



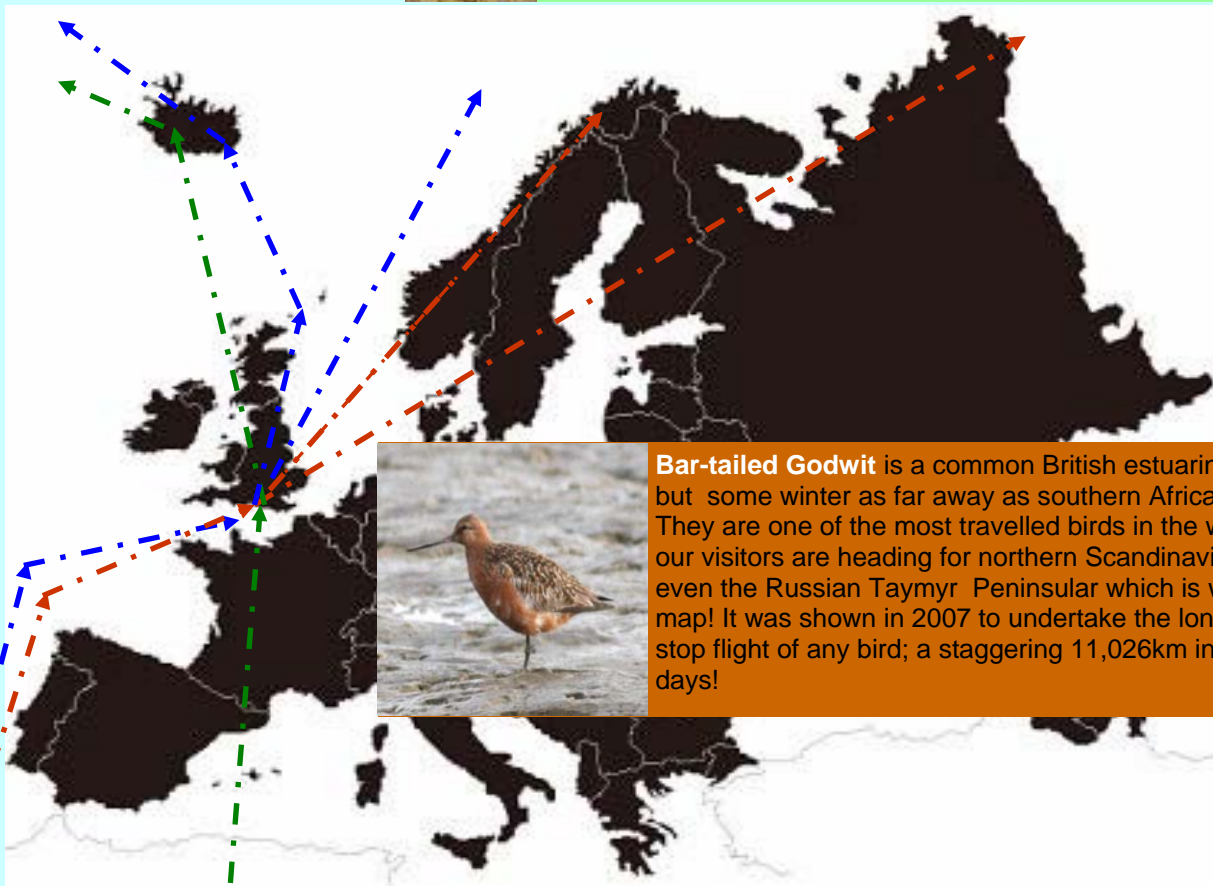
### The Wildlife Issue

## Magical Migration

Migrants pour through Britain during April and May. Many like our **blackcaps**, **whitethroats** and **cuckoos** will stay and breed but others will be only part way on their epic journey from their wintering grounds in the far south to reach their chosen breeding habitat in time to raise a family. The three species below have all been seen on the reserve this spring and give some idea of the just how far birds will travel and how important our reserve is as a staging post.



**Wheatears** are one of the earliest migrants from Africa and many stay to breed in the uplands of Britain. Later in the spring we get larger, more brightly coloured birds of a different race that travel even further, to Iceland and even Greenland to breed!



**Bar-tailed Godwit** is a common British estuarine wader but some winter as far away as southern Africa. They are one of the most travelled birds in the world and our visitors are heading for northern Scandinavia and even the Russian Taymyr Peninsular which is way off the map! It was shown in 2007 to undertake the longest non-stop flight of any bird; a staggering 11,026km in nine days!



**Arctic Terns** are the greatest travellers of all birds and their annual Pole-to-Pole migration can reach nearly 71,000km! Unlike other species this elegant tern often moves overland and can literally turn up on any body of water as they head north towards The Farnes, Shetland and beyond!

