

RSPB Bexley Group Walk – Crossness Nature Reserve and River Thames
Tuesday 18th September 2018 – Leaders Ralph and Brenda Todd

Timed for a falling tide and a hope for a fall of autumn migrants it was very encouraging to have 24 members and friends arrive for our annual visit to Crossness Nature Reserve, especially as about a third had never visited before. It was also much appreciated that the warden, Karen Sutton was able to join us.



Checking the gulls and peregrine (Brenda Todd)



Resting cormorants (Ralph Todd)

The falling tide bit worked well – lots of black-headed gulls and teal feeding on the exposed mud and it wasn't long before everything erupted in the presence of a young male peregrine that alighted on the sludge incinerator chimney – excellent views were had of this regular visitor to the Thames. All the birds soon settled back on the mud and we found the odd gadwall, mallard, a single black-tailed godwit and common sandpiper. Over 20 cormorants fed or rested by the outfall. Well over 300 black-headed gulls were present but we didn't undertake a thorough count. Single adult herring and lesser black-backed gulls sat next to each other for comparison and a grey heron and little egret also paired up for the photographers amongst us.

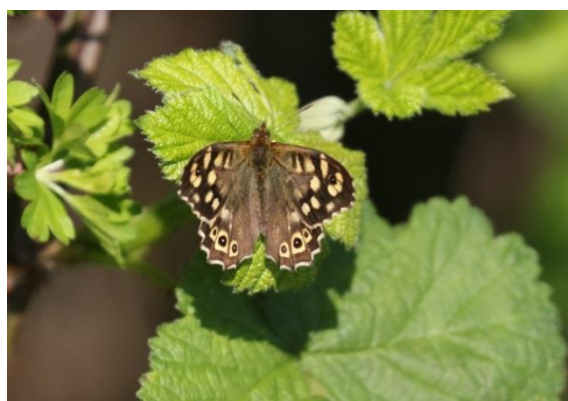
A brief stop gave the opportunity to explain about the planned Cory developments that will have a huge negative impact on the area we had just enjoyed.

As for small birds, well they were noticeable by their absence. The strong winds forecast arrived and the brief glimpses we had of chiffchaff and great tits were just that – brief.

Almost an hour had already passed as we made our way back to the reserve, noting some speckled wood butterflies and southern hawker dragonflies in the more sheltered parts of the path. The west paddock held a few teal and lapwing, hunkered down in the thick vegetation. Continuing towards the stables we found and enjoyed good, prolonged views of at least one possible migrant (winter visitor)– a male stonechat but sadly that was the sole representative of the hoped for “autumn fall of migrants”? Kestrels were hovering around us and a pair sat for a while at the entrance to the next box in the Norman Road field. Great Breach Lagoon produced single shoveler and little grebe along with a few mallard and tufted duck. Two jays and a single swallow flew over and Cetti's warblers were the most vocal of species encountered. As we drove out of the reserve we noticed a large increase in swallows.



Kestrel (Ralph Todd)



Speckled Wood (Ralph Todd)

We completed the visit with some time in the hide overlooking the scrape where a reed warbler moved low in the reeds preventing a decent view. Then Karen invited the group to the schools enclosure where great views of common lizard were enjoyed with cameras and phones recording these dozy creatures.



Checking for reptiles (Brenda Todd)



Common Lizard (Nicky Wilson)

Whilst the species list possibly wasn't quite what we'd hoped for, the emerging warm sunshine, the friendliness of the group and the opportunity to introduce many to one of Bexley's finest wildlife areas made for a most enjoyable three hours.

36 species of bird seen/heard

Birds seen/heard: Crossness Nature Reserve: Little grebe, cormorant, grey heron mallard, teal, shoveler, tufted duck, greylag goose, Canada goose, kestrel, moorhen, coot, snipe, lapwing, black-headed gull, woodpigeon, stock dove, swallow, grey wagtail, stonechat, jay, magpie, carrion crow, starling, Cetti's warbler, reed warbler and goldfinch. Plus – common lizard, southern hawker dragonfly, speckled wood and small white butterfly.

River Thames: Cormorant, grey heron, little egret, mallard, teal, gadwall, kestrel, peregrine falcon, moorhen, coot, lapwing, common sandpiper, black-tailed godwit, herring gull, lesser black-backed gull, black-headed gull, carrion crow, magpie, chiffchaff, great tit and starling.

Ralph and Brenda Todd
September 18th 2018.



Stonechat (Ralph Todd)