

RSPB Bexley Group Local Walk – Martens Grove Thursday 19th April 2018 Led by Ralph and Brenda Todd

Hard to believe but after 39 years this was the first group visit to Martens Grove – a beautiful, small area of woodland/park close to the old A2 and the Crayford gasometer. Eight members (three of whom were first timers) joined us on what was to be the hottest day of the year so far (hottest April day on record by some accounts). Perhaps birds don't like the heat as much as we do – if they do, they weren't as appreciative as we or the butterflies were – a lovely sunny morning with clear blue skies.

Gathering as we did in a residential area adjacent to the woods it was no surprise that magpies, woodpigeons and the infuriating ring-necked parakeets were the first and obvious species seen. As we made our way into the shade of the woods it was clear that both blue and great tits had not been too badly affected by the early spring snow coverings as there was much singing, displaying and territorial behaviour. A very active and noisy group of parakeets, at least 25 in number, were making such a din it was difficult to pick out much else. Hooray for the song thrush that made its song audible above the parakeets and well done chiffchaff for showing itself whilst chiffing and chaffing. As with previous recent walks, jays were much in evidence, at least 3 in one area and we did manage to see the occasional stock dove amongst the dozens of woodpigeons – estimated 5 or 6 pairs of stock doves were in the woods.



Gathering in the shade



Stock Dove

Keeping our eyes to the ground checking for exposed tree roots did give us the chance to enjoy the emergent bluebells, some wood anemones and lesser celandine.

A distant green woodpecker kept calling but wouldn't show itself. Blackcap did much the same until we entered the eastern side of the woods when a male showed well then dived into undergrowth where a female was also present. A nuthatch was spotted collecting nest material from dense undergrowth then flew high into an oak tree giving us a good view.



Nuthatch



Great tit

In addition to ever present grey squirrels, butterflies also provided some added interest with a painted lady resting on the ground just in front of us, at least 3 orange tips flitting around, small tortoiseshell and speckled woods along the rides and a brimstone over an area of open grassland.

The walk had been planned in the hope that not too much leaf foliage would make birds difficult to find – there was some leaf but not a lot but many species expected or numbers hoped for didn't materialise. Thankfully there was some bird song upon which we could at least test our hearing and song/call ID skills.

Once again this proved a most enjoyable two hour wander in yet another of the Borough's delightful open spaces. We're sure we won't wait another 39 years before the next visit.

Birds Seen/Heard –Stock dove, woodpigeon, collared dove, ring-necked parakeet, green woodpecker, wren, robin, blackbird, song thrush, blackcap, chiffchaff, blue tit, great tit, nuthatch, jay, magpie, carrion crow, chaffinch (18 species). **Butterflies**, Brimstone, painted lady, small tortoiseshell, orange tip, speckled wood, whites.

Ralph and Brenda Todd
April 20th 2018.