Why not join us on one of our May Dawn Chorus walks to see what who has dropped in to breed or stopped to take a breather?

### Lots to do in May and June! For more information and to book please see contact details overleaf

- ◆ **Military Walk** Sun May 8
- ◆ **Dawn Chorus Walks** Sun May 15, 22 and 29.
- ◆ **Dusk Walk / Late Opening** Thurs May 26 & June 23
- ◆ **Treasures of the Thames - A Victorian Day Out**
- ◆ **Family fun & guided walks** Wed June 1
- ◆ **Off The Beaten Track** Sun June 5
- ◆ **Insect Afternoon** Sat May 21 & June 11
- ◆ **Dragonfly Walk** Sun June 18
- ◆ **Be A Better Photographer Walks: SLR:** Fri June 10 **Bridge/ Digital:** Fri May 20, Sat June 18

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: April:** The fantastic weather brought in a steady flurry of migrants including countless **reed** and **sedge warblers** and **whitethroats** along with pulses of **wheatears** that peaked at 26 on the 16<sup>th</sup>. **Pied flycatcher** (6<sup>th</sup>), **redstart** (10<sup>th</sup>), **ring ouzels**, **yellow wagtails** and **tree pipits** all made an appearance while at least six reeling **grasshopper warblers** were in song. There were plenty of **sand martins** through but very few house **martins** or **swallows** and we had to wait until the 24<sup>th</sup> for the first **common swift**. However, its mountainous congener the **alpine swift** graced the marsh for seven glorious minutes on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The second year on the trot that we have had this imposing species.



Ring Ouzel

Les Harrison

The pair of **garganey** lingered on giving hope that they may stay and breed but most other duck species moved on for the summer leaving a few stragglers. Raptors were still a feature with the female **hen harrier** being last seen on the 2<sup>nd</sup> but **marsh harriers** and **buzzards** continued to be regular with some suggestion of passage by both species while there were five sightings of **red kite**. A pair of **peregrines** were around all month and a late **merlin** was seen while dashing insect-catching **hobbies** put on a spectacular show and peaked at 22 on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The **ravens** made their first appearance of the year.



Grasshopper Warbler

Les Harrison



Broad-bodied Chaser

Pete Jackson

**Common scoters** were recorded on the Thames along with a few **terns** and by the end of the month **common**, **Arctic**, **Sandwich** and **black** had all been recorded along with a couple of **little** and **Mediterranean gulls**. there was a good variety of waders to be seen with **whimbrel**, **grey plovers**, **greenshank**, **green**, **wood** and **common sandpipers** and in the last few days chestnut bellied



Pied Flycatcher

Andy Tweed

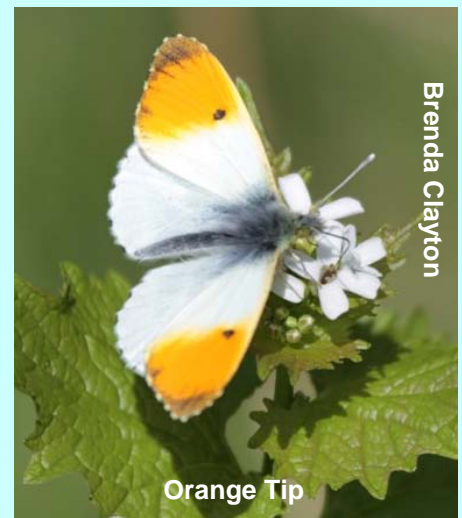
**bar-tailed godwits** started to move through and by the 30<sup>th</sup> there were 45 on the foreshore.



Water Vole with bedding

Alison & Isobel Sale

With such warm temperatures there was a wealth of insect life and 11 **species of butterfly** were recorded including dapper **orange tips**. **Hairy hawkers** were first dragons on the wing and the three common **damselflies** and **four-spot** and **broad-bodies chasers** were not far behind. Fingers crossed for a good summer... Water Voles have been putting on fine show.



Orange Tip

Brenda Clayton

Don't forget to check out [www.rspb.org.uk/rainham](http://www.rspb.org.uk/rainham) and our Community Blog or [www.elbf.co.uk](http://www.elbf.co.uk) for the latest reserve blog post, wildlife sightings and reserve news. Sign up at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for 'RSPB Rainham Marshes'.

## What's On? Regular Events:

**Weekly:** **Wednesday: Birdwatch** (9.30am start) **Friday: Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)  
**Fortnightly: The Sunday Stroll** at 1pm from the 6 February onwards. Check website for all dates.  
**Monthly: Kids Birdwatching Club** (10.00am-12.30pm): **May:** Saturday 21; **June:** Saturday 11  
**For more information about the events and the RSPB** Phone : 01708 899 840  
**Email :** [rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk](mailto:rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk) **Web :** [www.rspb.org.uk/rainham](http://www.rspb.org.uk/rainham)