

Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Art on the Marshes: November was quite an arty month at Rainham Marshes with our reserve sticker competition attracting 174 entries! The winner will be announced on 15 December and we shall reveal the winning entry in the next issue of Marsh Matters. John Chandler, one of our multi-talented Field Teachers has now completed his huge military mural on the outside of the 'Brick Building' at the Reedbed Discovery Zone. This compliments his paintings depicting the history of the ranges that hang underneath the Mantlet Bank that protected the soldiers operating the target pulleys from getting hit by stray bullets! From 15 December into



the New Year there will be an Art Exhibition in the Centre showcasing the work of those who have attended the Havering Adult Education art course that John has led in recent years. All the work will be for sale. Finally, and by no means least, Richard Allen has returned and created the winter view mural inside the hide. Over twenty species are depicted and the attention to detail is amazing. You will have to visit to try and find them all, both in and outside of the newly named Ken Barrett Hide!

Reserve News: The busy winter period for ground-works continues apace with the actual Northern Trail boardwalk construction likely to start in the New Year now that the foundations are in place. Improvements to the current wildlife scrapes are also impending and work on the new education and visitor facilities at the Marshland Discovery Zone is imminent.

The Wennington corral is almost operational thanks to help from the volunteers in some truly appalling November weather. Sixty cattle left the site in the last week of the month, as we move into the winter phase of grazing and the sheep have been moved off of Purfleet Scrape to leave something for the wigeon to eat! Encouragingly, both wigeon and the geese flocks have been seen feeding in previously unused areas thanks to the current livestock grazing regime.



Good Nature Gifts

Looking for a special gift for that difficult relative, the one that has everything? We may be able to help. Have a look at our range of virtual gifts, there's something for everyone. Prices vary from £10 for a Goldeneye Nest Box to £70 for 100m of Heathland. Maybe you'd like to fund a sheep for just £22.

100% of the income from these unusual gifts goes to conservation. Visit our shop in the visitors centre to see the full range.



If you wish to join our e-news group to receive future Marsh Matters please email and let us know.

What's been about? The long-staying **turtle dove** lingered until 7th and the feeders also attracted a **brambling** on 13th-14th and a couple of **lesser redpolls**. Gull watching produced **Mediterranean gulls** on 3rd and 29th and a **glaucous gull** on 28th following a boat. Surprisingly no **Caspian gulls** were found. The **black-tailed godwit** flock increased to 200 by 27th and up to six **jack snipe** were seen. **Golden plover** peaked at 90 and two **grey plovers** could be found on the foreshore. Wildfowl numbers increased slowly with a peak of 14 **pintail** and about 450 **wigeon** but the highlight went to the three adult **Bewick's swans** that spent a couple of hours on the mud in Aveley Bay on 15th. Further river watching produced a **great northern diver** going west on 20th and two **goldeneye** on 12th. Raptors were still to be seen and there were two sightings each of female **hen** and **marsh harriers** along with a **merlin** on 30th and up to three **peregrines**. **Short-eared owls** made a welcome return from 15th with at least five from 17th. **Ring-necked parakeets** are now an almost daily sight but flocks totalling 36 on 3rd smashed our previous record of ten! There were plenty of small birds around and both **snow** (2nd) and **Lapland buntings** (13th) were recorded going over while a **Dartford warbler** was seen briefly on 23rd with a single **yellow-hammer** on 4th. **Bearded tits** and **Cetti's warblers** were occasionally reported. **Brown hares** were reported near the Veolia ES Tip and a **common darter** dragonfly even made it to December 1st! **Walnut spiders** were one of the few big spiders still active.



Brambling—Sam Shippey



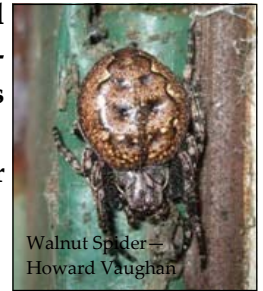
Bearded Tit
—David Preston



Short-eared Owl—Les Harrison



Brown Hare—Les Harrison



Walnut Spider—
Howard Vaughan

Recent & forth coming events: Our second **Gull Identification Day** on 1 December went very well and another is planned for Saturday 5 January. **Meet Santa** weekend on 15-16 December and the **Christmas** (Saturday 22 December) and **New Year Rambles** (Sunday 6 January) still have spaces so book now before it is too late!

Looking for the perfect gift this Christmas? Why not buy that someone special a **RSPB Gift Membership**. With FREE entry to over 100 nature reserves, the acclaimed 'BIRDS' Magazine sent quarterly and a choice of great free gifts all included in the price, this is the must have gift of the year. And don't forget that all of the income from memberships goes towards conservation.



Robin—Paul Rigby

What's On? Regular Events

Weekly: Wednesday : **Birdwatch** (9:30am start)
Thursday : **Healthy Living Walks** (12:15pm start)
Friday : **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

Monthly: **Wardens Walk** (10am start) on the first Monday of each month and **Wildlife Explorer Group** and **Birdwatching Club Days** for kids on one Saturday per month.

For more information about the events, RSPB and WEX

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