



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue Ten
June 2008



Rowdy Avocets attempt to move into the Rainham Marshes neighbourhood.

Not necessarily the neighbours from hell but certainly a wake up call for our lapwings, redshanks and other marshland birds. First one, then two and finally four pairs of these noisy territorial waders descended on Purfleet Scrape.



Sam Shippey

Avocet on nest

Within a few days they had settled in and were defending their chosen muddy island apartments from all comers. Herons, egrets, crows and coots certainly came in for severe grief, which seemed to ease the pressure on the local lapwings somewhat!



Les Harrison

Avocets 'v' Little Egret

All of this bravado was followed up by the fantastic revelation that one pair had laid eggs and were sitting on a nest- an historic occasion for Rainham Marshes. Sadly we believe the nest was predated one evening and the birds lost their eggs. However, two birds have since come back and can be seen from the Visitor Centre most days. We'll keep our fingers crossed for more successful breeding attempts next year.

Adventure Play Area opens new doors for Rainham Marshes visitors.

On 24 May the new play area was officially opened and the weather thankfully remained kind all day, enticing over 500 people to visit, including many from the local community with their children in tow!

Getting kids closer to nature is a key part of what Rainham Marshes is about. The adventure area has been devised to help children feel more in touch with the wild world around them, while also allowing them to let off steam away from sensitive wildlife areas, so we think parents will love it too!



Jesper Mattias
(rspb-images.com)

Reserve Work:

The Centre Wildlife Gardens are starting to bloom and work has now begun on the raised vegetable and herb beds and the large pond. This will attract even more into the area and will help encourage visitors to create similar wild spaces at home.

'Bee work' has continued with the old military mantlets being mowed and mini-sand cliffs dug to create better conditions for solitary bees and wasps to burrow into.

Part of the Northern Boardwalk is now open and the marsh alongside will be grazed to provide better views towards the wildlife on Aveley Pools. Work will continue on the remaining section of boardwalk after the breeding season.



Howard Vaughan

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.

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

What's about? With near perfect water levels across the site it was not that surprising that May became a wading bird month. A staggering 24 species were recorded, including 21 of those in just one week! All the commoner species were seen along with several **black** and **bar-tailed godwits**, **sanderlings** and **little stints**, four **knot** in



Howard Vaughan

Little Gull

resplendent chestnut plumage, seven **turstones**, nine piebald **grey plovers**, three **wood sandpipers** and up to four diminutive **Temminck's stints** all on their way to the Arctic!

At least five drake and one duck **garganey** continued to be seen and we hope that this rare summer visiting duck will breed this year. **Tufted duck**, **pochard**, **shoveler** and **teal** are all also prospecting.

Little gulls were seen on several dates and the Thames hosted five species of **tern**, including a **little** on the 4th and a **black** on the 5th and 7th.



Sam Shippey

Black-tailed Godwit



Mark Webb

Marsh Frog

A howling north-easterly with rain on 26th saw some real seawatching from the centre with two **fulmars** and huge **gannet** trying to find a way back out of the river. Both are very rare this far up the Thames.

Hobbies were very obliging with at least 11 hawking over the reserve. Despite searching we could not find the hoped for red-footed falcon. **Marsh harriers** were recorded most days and **red kite** (14th), **buzzard** and **honey buzzard** (both 31st) kept up the big bird of prey passage while a calling **tawny owl** on 11th was an excellent find for Rainham.

Summer visiting warblers got down to the serious job of breeding and there were still migrants to be found with single **spotted flycatchers** on several dates and two cracking singing **firecrests** on 25th.



David Morrison

Weasel

Hairy hawkers dragonflies have been seen at more spots on the reserve than before and the first **black-tailed skimmers**, **four-spotted** and **broad-bodied chasers** are starting to terrorise other insect life. **Foxes** with cubs have been encountered and there is evidence that **badgers** are still visiting the reserve.



Garry Bowden

Little Grebe

Forthcoming events: There are various Spring-watch related events in the first week of June including a **Plant Walk** on Saturday 7. The **Big Bike Ride** on Saturday 14 is a great opportunity to enjoy a different view of the reserve and River Thames while our annual **Big Bug Hunt** on Sunday 22 is a must for all insect lovers. Booking is essential. Why not come along and join in one of these or any of our regular events listed below?

What's In The Shop?

Free **Fruity Nibbles** (550gm) till 30 June with a coupon from the latest **BIRDS** magazine when you spend £35 on RSPB bird food or feeders!



Gary Boyes

Goldfinch

What's On? Regular Events:

Weekly: Wednesday : **Birdwatch** (9:30am start)
 Thursday **Healthy Living Walks** (12:15pm start)
 Friday : **A Walk With Wildlife—formerly Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

Monthly: **Wardens Walk** (11am start) **'Springwatch Wader Walk'**: Sunday 8 June
'Wardens View': Sunday 13 July

Wildlife Explorer Group and Birdwatching Club Days for kids: **June:** Saturday 14 and Saturday 21 respectively. **July:** Saturday 12 and Saturday 19 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

