



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue 26
October 2009



Bridging the Gap

If you've visited us recently, you'll have noticed that work has begun on the long-awaited Veolia Mardyke Bridge. The bridge will be a vital final link in the riverside path, bringing Purfleet just a hop, skip and a jump away from the Visitor Centre.

For those of you who like to travel by train, it means that Purfleet station is now just a leisurely ten minute walk away, along a breathtaking stretch of the Thames.

As well as the bridge itself, interesting artwork and furniture has been designed by acclaimed artist Edward Allington. His artwork has been created to make the most of the stunning river sunsets that Purfleet benefits from.

We can't say exactly when the bridge will be finished, but all being well it shouldn't be too soon after the new year.

The bridge is a partnership project between Sustrans, Thurrock Council and the RSPB. Funding has been generously provided by the Veolia ES Cleanaway Mardyke Trust, Thames Gateway Parklands (a HCA grant administered by Essex County Council) and the Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation.



Reserve News



September was dominated by even more dry settled weather which, although not so good for the scrapes, allowed for the hay meadows to be mowed and importantly led to us having a very successful and wonderfully warm Country Fayre on the 19th and 20th.

Many thanks to the staff and volunteers that made it all possible.



The event was very well attended and with a bouncy castle, police car rides, craft stalls, pond dipping and some great music there really was something for everyone. Can't wait for next year already!



With this hectic weekend over we have got back to the nitty gritty, with diggers and bulldozers now on site and shifting tons of soil to create even more wet habitat for wildlife on Aveley Pools throughout the year. More on the new Shooting Butts Hide next month.

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.

Charity registered in England and Wales no 207076, in Scotland no SC037654

What's been about: September:

It was a month for raptors with sustained sky-watching producing an excellent movement that included at least 22 buzzard, three honey buzzard (24th, 27th, 28th), 11 marsh harrier, hen harrier (27th), another Montagu's harrier (juvenile on 20th), three goshawks (11th, 12th, 19th) and many sightings of sparrowhawk, hobby, kestrel and peregrine. To top it all a dark morph Eleonora's falcon graced the reserve for a few minutes on the 20th. News of the tufted puffin in Kent had everyone glued to the Thames and the day after (17th) a guillemot was found, only to be topped by an even rarer puffin on the 23rd. A black-necked grebe on the river on 21st was most unusual. Tern passage was almost non-existent with 51 common, four Arctic and a black on 14th being the only notable count. A male common scoter, three little gulls and two Sandwich terns were seen the following day. Duck started to dribble back in with up to five pintail but there was no major influx. Waders were similarly scarce with a little stint on 17th-18th being the highlight along with a spotted redshank (12th) and two knot from 15th. The water rails just get tamer by the day! The woodland held spotted flycatchers on several dates and a pied flycatcher was found on 1st with a redstart on 11th. Whinchat passage was prominent with peaks of 13 on 2nd and ten on 8th while good numbers of yellow wagtails and meadow pipits moved through. Amongst them were the first rock pipits and three tree pipits. Six tree sparrows around the feeders were something of a surprise (8th) and a turtle dove on 11th would prove to be the only bird of the autumn.



Mark Webb

Adult Water Rail



Tony Coombs

Juvenile Water Rail

The porpoise continued to be seen with some regularity and the bull grey seal is still making appearances which is not surprising when you see the size of some of the sea bass the local fishermen are hauling out! Clouded yellow butterflies have started to appear and a huge cryptic convolvulus hawk-moth (see opposite) wowed many people at the Country Fayre.

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'.



Brenda Clayton



Jonathan Lethbridge

Hobby



Priscille Preston

Redstart



Sam Shippey

Mating Migrant Hawkers



David Morrison

Harbour Porpoise

Events: The next big event is our **Feed The Birds weekend** on October 24-25 where you will be able to make all kinds of bird feeders and get advice into looking after the birds at home! Unfortunately, we have had to cancel Halloween Trick or Tweet for this year. There is still space on the **Architecture Tour** on Saturday November 7 and our first **Gull ID Day** is on Saturday November 21.

What's On? Regular Events:

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

Monthly: Rangers Ramble (1pm start) on the second Sunday of each month

Wildlife Explorer Group (10.30am-12.30pm) and **Kids Birdwatching Club** (10.00am-12.30pm):

October: Saturday 10 and 24 respectively November: Saturday 14 and 21 respectively

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

Phone : 01708 899 840 Email : rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk Web : www.rspb.org.uk/rainham