

RSPB Bexley Group Walk Danson Park. 14th November 2017

Two carrion crows, four magpies and 13 ring-necked parakeets assembled in the Danson Stables car park to welcome the 23 members and friends who joined Brenda and I for our winter walk in Danson Park. The cold, sunny conditions of yesterday had reverted to milder, high cloud for today – not bad conditions for the three hour stroll.

We began with an update on parakeets, their status and increasing menace, not to mention cost to those who feed birds in the garden. From the car park we ventured into the old rose garden where we immediately found not one but three robins: two clearly squaring up for a territorial punch up. A flock of long-tailed tits were noisily/busily moving through and closer inspection produced goldcrest, great and blue tits – five of the latter emerging from one ornamental shrub. Next to attract our attention was a great spotted woodpecker, then another – two in one tree – only momentarily though as one flew off in one direction with the other staying around just long enough for the last tripod leg to be lowered before flying off in the other direction. The group had been warned about the curse the tripod/telescope has on anything hanging around long enough for a good view (later to be disproved).



Bexley RSPB Group Danson Park Brenda Todd Green Woodpecker Ralph Todd

A couple of chaffinches and a blackbird were seen in the garden before we emerged out behind the Stables to the woodland where a jay and a couple of jackdaws were noted. A green woodpecker flew up from just a few yards away - so well camouflaged. It did remain partially visible on the high bough of a nearby oak but the best views were as it flew back across our heads.

There were still many leaves on the trees which didn't bode well for viewing what birds were present on the woodland edge so we made our way briskly to the river, stopping only occasionally to check any movement – the shout of crow mobbing something was too quick even for the most nimble of foot and no identification was made. Crossing the stream we noted a single grey wagtail feeding downstream – in dark conditions it wasn't easy but with the aid of the now useful telescope most people had a good view.

A quick diversion to look at the school playing fields through the hedge and fence produced four species of gull: black-headed being the most numerous but herring, common and lesser black-backed also close by for good comparison. We would have other opportunities to sort out these four gulls including adult and juveniles once looking over the lake with those birds resting on the anchored dinghies. We know how much everyone enjoys gull identification!

Having briefly mentioned the absence of small fish in the river, hardly had we gone another few yards than a huge gathering of fish were seen, then another – literally 100's, possibly 1000's, chub, roach and perch were identified. We now knew why a grey heron sat motionless on a nearby tree stump.

Standing on the bridge between the bog and rock gardens many mallard, on the adjacent pond thought they were in for a culinary treat (not so), moorhen and coot were also close by. Goldfinches were noted perched high up. Moving along the south side of the lake more heron were seen. A single cormorant perched and there were scores of black-headed gulls in various plumages. Little else was spotted in this part of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Around the small island, we were pleased to see not one but three pochard (two male/one female) a duck in decline over much of its range including the wintering numbers here at Danson Park



Grey Heron – Rockery pool Brenda Todd



Bexley RSPB Group Danson Park Brenda Todd

. A great crested grebe also showed well as did the pair of swans with their four grown cygnets. Another group of long-tailed tits passed through. As we continued along the water's edge an increasing number of coots were observed – well over 100 - plus four species of gull (as seen before) though many more common and herring gulls. Numbers built up as we neared the eastern end with many more coot, Canada geese and mallard. Surprisingly, no other duck species, no little grebe and for the first time in a long while – no Egyptian geese. Fourteen cormorants were resting on the pontoon.



Great Crested Grebe Nicky Wilson



Pochard Nicky Wilson

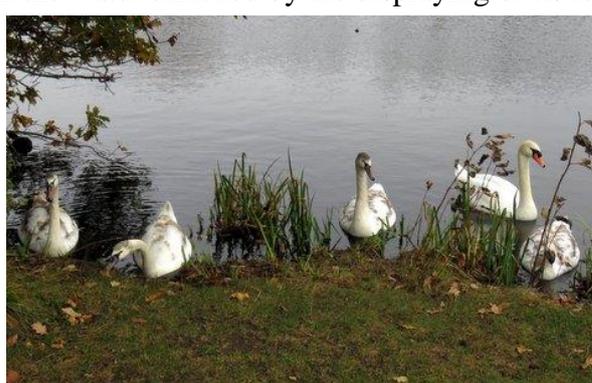


Black-headed Gull juvenile Nicky Wilson

Our walk continued along the northern edge of the lake with the occasional, jay, jackdaw and of course plenty of crows and magpies plus a few starling moving around and unidentified thrushes flew over high. As we once again approached the LNR, more overgrown from this side, on the edge of the vegetation a stunning little egret reflected beautifully in the water enriched by the displaying of its full set of plumes.



Little Egret Nicky Wilson



Mute Swan Family Nicky Wilson

A very pleasant, enjoyable and social morning's walk, enriched we hope by some historical notes (or useless information depending on your preference), concluded at 12.20 back at the car park.

Birds seen: Great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, little egret, mute swan, Canada geese, mallard, pochard, moorhen, coot, black-headed gull, common gull, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, woodpigeon, ring-necked parakeet, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, grey wagtail, starling, wren, robin, blackbird, goldcrest, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, jay, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, chaffinch, goldfinch. (33 species)

Ralph and Brenda Todd
November 14th 2017