



# Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue 22  
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## Hats off to our Great Crested Grebes!

### In the beginning:

The RSPB was founded in 1889 on the back of a long running campaign to counter the barbarous trade in plumes for women's hats, a fashion responsible for the destruction of many thousands of egrets, birds of paradise from New Guinea and other species across the world whose feathers had become fashionable in the late Victorian era.



Protestors against the plume trade

Amongst those birds slaughtered senselessly were **great crested grebes** whose plumes adorned hats and whose fine belly feathers (known as grebe fur) were used as coat and hat trim.



The happy family

Sam Shippey

Only with protection from the fledgling RSPB and the creation of many lakes formed during 20th century gravel extraction did the grebes begin to thrive and prosper.

Now 120 years on, Rainham Marshes can play its own part in the recovery of this enigmatic water-bird. After some spectacular courtship weed-dancing in March the pair of grebes has, for the first time ever, successfully hatched three stripy, humbug youngsters on Aveley Pools.

At the moment they can be seen with a little patience, hitching a lift with Mum and Dad. Enjoy!



Feeding the babies feathers.

Sam Shippey

**Reserve Work:** Lapwings still dominated our work out on the reserve and the continuous surveying, radio tracking and monitoring has led to the discovery of over 20 nests. Hopefully some of the chicks will survive the rigours of life on the marsh to fledge successfully.

After three years of dedicated cattle management by our team, it has been wonderful to see over 60 lively calves born on site this spring into perfect grazing conditions.

The warm spells in late May prompted a profusion of dragonflies and damselflies to emerge and even the wildlife garden pond had seven species on it! The garden is flourishing and is still attracting visitors (human and otherwise) of all shapes and sizes! Why not come and see for yourself?



A watchful parent Lapwing

Tony Coombs

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: May:** The high point of the whole month was the 13th when at long last we were treated to some visible wader passage. During the course of the day 15 species were seen including record breaking flocks of 26 spangly **sanderling**, 21 pie-bald **grey plover** and seven rusty **turnstone** along with 12 **bar-tailed godwit**, 26 **ringed plover** and two **whimbrel**.



Reed Warbler

Tony Coombs

All these waders would have been on their way north to the Arctic to breed and this passage was mirrored across the country over the course of the week. On the river various terns were moving and 16 **black**, 11 **Arctic**, 12 **common** and two **little terns** were logged. Two **Sandwich terns** were seen over the next four days and a **curlew sandpiper** on 14th - 15th and 31st added spice. Other waders included four **avocet** (14th) and 16 British race **black-tailed godwits** (11th) that could well have been on their way to the Ouse Washes to breed.



Another Marsh Frog bites the dust!

Mark Swallow

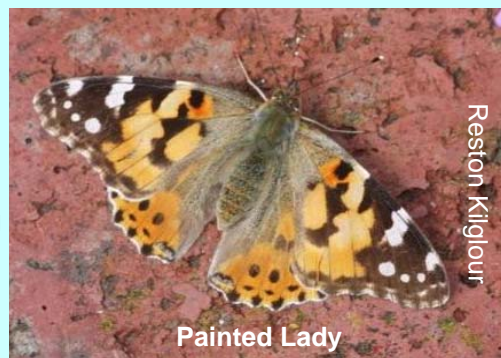
A **red kite** (4th) and several **buzzards** moved through while a female **marsh harrier** was seen on three dates. Three more **spoonbills** dropped in for a while on 6th with a single immature seen on three subsequent dates. **Little gulls** were seen on 4th and from 12th-14th and a **Caspian** (13th) and a couple of **Mediterranean gulls** were reported. A single **spotted flycatcher** was in the woodland on several dates from 13th and seven migrant **whinchats** (an upland relative of the stonechat) was exceptional for the spring. The **Dartford warbler** was seen again on 13th-14th and may well be summering and a **turtle dove** (7th) was sadly the only record.



Broad-bodied Chaser

Dave McGough

Sixteen species of butterfly included our 30th species for the site with a **green hairstreak** on 22nd and literally 1000's of **painted ladies** were seen over the course of the second bank holiday weekend. The national invasion of the species is reckoned to have reached the tens of millions! Dragons and damselflies included a wandering **banded demoiselle** and many



Painted Lady

Reston Kilgour

smart **broad-bodied** and **four-spot chasers** along with a further eight species of **Odenata**. Two **glow-worm** larvae were seen around the centre so hopefully we shall have some adults lit up during the summer evenings!

Do not 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) for the latest reserve wildlife sightings.

**Events:** On Friday July 3 we are hosting a **Moths Count Event** from 9pm till late. Booking is essential for this one as we expect it to be very popular! Later in July we will be holding another **Digi-scoping Optics Day** (Saturday 25) and our famous **Bug Hunt** (Sunday 26). Hope to see you there!

### We are on Facebook!

Not wanting to be left out we have formed our own group.

Sign up at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for 'RSPB Rainham'. Come and join in! We look forward to hearing from you!

### What's On? Regular Events:

**Weekly:** **Wednesday** : **Birdwatch** (9.30am start) **Thursday**: **Healthy Living Walk** (12.15pm start)  
**Friday** : **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

**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):

**July:** Both Saturday 11 **August:** Saturday 15 (KBC only—No WEx this month)

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

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