



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

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April 2010



A room with a view...

On March 30 the eagerly anticipated Shooting Butts Hide arrived on the marsh on the back of several large lorries. It was craned into place on its metal legs and bolted together like a giant Meccano set.

It will be a little while before it is finished and opens for all of us to enjoy but it is already easy to see that it will afford the much hoped for panoramic views over both the new Butt Scrape and Target Pools.

Lapwings and little ringed plovers are already prospecting on the islands out front and



Russell Sherriff



Sam Shippey

shelduck are busy investigating the rabbit burrows in the sandy mantlet bank just below the windows, that will provide them with safe nesting accommodation.



Russell Sherriff

Prospecting Little Ringed plovers

Reserve work: A cold, wet and windy March did not dampen the spirits of our lapwings and by the start of April we had four nests with incubating birds. Like last year we are carefully placing tiny cameras near as many nests as possible to investigate breeding success. Fingers crossed!

Teams of volunteers are out of the marsh daily now, conducting bird and mammal surveys while later in the summer it will be the turn of dragonflies, butterflies, moths and bats. It should prove to be a very busy year.

In the wildlife garden we have been planting more honeysuckle and other nectar rich plants and have got the formal beds in tip top shape for another summer of colour, scent and the buzzing of bees and hoverflies!



Sam Shippey

Who's watching who?

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: March: A fairly typical March with a mixture of winter visitors and the first trickle of summer migrants heading north. Gulls were still being scrutinised and three more **glaucous gulls** and several new **Caspians** were discovered.



Paul Hawkins

Ring Ouzel - the mountain blackbird

Our run of winter wildfowl also continued when two adult **Bewick's swans** dropped in on 7th and three fly-by **white-fronted geese** on 10th completed the goose set as well! **Wigeon** reached a winter high of 911 on 14th and the **great crested grebes** were seen in full weed dance display.

Four species of **owl** were encountered including four **short-eareds** and an elusive **long-eared** and the pair of **marsh harriers** were still around. An early **osprey** was chased through on 20th and a **red kite** was seen on 29th.

Little egrets got frisky and a **great white egret** spent just a few minutes on the marsh on 13th. The **water pipits** at the Stone Barges attained striking summer plumage before moving on. The first migrant was a **little ringed plover** on 13th and up to five were seen subsequently. **Greenshank** (14th), **little stint** (7th) and bobbing **jack snipe** (24th-25th) hinted at northbound wader passage while from further south the first **sand martins**, **swallows** and **wheatears** arrived followed by an early **willow warbler** (18th) and a fine male **ring ouzel** (27th-28th).



Russell Sherriff

Water Pipit

Surprise of the month was the brief return of a **penduline tit** on 13th-14th. Where do they go to when not at Rainham Marshes?

Peacock, **brimstone**, **small tortoiseshell** and **comma** butterflies were seen but there was little blossom other than coltsfoot and red-dead nettle and bees were thus very scarce.



Chris Allen

Peacock

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'.



Dave McGough

Coltsfoot—it flowers before the leaves come through

Events: Two new events for 2010 with the **Be A Better Photographer** guided walks on **Saturday April 24** (10am-1pm) and **Friday May 14** and **June 6** (1pm-4pm) and our **Insect Afternoon** walks on **Saturday May 22** and **June 19** (1pm-3.30pm). Booking is really essential as places are limited. **Dawn Chorus** walks will take place at 4am on **Sunday May 16** and **May 23** and **Thursday May 27** sees the start of a series of **Dusk Walks** (7pm-10pm).

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): **May:** Saturday 8 & Saturday 22 respectively **June:** Saturday 12 & Saturday 19 respectively

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

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