

Spring Birdwalk 12th March 2016

Straying from our regular ways, we decided on this occasion to witness the first stirrings of spring at Weelsby Woods.

Despite the numerous humans and their dogs, there is still plenty here for the keen-eyed birder. We headed for an area off the beaten track, where we were immediately struck by a marked increase in bird life. Two great tits came tumbling to the ground, their claws interlocked in mortal combat, whilst distant jays squawked and the song of a mistle thrush rang out through the clear morning air. Shortly afterwards a sparrowhawk whizzed by. Not a bad start, but there was better to come...

As we approached the top of the rise, we were greeted by the unmistakable excited calls of a nuthatch. This iconic bird is often overlooked as it can be very unobtrusive for much of the year; but in springtime, the males will quickly overcome their reticence and shout from the treetops as if their lives depended on it – which of course they do, in a sense.

When a bird gets this agitated, you can bet that he's not alone, and we were lucky enough to get some reasonable views of at least two nuthatches – high in the trees – before moving on to admire a pair of bullfinches; and a song thrush standing close enough to a mistle thrush to allow comparison of the differences between them. By the end of our two hour circuit, a couple of dozen people had encountered a similar number of species, which included home-inspecting coal tits, squabbling woodpeckers and – the 'king of birds' – the wonderful gold-crested wren.

Sometimes it pays to change your ways.

Ray Hume
12th March 2016

