



# Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue 28  
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## Water, water everywhere!

At last the heavens have opened and the reserve has once again become a lush grassy wetland with a mosaic of shallow pools and ditches and overnight attracted literally hundreds of teal, wigeon, gadwall, mallard and shoveler to drop in for a wash and brush up and something to eat. Some of these eastern travellers may stay on and winter on the marsh but others will disperse further across the country, even going to Eire or Iberia. The newly finished Shooting Butts Scrape and Ken Barrett Scrape may look like a muddy, contoured moonscapes but the water is steadily filling them up and the local wildlife is taking advantage of them already.



Tony Coombs

Female Wigeon, a pair of Gadwall and a drake Mallard over the pools



Howard Vaughan

The final stages of the Ken Barrett Scrape take shape

Over 1000 lapwing are now commuting between these scrapes and the Thames foreshore and nearly 200 golden plover can be picked out as they roost in a tight blob of shimmering colour on one of the new islands. Greylag geese sift the mud looking for plant tubers and snipe are already probing around the edges while grey herons and little egrets are on the look out for fish and frogs that have got isolated in small puddles during the work.



Tony Coombs

Camouflaged Golden Plovers and Lapwings on Aveley

Hopefully, this is just the start. With more wet weather forecast, all we need is an icy blast from the east and we may even get some wild geese or swans dropping in with the increasing wildfowl numbers.

Now that would be a nice Christmas present!

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.

**What's been about: November:** With water now evident on the site the number of duck rose steadily and there were about 500 **wigeon** by mid-month along with 600 **teal** and 11 **pintail**. There were still raptors to be had with **hen harriers** on 4th and 15th and a superb male **marsh harrier** that stayed from 16th. The majority of birds here are immature or females so this was most unusual. a female **merlin** was seen on three dates and **peregrines** became a daily sight, making fantastic stoops at the **lapwings** which had slowly risen to about 1000. **Golden plover** peaked at 194 on 20th with 280 **black-tailed godwits** roosting on the stone barges on 16th. A single **avocet** was seen on 11th and dunlin numbers peaked at 700 on the foreshore from 10th. Two **jack snipe** were to be found by the patient, bobbing in the crake pool. Short-eared and **barn owls** were seen on several dates and a **little owl** on 7th was the first for at least ten years. **Yellow-legged gulls** peaked at 14 (12th) and **Caspian gulls** were seen on three dates. a potential **Azorean yellow-legged gull** was seen on 27th.



Les Harrison

Male Marsh Harrier



Adrian Kettle

A diminutive Serin

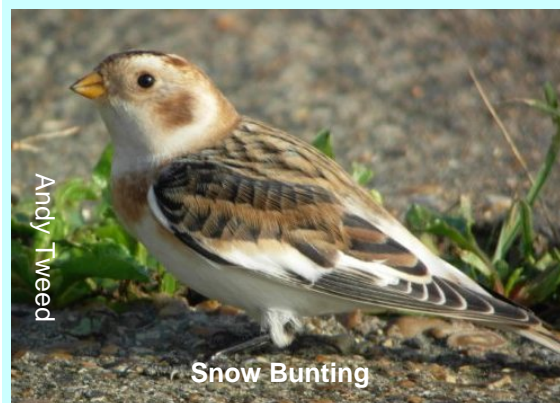
There was quite a lot of small bird action with **yellowhammers** on three dates, four **corn buntings**, a very obliging **snow bunting** (9th) and **Lapland buntings** on 12th with two on

16th. Fourteen **Cetti's warblers** have been in song and a **Dartford warbler** was seen on 25th and 29th. **Stonechats** have become evident but a very pale female bird attracted most of the attention. Two **bearded tits** were seen on 1st and amongst the growing finch flock a single elusive **twite** was seen on four dates from 11th. Amazingly two female **serins** were located on 15th and have taken up residence in the same area as last winter. Who would have thought that they would come back for a second winter? The feeders have been popular with **house sparrows** and **green** and **goldfinches** and the **collared dove** flock has built up to nearly fifty!



Russ Sherriff

Unusually pale Stonechat



Andy Tweed

Snow Bunting

The mild weather has seen several **marsh frogs** still out and about and couple of **smooth newts** were found crossing paths. **Red admirals**, **commas** and even a **painted lady** made it to mid-November but there were no dragonflies after the 15th.

Don't forget to check out [www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/sightings.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/sightings.asp) or [www.elbf.co.uk](http://www.elbf.co.uk)



Joshua Twine

Smooth Newt warming up on the tarmac!

for the latest reserve wildlife sightings. Sign up at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for 'RSPB Rainham Marshes'.

**Events:** Why not come to **Meet Santa** in his woodland grotto on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 December from 12-4pm. **Booking is essential for this event.** However we also have free, informal **Gull ID Days** on Saturday December 12 and Saturday 16 January where you will be able to learn more about this fascinating family of birds, so why not just turn up and join in. Wrap up warm though!

### What's On? Regular Events:

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

**Friday:** **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start) **except January 1 2010**

**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):

**December:** both Saturday 12 **January:** Saturday 9 and 16 **February:** Saturday 13 and 20

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

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