

**Bexley RSPB Group – Walk KWT Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February (morning)  
Bough Beech Reservoir (afternoon).**

Not sure why we find it necessary to start reports with a weather update. Perhaps on this occasion because we seemed to be heading into something nasty, heavy rain, strong winds and generally pretty awful. On the positive side, the new booking system worked with all 15 members/friends arriving in the car park of the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve for the 9.30 start. Unfortunately the staff who had been notified weren't expecting us. However, a polite request saw the toilets opened and we were soon on our way.

A large flock of siskins had been in the car park before our arrival but had clearly moved on. A singing song thrush and robin provided the avian welcome reception. Given the really heavy grey skies, blustery conditions and imminent threat of rain we decided on the trail between East and West Lakes towards the Willow hide might be best, saving the larger hides on the East Lake until the rains really set in.

The woodlands quickly turned up a small flock of siskins high in the birch trees with wren, robin, blackbird, jay, blue and great tits the only other small birds noticed. Jackdaws flew noisily overhead. The West and North Lake held good numbers of tufted duck, pochard, mallard, gadwall and a couple of pairs of great crested grebe. Grey herons were busy to and from the small heronry. At the Willow Hide, some entered but most viewed above the recently cut back willow fencing. The usual Canada and greylag geese were pairing up, squabbling amongst themselves and a shoveler were loafing around the edges. Coots and moorhen were ever present. We reached the reserve boundary at the end of the Long Lake with just a few crows and jackdaws on the fields. A single redwing was seen but it was the pair of displaying robins that held our attention for quite some minutes.



Teal, Black-headed gull, odd greylag goose



Robin



Jelly ear (all Nicky Wilson)

With time on our side and the rain holding off we ventured forth undertaking the complete perimeter path around the top of the East Lake, viewing more wildfowl, mostly tufted duck and pochard and a few more great crested grebes. A small flock of lapwing went up and gave a good display. The woodland around the south end of the lake proved a little more productive with redwings and long-tailed tits with a small flock of blue and great tits. However, it was the fungi that began to take our attention with King Alfred's cakes, Jelly Ear and outside the Slingsby Hide a wonderful spread of Scarlet Elf Cups. The hide provided our first opportunity for a seat in two hours of walking. Not much to be seen at this time of year - just a couple of wren in the reed bed, a distant chiffchaff and more lapwing (perhaps the same flock) resting on the water's edge. As the weather showed real signs of deterioration and grateful we had kept dry so far we missed out the Tower/Sutton Hide making our way directly to the John Tyler Hide where we could all sit and view probably the most productive end of the East Lake. A selection of gulls - black-headed, common and herring, an island full of cormorants, lots more lapwing, a few teal plus the usual ducks species. Alas no snipe could be found.



Looking down at King Alfred's Cakes (Brenda Todd)

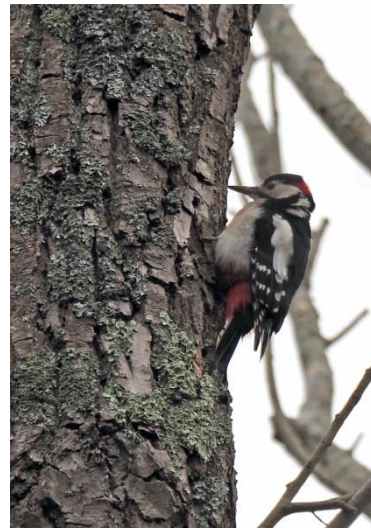


and Scarlet Elf Cup (Nicky Wilson)

With twenty minutes left of our allotted time we left the hide to get wet by the first rains of the morning. Spirits soon lifted by the sight of the Visitor Centre and snack bar being open. Perhaps not quite the morning we had hoped for but lucky to have made it round mostly dry. The conditions had clearly kept many small birds out of sight and a bit too early for song or spring flowers. However, all enjoyed the opportunity to explore most of the reserve. Thanks to Len for suggesting the circular route which for many was a first and to Tony and Eve for their fungi spotting and identification.



Looking up (Brenda Todd) for



Great Spotted Woodpecker (Nicky Wilson)

Some of us would be heading off to Bough Beech for an afternoon walk in what looked to be pretty awful weather – read on for details. In the meantime the following were seen/heard in the three hours spent on this reserve.

Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve species seen/heard. Great crested grebe, cormorant, grey heron, mute swan, greylag goose, Canada goose, Egyptian goose, gadwall, teal, mallard, shoveler, pochard, tufted duck, pheasant, moorhen, coot, lapwing, black-headed gull, common gull, herring gull, woodpigeon, great spotted woodpecker, wren, dunnock, robin, blackbird, song thrush, redwing, chiffchaff, long-tailed tit, blue tit, great tit, jay, magpie, jackdaw, carrion crow, starling, goldfinch, siskin (39 species) plus fungi including King Alfred's cakes, jelly ears, scarlet elf cup.

## **Bough Beech Reservoir – afternoon visit.**

After a short lunch break (in the rain) eleven of the morning group made the short journey to Bough Beech Reservoir. Having checked the reservoir itself, with a strong wind blowing across the open water which was really very high with little visible birdlife (all mostly sheltering/hunkered down) it was decided to concentrate on the feeders around the Oast House where some hedgerow snow drops gave some hope of a forthcoming spring.



Snowdrops



Marsh Tit (both Nicky Wilson)

We assembled in the barn where to our good fortune; old acquaintances of ours, Peter and Lynne Flower were still having lunch having carried out some willow stripping in the morning. We introduced the group to the reserve, its history then to Peter and Lynne who had not only very kindly ensured the feeders were full but also offered us the opportunity to view a few eggs of the brown hairstreak butterfly that they had found a few weeks back. Everyone was up for this, so off we walked, through a muddy meadow and, standing in the pouring rain Peter showed us two tiny (and we mean tiny – smaller than a pin head) white eggs of this rare butterfly, indeed this will prove to be the most easterly population in the UK (an adult was seen last summer). Well chuffed with this experience (some attempting photographs) we returned to the task of finding some birds - not so difficult with the filled up feeders. Plenty of blue and great tits, dunnocks and the occasional chaffinch. However it was the marsh tit that was the speciality and both sets of feeders were attracting at least one bird so everyone was happy. On the pond a pair of gadwall and shoveler were visible but it took some time to find the snipe. Again everyone managed good views including our two younger members who were able to use the telescope once Ralph had reduced it to its minimum height. Witnessing Ralph getting up off all fours, knees covered in mud seemed something of a treat as well. We were thanked with a demonstration of bobbing jack snipe. With that, all agreed we were wet enough, wet through in fact, so within just one hour we concluded the meeting, having walked hardly any distance but been pleasantly fulfilled with what we had seen. Thanking Peter and Lynne we were on our way by 2.30.

Species seen: Gadwall, mallard, shoveler, moorhen, coot, common snipe (5), dunnock, marsh tit, blue tit, great tit, jackdaw, chaffinch. (12 species seen).

Ralph and Brenda Todd  
16<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Next walks (see Facebook/Web pages for details) will be:

Saturday 12 March – Riverside Country Park - 09:30-13:00 (Car Trip) Leader George Kalli

Tuesday 22 March - Southmere Lake and Thamesmead Golf Course/River Thames  
9:30-12:00 Leaders Ralph and Brenda Todd