



Rainham Marshes united once again !

Nearly ten years after the RSPB acquired Rainham Marshes from the MoD, we have made our first reserve 'extension' after signing a lease with the London Borough of Havering for 60Ha of Rainham Marsh adjoining the west of the existing reserve. The 'new' section of the reserve is hemmed in between the A13, Ferry Lane and Coldharbour Lane. It may sound like it's surrounded by development - and it is; but the marshes have enormous potential to recover from decades without management. Before long we hope to see the return of key species such as breeding lapwing, as well as a boom in the already healthy water vole population.



David Howell

What is truly remarkable is that less than eight years ago, this valuable part of the marshes was earmarked for industry. However, Havering soon took the long-sighted decision to protect the site from development and improve it for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of local communities, particularly those in Rainham village who have not had access to the marshes in over a century. With the help of organisations such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, The Veolia ES Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust, the RSPB and Havering have been working together for several years to agree management arrangements and raise the funding required to restore and manage the marshes.



Howard Vaughan

You should see some big changes at the west of the reserve over the next few years. Not only will we start to reintroduce cattle grazing and some water level control for the benefit of wildlife, but Havering will also be opening extensions to the Rainham to Purfleet path through the marshes. This will complete over 10km of footpath and cycleway, linking the two communities via the marshes and River Thames.

A final big thanks to the RSPB's young members across the UK - the Wildlife Explorers - who raised money to help the RSPB lease and manage this new section of the reserve.

Reserve work: Many of the new developments on the reserve in the next few months are beginning life off site. The Mardyke Bridge is well under construction in Yorkshire and is due to arrive in spectacular fashion on February 9 with an opening a couple of weeks later while the Shooting Butts Hide is being likewise pre-fabricated and a spring opening is still in the offing! Work has begun on the new access gate and bridge that will allow visitors to the reserve to walk up onto the riverwall path from our Southern Trail so please bear with us if there is some disruption to the trails over the next few weeks.

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: January: 2010 got off to a great start with all the goodies from the end of December making it to January 1st with both **serins** and the **great skua** performing well. The **buzzard** and female **marsh harrier** lingered and **merlins** and six **peregrines** hunted. The **barn owl** and **short-eared owls** survived the cold and started showing well. Two **bitterns** were seen on the 1st with other sightings on 2nd, 21st and 28th. The cold weather brought three **mergansers** (10th), **ruddy duck** (15th), three **scoter** (25th) and **goldeneye** (6th and two 18th) to the Thames.



Sam Shippey

A huge white-winged juvenile Glaucous Gull

Three **brent geese** on 12th were the precursor for 22 on 21st when 71 **pink-footed geese** headed east and two **tundra bean geese** dropped out of the flock and spent the rest of the month on the reserve. Five **whooper swans** were tracked across the region on 23rd and ended up roosting on the marsh where they stayed until the following morning. One was colour-ringed so we await details!



Les Harrison

Five regal adult Whooper Swans

Up to five **jack snipe** were seen and **woodcock** became a daily occurrence. Two **bar-tailed godwits** and 11 **grey plover** were on the foreshore along with a single **knot** from 26th. A flock of 28 **knot** were seen the next day! The **ruff** flock peaked at six and 30 **oystercatchers** (15th) were not only unseasonal but a reserve record. Gull watching proved an excellent choice for the month with no less than four juvenile

glaucous gulls, an adult **Iceland** (22nd & 26th), several **Mediterranean** and upwards of 20 **Caspian gulls** for those with patience.

A **slavonian grebe** was found in a ditch on 24th where it busily caught sticklebacks and dazzled visitors into February. Up to 200 **skylark** were found wintering and two **woodlarks** were seen on 17th while **Lapland** (5th), 11 **corn** and up to three **yellowhammers** made it a good bunting month. The **serins** stayed all month and the **bearded tits** returned for another photo session.



Les Harrison

The dapper Slavonian Grebe

Like everywhere else the reserve was full of **fieldfares** and **redwings** during the snow.

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'.



Pete Merchant

Tundra Bean Goose

Events: Gull ID Days: Saturday 13 February and Saturday 13 March 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! With thoughts of spring why not come along to our Spring Walk on Sunday 28 March.

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): **February:** both Saturday 13 **March:** both Saturday 13

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

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