

It has become something of a theme to begin with an appraisal of the weather for these local walks – today can be summed up as flipping awful – really thick low cloud, damp, gloomy, fine drizzle turning to rain later on. Just right for misting up spectacles, binoculars and telescope. Not a hint of wind to blow it away but still 10 members turned out to join us for what was promoted as a migration spotting walk.

We got off to a pretty good start as we entered the old English garden, where, since our last visit, all the conifers and broken wall have been removed leaving some open ground where we found at least five dunnock and about a dozen chaffinches feeding either here or flying up into the nearby trees – a sure sign of some recent migrant arrivals. A party of long-tailed tits flitted through. The next 15 minutes or so proved heavy going as we skirted the northern woodland, with nothing to report until Harry Halstead turned up and immediately located a feeding green woodpecker on the grass in front of us. From here it was mostly carrion crows, the odd jay and occasional blue or great tit.



Viewing the Bog Garden



Green Woodpecker

It really wasn't until we found ourselves walking alongside the stream towards the bog garden we began to notice more robins and wrens. Again in numbers that suggested our resident population had been enhanced by autumn arrivals. We were joined at this point by Tom, a newcomer to the group and our walks. A discussion about the future of the bog garden (one of only four Local Nature Reserves in Bexley) and some sordid information about moorhen breeding behaviour passed a little more time before wandering along the south side of the LNR towards the lake. Surprise find of the day were three siskins feeding on Alder catkins with a goldcrest photo bombing them. A single grey heron rested nearby.



Goldcrest



Wren

Through the gloom and against a backdrop of a dozen or more orange canoes we were rewarded with three great crested grebes, a pair of mute swans, half a dozen cormorants, plenty of mallard and c10 tufted duck with at least three males present. One adult and one first year common gull was observed amongst the black-headed gulls – there was no appetite in the drizzle for the infamous gull workshop! About 15 Egyptian geese fed out on the open parkland.

Retracing our steps to the north side of the lake (there was little point in doing a full circuit given the water sport activities) we were able to locate the female teal that Harry had first spotted a couple of weeks ago and a lovely flock of long-tailed tits (15 or more) with a few blue and great tits amongst them flew over our heads. It was great to have Harry's young eyes and ears with us (and the rest of him of course) – he spotted another green woodpecker flying away from us then hearing and seeing a kingfisher flying in the opposite direction up the lake – sadly the latter only seen by a sharp eyed few. The ubiquitous Canada geese and more Egyptian geese were in evidence and generated a debate about how, if at all, they should be controlled.



Viewing Danson Lake and Geese



Egyptian Geese

Time and weather determined we should slowly make our way back to the car park. There were some useful exchanges/information about the history of the park, Danson House and the Charter Oak during our walk and as it came to an end, Harry, yes, Harry “green woodpecker” Halstead located our third bird of the day. This one remaining fixed to one spot where it had clearly found a decent food source. We managed close views, enhanced by the use of the telescope this time and were able to discern the red streak in the black moustache which confirmed a male.

As the drizzle finally turned to steady rain we found ourselves back at the car park by 12 noon having had some good views of many species and despite no winter thrushes some evidence of autumn/winter arrivals in the form of chaffinches, robins, wrens and siskins.

Thanks to those who had faith in the rain holding off and turned out to save Brenda and I having to do the walk on our own.

Birds seen: Great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, mute swan, Canada geese, Egyptian geese, teal, mallard, tufted duck, moorhen, coot, black-headed gull, common gull, herring gull, woodpigeon, ring-necked parakeet, kingfisher, green woodpecker, wren, dunnoek, robin, blackbird, goldcrest, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, jay, magpie, carrion crow, starling, chaffinch, siskin. (32 species)

Ralph and Brenda Todd
(who provided all images)
October 24th 2019