



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

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Rainham Marshes' new baby is dropped in by a passing crane...

At the start of September a huge crane lifted the five metal containers that make up the Marshland Discovery Zone into place. Now they are here we can begin to turn these into a state of the art, sustainable family and education facility that will act as a focus for all visitors to the marsh.



Greg Ross

Left a bit!

The classroom will look out onto the activity and pond dipping area and have their own composting toilets while the huge hide will be glass fronted and overlook the kingfisher pool and a newly created flooded meadow.

Once complete, visitors will be able to go pond dipping and we will have inspiring interpretation to interact with.

This really is a project in progress so watch this space over the coming months. We hope to have the area accessible this winter and fully open by Easter.



Howard Vaughan

Brona with her new classroom!

A stoatally astonishing experience!

David Blackwell has been helping out at Rainham Marshes for many years with a variety of different strings to his volunteering bow. However, in August he became a living adventure play area when no less than six baby stoats came to investigate him while he was working on the river wall. They scampered up the outside (phew!) of his trouser legs and even tried chewing his steel toe-capped boots before being admonished by their mother and running off!

So, you see, next time you visit our Adventure Play Area, do not forget that all around you wildlife on the marshes is also devising interesting ways of letting off steam!

Reserve Work: The sheep will be back on the marsh very soon to help us keep the grass nice and short. This will encourage the wintering wigeon to stay and hopefully the first ones will be arriving any day soon! We will soon start work on a long term project to improve Aveley Pools, creating islands and gaining better control of the water levels; all of which will mean more birds. We have continued 'topping' (it's a bit like large-scale strimming!) the thistles on Purfleet Scrape to make it perfect for wildfowl once the water levels naturally rise over the autumn.

Another new multi-story bee sand bank has been created not far from the centre to add to this scarce habitat on the reserve and the flowerbeds around the Centre have attracted many species of bees and butterflies despite the weather.

The new bird feeding station behind the wildlife pond is now being well used by finches and tits and even a cock pheasant has paid a visit once or twice although he tends to clear up underneath rather than trying to hang from the feeders! As for the pond, you would not believe that it is less than two months old as the amount of wildlife using it is astounding. Even the kingfisher is getting closer and closer to using the perch we have provided and a little egret was trotting around the margins one morning.



Howard Vaughan

Blooming marvellous!

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: August: There was a fantastic passage of different species of terns moving east/west along the Thames from the 16th onwards. Between then and the 31st over 1200 common, 44 Arctic, 10 Sandwich, 31 black and a single little were logged along with three kittiwakes. These would have been birds



Les Harrison

Marsh Harrier

beginning their long journey south to winter in Africa and even Antarctica, seeking shelter in the Thames from the strong winds before continuing their marathon migration.

Sightings of birds of prey included marsh harriers on eight days with two on two dates and two single buzzards. Peregrines and hobbies were frequently seen hunting.

As water levels in the pools dropped naturally over the summer, there were fewer muddy margins left for wading birds to feed. Nevertheless, the reserve was still attractive enough to draw in a wide range of these elegant birds as, like the terns, they began to pass through on their southwards migrations. They included wood sandpipers, an elegant spotted redshank, five avocets, 12 greenshank, knot, four scuttling sanderlings and both godwits.

A Garganey was found on the 8th and teal and shoveler numbers slowly built up. Wheatear and whinchat passage was very sparse but there were several



Max Hellicar

Common Lizard

spotted flycatchers, two reports of tree sparrows and single turtle dove, tree pipit, redstart and nightingale.

Grand finale for the month was a smart ortolan bunting which paid a brief visit on the 30th. This is a very scarce visitor from mainland Europe where

it was regarded as a local delicacy in France until it was banned from the menu in 1999! Glad one got away!

It has been a terrible summer for butterflies with very few really warm days for them to feed although peacocks seem to have done well after producing so many caterpillars in the spring. Marsh frogs and lizards have been seen basking whenever the sun peeked out and a mole has repeatedly been pushing up our rain gauge each morning! Soon the duck will be returning to the marsh and thousands of lapwings will once again flicker across the winter skyline. We can't wait...



Pete Jackson

Spotted Flycatcher



Andy Tweed

Green Sandpiper



Howard Vaughan

Peacock butterfly

RSPB Rainham Marshes Country Fayre Saturday 20 September! 10am-4pm Come and join us for a fun filled family day!

Sheep shearing, guided walks, exhibitors, Punch & Judy and much more!

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: 14 September, 12 October, 9 November

Wildlife Explorer Group (10am start) and **Kids Birdwatching Club** (9.30am start) : **September:** both on Saturday 13. **October:** Saturday 11 and 4 respectively **November:** Saturday 8 and 15 respectively

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

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