



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue 31
March 2010



New riverside landmark opens

On February 9 the latest piece of the RSPB Rainham Marshes jigsaw was quite literally lowered into place. The twenty ton specially designed Veolia Mardyke Bridge was reversed with amazing skill the full length of the river wall, all the way from Coldharbour Lane.

This took just over an hour to bring down and yet only 15 minutes to crane into place! Since then, the finishing touches have been applied and the area around it landscaped.



Very slowly backwards down the river wall!

Dave McGough



Lifting gently into place

Dave McGough

It is already being well used and not only offers a more immediate link for the local community to our wonderful reserve but allows those visitors who have travelled by train a quicker and more scenic approach.



The new view across to the reserve

Priscilla Preston

Reserve work: Rain has not stopped play with the major construction projects on the marsh and it is hoped that during April the Shooting Butts Hide and the new riverwall access path from our Southern Trail will be completed. February's deluge has left the reserve the wettest since 2003 and as such some of the pathways have been flooded. This (and the mud!) should be a short term problem and wellies should not be required for too much longer. The gardening team have been working hard to get the wildlife gardens in shape for the spring and there are already signs of spring bulbs, pansies and primulas showing their heads. The first bees are checking out willow and hazel flowers but we have yet to see a butterfly.



A very wet reserve viewed from the centre roof

Howard Vaughan

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

All the images used in Marsh Matters are taken at RSPB Rainham Marshes by staff, volunteers and visitors.

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What's been about: February: The wildfowl theme from January continued throughout February with the two **tundra bean geese** dropping in again on the 6th, 13th and 14th and two **pink-footed geese** arriving the next day till 17th. Twenty **brent geese** were seen on the 7th and elegant **pintail** peaked at 31 on the 10th. The obliging **slavonian grebe** from the end of January was inexplicably found freshly dead on the 8th.

Gull watching produced about eight different **Caspian gulls** as well as **Iceland** (12th) and **glaucous** (13th). **Mediterranean gulls** were seen regularly and a **little gull** was caught up with a huge movement of 10,000 **black-headed gulls** in just three hours on the 28th. **Yellow-legged gulls** peaked at 24 on the foreshore with many smart adults. They will soon head off back to the Mediterranean for the summer to breed. A **turnstone** was new in (3rd) and a **jack snipe** and up to 23 **curlew** were seen.



Reston Kilgour

Slavonian Grebe



Andy Tweed

Definitely Pink-footed Geese!

A female **marsh harrier** was seen on the 4th and a male showed very well on the 27th while the **peregrines** put on daily acrobatic performances.

The two **serins** stayed till the 24th and a **penduline tit** showed closely for a

few minutes on the 15th to a few lucky observers before heading north. This is the seventh year in succession that this rarity from the continent has been seen on the reserve. Two **bearded tits** were heard on the 12th and **water** and **rock pipits** continued to show well on the foreshore. The **barn owl** was out all day on the 4th but unfortunately appeared to have a damaged leg and was not seen subsequently.

The first **water voles** of the season were out feeding on nicer days but no **marsh frogs** have been brave enough yet!

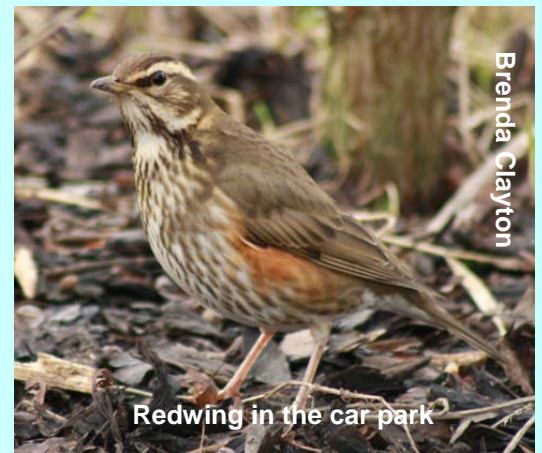
Don't forget to check out www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/sightings.asp or www.elbf.co.uk for the latest reserve wildlife sightings.

Sign up at www.facebook.com and search for 'RSPB Rainham Marshes'.



Les Harrison

Effortless Barn Owl



Brenda Clayton

Redwing in the car park

Events: Gull ID Days: Join us on Saturday 13 March where you will be able to learn more about this fascinating family of birds, so just turn up and join in. Wrap up warm though! With thoughts of spring why not come along to our **Spring Walk** on Sunday 28 March. April 2-18 sees our annual **Easter Eggstravaganza** where if you can crack our Treasure Hunt and solve the puzzle you can collect your reward!

What's On? Regular Events:

Weekly: **Wednesday: Birdwatch** (9.30am start) **Friday: Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)
Monthly: Wildlife Explorer Group (10.30am-12.30pm) and **Kids Birdwatching Club** (10.00am-12.30pm): **March:** both Saturday 13 **April:** Saturday 10 & Saturday 17 respectively

For more information about the events, RSPB and Wildlife Explorer Group Phone : 01708 899 840

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