

## RSPB Bexley Group Local Walk – Hall Place North, Bigs Hill Wood and Shenstone Park

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Led by Ralph and Brenda Todd

Hall Place south, the river Cray and Crayford Rough have often been the location of our walks in the past but we believe the north side and Shenstone Park to be a first. Thirteen joined us at the car park meeting place (could this be the last time we get free parking?). Safely across the busy Bourne Road we strode off over the newly mown football pitches safe in the knowledge the forecast was no rain before at least 12 noon! With a backdrop of tractors pulling mowing machines and the noisiest trimmers known to man we were able to locate feeding jackdaws, woodpigeons and a small group of starlings. Reaching the top we took it more slowly, wandering around the tight bramble/nettle islands: then the more shrubby areas in the hope of lots of activity – robins and wren called, blackcap played hide and seek and a jay looked sternly at us from its dead tree perch. With most trees in leaf it was increasingly difficult to find the long-tailed and blue tits calling as they made their way through the tops of the birches and rowan. Looking up to see a herring gull accompanied by some smaller birds most of us were delighted to see our first swifts of the season with at least four whizzing around (later from Shenstone Park we saw quite a movement and a tight flock of a dozen or so).

As Hall Place North narrows down between nearby houses we went through a kissing gate into Biggs Hill Wood – a new location for many – small but a good selection of mature oaks, sweet chestnut and ash with some ground cover in the form of cow parsley. A couple of ornamental pines held at least one goldcrest which some managed to see. Crossing the even busier Watling Street into Shenstone Park we had to look at our watches – it was only 11am and the odd drop of rain could be felt.

Another new site for many we had a discussion about the origin of the metal cow structures (to commemorate David Evans Silk works – closed in 2001) and couldn't quite find the connection – many plausible suggestions until Janet concluded there must be an udder explanation!!! After that I guess we deserved the downpour that ensued – a full one hour before forecast and with us as far from our cars as we were destined to be - a passing shower maybe but it lasted a full 20 minutes which saw us taking cover under various trees large enough to accommodate 15.



Shenstone Park – trying to keep dry



Jackdaw

There then followed beautiful sunshine and some warmth as we walked up and down the park, checking out the various habitats and also the view that is to be had from here. More of the common woodland species were seen or heard. Then a song thrush appeared, feeding in the undergrowth close to a nettle patch. Mindful of the large dark clouds on the horizon we decided to make our way back to Hall Place – just at the end, as we were about to cross the road – Janet spotted a mistle thrush in the distance – there were in fact three and two stock doves fed nearby – a rather satisfactory end to the walk.



Song Thrush



Mistle Thrush all photographs by Ralph and Brenda Todd

Some of us did venture down to the hide in Hall Place gardens in the hope of kingfisher or green woodpecker – neither had been seen all morning and we couldn't improve on that but it was nice to see a robin feeding two young, a wren singing to defend/advertise territory – flitting as it did from branch to branch and of course the dunnocks, chaffinches and brown rat feeding under the feeders.

Once again a most enjoyable, social walk, great company and we kept (mostly) dry.

**Birds seen (or heard)** Herring gull, stock dove, woodpigeon, collared dove, ring-necked parakeet, swift, great spotted woodpecker, wren, dunnock, robin, blackbird, song thrush, mistle thrush, blackcap, goldcrest, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, jay, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, starling, house sparrow, chaffinch. (25 species)

Hall Place Hide – Mallard, moorhen, woodpigeon, wren, dunnock, robin, blackbird, blue tit, great tit, magpie, chaffinch.(11 species)

Ralph and Brenda Todd  
May 10th 2019.

Next walks – Bough Beech and Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> September.  
Check <https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/groups/bexley/events/> for any additional walks.