

RSPB Bexley Group Local Walk – Joydens Wood Thursday January 25th 2018

The first local group walk of 2018 was, we have to confess, approached with some trepidation given the recent prolonged period of wet weather. Especially that of the preceding day – a recce had confirmed how wet the trails were. That said, we awoke to clear blue skies and at 9.30 12 members had gathered to join us on what turned out to be a near perfect spring like walk. Yes the paths were wet, very wet in places and yes, there were quite a few dogs/walkers to contend with - one lady with 10 dogs was a little intimidating – but then a lady with one dog faced with 14 birdwatchers was probably not what she was used to. We spent almost three hours in this mixed woodland. It is probably worth mentioning what we did not see – sparrowhawk, any woodpeckers, any thrushes (including blackbird), dunnock, wren and only one pair of chaffinch. We wouldn't want that to suggest a disappointing walk – far from it. This proved to be a most enjoyable and, hopefully, informative walk especially for those (at least 4) who had never visited the woods before.



Watching a tit flock

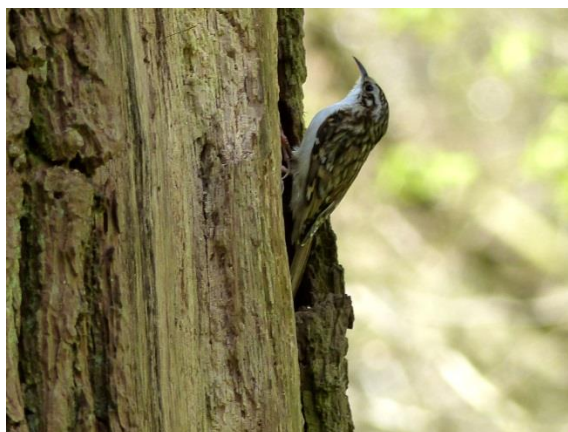


Discussing Anglo-Saxon history at Faesten Dic

A brief introduction to the woods as we gathered at the Summerhouse Drive entrance was followed by a slow walk where distant dunnock and song thrush were heard (the only ones of the morning – neither were seen). Magpies and ring-necked parakeets were in competition for the noisiest species and grey squirrels continued to leap through the tree tops. We followed the backs of the Joydens Wood estate gardens adjoining the woods but they failed to produce many birds apart from plenty of blue and great tits and a small flock of long-tailed tits. The sun was shining, we were content. After turning down a slope we gathered at the Faesten Dic where a short history lesson took place. Looking up a common buzzard disappeared through the tree being pursued by crows, too quick for most of us to see. Our one detour off a main track through a plantation did produce reasonable views of coal tits and the only pair of chaffinch. When we headed down the Valley path we were able to stand for some time to enjoy a mixed tit flock amongst which were a good number of coal tits and goldcrests, Gary spotted a treecreeper which was eventually seen by everyone with Richard either relocating the same bird or perhaps the second bird we had been hearing. By now the lone silver birch tree was in easy view and the treecreeper obligingly sat still for some time, in good light, not an easy bird to see but we nailed this one.



Coat Tit



Treecreeper

As the realisation that all this downhill walking meant there was to be an uphill stage we slowly made our way up the main path, again enjoying a little history before arriving at the open heathland area. We'd hardly stopped to discuss this change in habitat when not one but four common buzzards were seen circling with occasional mewing to be heard. At the picnic area tales of dene holes, bomb craters and a crashed hurricane (aviation type not wind) were discussed and the timber sculpture of the latter was seen. From here we were approaching the end of the walk but more was to come in the form of five siskins (1 male/4 female) feeding in glorious sunshine in the track side silver birches – two jays flew past in pursuit of each other. As we headed out of the wood both nuthatch and green woodpecker were heard but not located.



Common buzzard



Siskin

There was certainly an element of “pew that went well” as we said our farewells after what had been, as many commented, a most enjoyable walk through a wide variety of woodland habitats: conifers, beech, oak, sweet chestnut, silver birch, gorse and heath and despite what we didn't see – what we did see was seen well and a good deal of local information shared amongst this most social of groups. Thanks to all who came along.

(all photographs – Ralph and Brenda Todd. We would like to thank Honor Wheeler for her help with our initial recce.)

Birds seen/heard (h) – Cormorant, common buzzard (4), black-headed gull, woodpigeon, ring-necked parakeet, green woodpecker (h), dunnoek (h), robin, song thrush (h), goldcrest, long-tailed tit, coal tit, blue tit, great tit, nuthatch (h), treecreeper, jay, magpie, carrion crow, starling, chaffinch, siskin, house sparrow (23 species)

Ralph and Brenda Todd
January 25th 2018.

Next walk – Sidcup Place (Meet Brewers Fayre Sidcup Place) 9.30- 12noon Tuesday 27th February 2018.