



# Walderslade Woods Group

## Birds of Walderslade Woods

### Introduction

Assuming you frequently walk the area, particularly early in the morning on fine days, I believe you could see 50 bird species in any full year. With several years of watching the area, 60 species should be achievable – this equates to more than 10% of the total list for Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The only Schedule 1 (specially protected) bird to be seen here is the sparrowhawk.

### Winter

One of the features for this time of year is the roving tit flocks. These sometimes contain over 30 birds, consisting mainly of great tits and blue tits with the occasional marsh tit and coal tit present. The long-tailed tits usually form separate flocks, sometimes containing in excess of a dozen birds.

Goldcrests (the smallest British bird) are often located initially by their very high-pitched call and are frequently seen on the yew and ivy in the woods. In particularly severe winters it is possible to see winter visitors such as siskin and redwing feeding in the trees. Birds flying over but not utilising the woodland include grey heron (seeking stocked garden ponds), kestrel and several species of gull, the latter especially around dawn and dusk as they fly to and from their estuary roost site.

### Spring

Many of the resident species are actively courting at this time with a significant increase in song eg wren, blue tit, great tit, robin and blackbird. Members of the crow family (corvids) breeding in the woods include carrion crow and the colourful magpie and jay. Two of the three British woodpecker species (green woodpecker and great spotted woodpecker) are present in all three valleys. At this time the green woodpecker advertises itself by calling, and often feeds on the ground in the more open areas. The great spotted woodpecker advertises itself by drumming on dead timber and feeds amongst the trees. Both will utilise dead timber for feeding and breeding. Of the finches, the chaffinch, greenfinch and bullfinch are the most common, with the latter favouring the open part of Round Wood. In the last decade the area was one of the few reliable places in Kent to see the hawfinch, but sadly this species has not been seen here for some years.

## Summer

By the end of May, most of the summer visitors have arrived and started breeding. Chiffchaffs favour the woodland, whereas blackcap, garden warbler and whitethroat prefer the open areas of brambles and scrub near woodland edges eg adjacent to Impton Lane and Round Wood.

Some species which can be seen in the woodland but prefer to breed in adjacent gardens and houses include collared dove, starling, house sparrow and hedge sparrow.

Swifts, swallows and house martins breed in neighbouring areas, but are often seen hunting insects above the woodland.

A good spot just outside the area is the motorway bridge – take the footpath that crosses Impton Lane (on the line of the old Tunbury Avenue). Although noisy, several species can be seen from here due to the openness and elevation eg black-headed gull, mistle thrush and yellow bunting.

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