perhaps even alarmed at the absence of many common species, at least in numbers but once again it proved a most enjoyable and sociable walk which, for many was a new destination in the Borough. Thanks to all for attending.

Birds seen/heard: Mallard, sparrowhawk, moorhen, herring gull, stock dove, woodpigeon, ring-necked parakeet, swift, carrion crow, magpie, jay, great tit, blue tit, long-tailed tit, nuthatch, wren, mistle thrush, song thrush, blackbird, robin, blackcap, common whitethroat, chiffchaff, dunnock, starling, goldfinch, chaffinch.(27 species). Plus, butterflies, speckled wood, large white, orange tip.

Ralph and Brenda Todd

May 2017