

## Bexley RSPB Group – Walk KWT Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2019

A break from our traditional Bexley based mid-week walks we ventured all the way to Sevenoaks and the Kent Wildlife Trust Wildlife reserve with 15 members gathering on a mild, slightly overcast morning. Gary already pointed out sparrowhawk and 2 common buzzards before we'd even introduced the walk – things were looking up - literally.



Members viewing the East Lake



Jay

The sound of fairly close chainsaws didn't fill us with much comfort but they didn't last all morning and were restricted to the beginning of the walk on the west side of the East Lake. Our early concentration was on the East Lake, with great crested grebes, tufted ducks, coot, moorhen and mallard being seen in good numbers. From the Tyler hide we could clearly see some displaying lapwings, a pair of gadwall (out of the water giving excellent views of their full plumage and leg colour). A small flock of teal, c12, flew in but no sign of hoped for little ringed plover, common sandpiper or snipe – water levels were unseasonably high.

Pausing for a moment to admire the silver birches we noted not one but four jays chasing each other around – they looked stunning in their vibrant breeding colours. Continuing on towards the Sutton hide more of the same waterfowl were seen along with both Canada and greylag geese. A pair of grebes teased us with an attempted courtship display but that came to nothing so we reverted to the tried and tested gull identification workshop with everyone (who wanted to) getting to grips with adult and juvenile common and black-headed gulls. A pair of Egyptian geese patrolled the water's edge. A snipe was found and seen by all including Stephen Shepherd who had made it his target for the day. It didn't go unnoticed that many had sneaked an opportunity to get the flasks and sarnies out but we soon moved on to the Ray Slingsby hide where another pair of grebes were seen swimming backwards and forwards with nest material. Both herring and lesser black-backed gulls were added to the list for the gull workshop!



Lapwing



Common Snipe

We retraced our steps back to where the tree felling was taking place and with one path closed as a result we wandered alongside the West Lake: one, possibly two blackcaps singing (one seen briefly), a chiffchaff chuffed once and went quiet. Wren, robin, blackbird, chaffinch, blue and great tits made occasional appearances and a great spotted woodpecker finally showed itself briefly – we had heard occasional drumming.

The North Lake produced one of the highlights in the form of a small but growing heronry – six nests seemed to be occupied.



Grey heron on North Lake heronry



Shoveler

Brenda and Gary were admiring the only clump of marsh marigold we found when a treecreeper flew from a nearby tree not to be seen again although the shrill call was heard later.

The Willow hide wasn't large enough for all to enter so some of us continued to search for the treecreeper whilst others checked out Snipe Bog Lake and added Shoveler to the morning's list. As we wandered back we enjoyed a blue tit excavating a crevice in a tree and all too soon it was 1pm and the walk was over. The flowering plant list was a little disappointing with only celandines and violets in the car park and marsh marigold.

Thank you to the 15 who joined us for what was once again a very enjoyable and pleasant morning of birdwatching.

Species seen/heard: Great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, mute swan, greylag goose, Canada goose, Egyptian goose, gadwall, teal, mallard, shoveler, tufted duck, sparrowhawk, common buzzard, moorhen, coot, lapwing, common snipe, black-headed gull, common gull, lesser black-backed gull, herring gull, carrion crow, woodpigeon, great spotted woodpecker, wren, dunnoek, robin, blackbird, blackcap, chiffchaff (h), long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, treecreeper, jay, magpie, jackdaw, chaffinch. (39)

Ralph and Brenda Todd

(all images Ralph and Brenda Todd)

Next walk will to Crayford Marshes with Donna Zimmer and Nicky Wilson Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April.