



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue Fourteen
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A fine day for a great Fayre:

We could not have hoped for a more glorious autumn day for our Country Fayre on 20 September with beaming sunshine, no wind, 1200 visitors, fantastic stalls and entertainment and a staggering 102 species of bird seen over the course of the weekend. Not bad for an urban reserve!



Howard Vaughan

Where's Morris?

There were many star attractions in the marquee field although the name the orphan calf competition and chance to feed her from a huge bottle probably won the day! The winning name was 'Honey' chosen by Remi Walker. Well done! 'Honey' will hopefully return to the herd to begin her job as a living lawnmower very soon.



Howard Vaughan

A herd day in the office...

Ant-eating Wryneck turns a few heads...

Its arrival could not have been better timed, coming just three days before our Country Fayre and despite its scientific name of *Jynx torquilla*, it was not a jinx for us and helped attract even more visitors over the course of its week long stay. Even more amazingly this sparrow sized relative of the woodpeckers was joined by a second bird for two days!

Wrynecks used to breed commonly across the country in old woodland, large gardens and orchards but have become all but extinct as a breeding bird in the last forty years. This may be down to an increasing shortage of feeding areas where they can collect ants close to suitable breeding sites and the increasing urbanisation and tidying of our countryside.

Most **wrynecks** seen in Britain are Scandinavian birds stopping over here on their way back to Africa for the winter. The strange name comes from its reaction to being threatened when it will raise a crest, stretch and twist its neck and sway gently from side to side! A most peculiar bird!



Peter Cooper

If I stay still you can't see me!

Reserve Work: With the breeding season over for another year we have pressed on with much needed work to improve our control over the all



Howard Vaughan

The pond takes shape

important water levels on the marsh. You will see diggers working on the pools and on the deep ditch that borders the reserve and this may cause some temporary disruption to the trails but it will be worth the effort to bring more **wildfowl** and **waders** to the marsh and closer to you!

We have started **harvest mouse** surveying, with volunteers out searching for their tennis ball sized grass homes while our final butterfly walks have revealed **small coppers**, **brown argus** and several late **wall browns**. As we go to press, we have begun work on the toddlers play area by the Visitor Centre. And, just in case you were wondering, the **kingfisher** has now been seen using the perch over pond. Looks like we shall have to find some more **sticklebacks**!



Howard Vaughan

Ditch improvements

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.

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What's been about: September: This is often one of the best months for birds on the marsh and it did not disappoint with continued passage of terns on their way to warmer climes. Over 1500 **common**, 200 **Arctic**, 112 **black**, 25 **Sandwich** and three **little terns** were logged with the 11th being the big day with over 800 birds being seen! Other birds in the river included **kittiwakes** - a sea-faring gull - (7th and 24th), three smart **little gulls** (12th), three **brent geese** (22nd) and **common scoter** (4th and 14th).



Marsh harriers were seen on nine dates - all being fresh juveniles other than a fine adult male on the 7th which was very unusual for the marsh. **Ospreys** headed through on the 7th and 19th and **buzzards** were clocked on seven days including a staggering 13 on the 20th. With a national influx of **honey buzzards** under way it was not surprising that we had one on 13th and two the following day. There seemed to be more **sparrowhawks**, **peregrines** and **kestrels** around and a female **merlin** was seen from the 17th. Three **goshawks** and seven obliging **hobbies** finished off the excellent raptor selection.

There were few waders to be seen with **knot** and **bar-tailed godwit** on the Thames and a **little stint** and a North American **pectoral sandpiper** on the pools from 28th. Up to a dozen **little egrets** roosted and our third **great white egret** briefly popped in. **Stock doves** built up to 110 on Wennington Marsh (25th) and **turtle doves** were seen on 9th and 18th. Duck began to increase and a couple of **garganey** were found amongst them.



There was plenty of small bird activity right from the start with the third **aquatic warbler** for the reserve from the 3rd - 8th. This endangered eastern European breeder attracted quite a crowd but was incredibly elusive. A caterpillar-guzzling juvenile cuckoo was wonderfully showy while the **wrynecks** proved equally popular but more obliging from the 17th. Diligent searching of the woodland produced up to four **spotted flycatchers**, a **redstart** and plenty of warblers including a skulking **marsh warbler** on 14th. Out on the marsh there were a few **wheatears** and peaks of 11 **whinchats** and nine **stonechats**, both on the 10th. Eight **tree pipits** were caught up with the **meadow pipit** migration and the first **rock pipit** of the season



was seen on 20th while a couple of **redwing** and a fine **ring ouzel** were seen before the month turned. A record 46 **ring-necked parakeets** were counted heading noisily back to their roost site at Hither Green on 19th. A **badger** was actually seen in the woodland one afternoon and there is evidence of their presence on the trails... **Chinese mitten crabs** have been seen in several ditches and occasionally taking a shortcut over land so keep your eyes open!

Events: October sees the return of our famously scary **Halloween Trick or Tweet** evening on **Friday 31**; there are still some places available so book now! **25-26 October** is **Feed The Birds** weekend where you can find out how to encourage wildlife into your garden, while Christmas is looming and there is still a chance to book a meeting with **Santa** on **13-14 December!**
Contact details below.

What's in the Shop!

Buy two 550g packets of Fruity Nibbles and get a **FREE** Starter Nut Feeder worth £2.95!

Buy three Bird Cakes with Nuts for £6 and **SAVE £3.75**

Offers available until 31 October

What's On? Regular Events:

Weekly: Wednesday : **Birdwatch** (9.30am start)
Thursday **Healthy Living Walk** (12.15pm start)
Friday : **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

Monthly: Warden's Walk (11am start) on Sundays: 12 October, 9 November, 14 December

Wildlife Explorer Group (10am start) and **Kids Birdwatching Club** (9.30am start) :**October:** Saturday 11 & 4 respectively **November:** Saturday 8 & 15 respectively **December:** Saturday 13 & 6 respectively

For more information about the events, RSPB and Wildlife Explorer Group

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