



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue Seven
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The future looks bright for Rainham Marshes thanks to Wildlife Explorers

February saw an impressive commitment from young people to Rainham Marshes. Firstly children from the long-running RSPB Wildlife Explorers group from Bromley, just the other side of the Thames, donated a thousand hard earned pounds to help us create a wonderful wildlife garden around our visitor centre and also to provide some support for our own fledgling Wildlife Explorers group.



This is the area we are hoping to buy through the appeal.

This is the area the RSPB already manage.

Then on 21 February, the RSPB announced that the national Wildlife Explorers Annual Appeal for 2008 would be asking its 160,000 young members to raise the money needed to help us buy the western end of Rainham Marshes.

Our dream is to reunite all of the remaining wild wetland between Rainham and Purfleet as one nature reserve. With support from so many young people, this dream now looks set to become a reality.



Vinnie the Vole

Reserve Work: There is no shortage of work being done out on the reserve at the moment. We are almost at the stage of bringing in the new metal classroom and hide, key elements of the Marshland Discovery Zone we are creating, which will be open by the summer for everyone to get hands-on with wetland wildlife. We are digging a substantial new pool in front of this area.



Over on the far side of the reserve where we are building the northern boardwalk, the high water levels have not prevented the main wooden framework from being completed or the new cattle fencing from going up. But there is still a lot to do.

Landscaping around the visitor centre is now under way. With planting scheduled to finish by mid March there should be a big splash of colour for you to enjoy this spring and summer.

Don't forget, if you feel you can spare a few hours to help us create a better reserve, just get in touch.

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?

February was an unseasonably sunny month with some fantastic spring-like days on the reserve. Looking out from the visitor centre, the marsh is still looking wonderfully wet, with the pools dotted with hundreds of waterbirds.



Curlew & Lapwings

Of the more unusual species, a family of six **white-fronted geese** visited on the back of the one spell of chilly easterlies and a **brent goose** popped in for a couple of days.

Many people love seeing wading birds – our impressive flock of **golden plovers** reached 300 and about 150 **black-tailed godwits** still came in each high tide, which is a good number for London. With them, for those that wanted the challenge of picking out something slightly different, were a single **ruff**, a **grey plover** and up to 30 **ringed plover** and **curlew**.

Three **short-eared owls** have been seen reliably at dusk, always an evocative sight as they systematically and silently patrol the Marshes. Other birds of prey have included **peregrines** and a hunting **merlin**, often signalled by many of the waterbirds taking to the air. Two **marsh harriers** and a **buzzard** passed through.



Blackcap

Among the large flocks of the more common gull species, were rarer individuals from all points of the compass, with an **Iceland gull**, at least five **Caspian** and six **Mediterranean**. The Thames was quiet for unusual birds except for a **red-throated diver** on 10th and there have been several **great crested grebe** sightings, the bird whose declines at the hands of the hat trade kick-started the RSPB back in 1889.

Marsh frogs, **water voles** and **bumble-bees** were all active on the warmer days, and **skylarks** and our overwintering **blackcaps** were occasionally in full song.



White-fronted Geese



Ruff



Water Vole

Forthcoming events:

With Easter nearly upon us why not come along with the family to our three day Eggstravaganza between 22-24 March?

Can you crack our Easter Treasure Hunt? Follow the trail, solve the puzzle and collect your Easter reward. No need to book.

What's In The Shop?



This special offer is available till 31 March.

Why not pop in to see what else is new in store?

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) 'Larking About': Sunday 13 April.

Wildlife Explorer Group and Birdwatching Club Days for kids both on Saturday 12 April.

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