



Marsh Matters

Issue Three
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The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Kingfishers appreciate helping hand

In the last week of October the volunteers placed a dead branch into the shallow water in front of the Ken Barrett Hide. With a short space of time it became clear why, as the kingfisher that regularly whizzes by was using it as a quick way to a full stomach. Terry Robinson, our site Office Manager, was in the right place at the right time.

"I didn't need binoculars - it was right there in front of the hide. It dived in six times and caught five fish, thumping them against the branch before swallowing them whole. Now, I'm not a birdy person at all, but this was quite amazing."

We can't promise that a kingfisher will be there when you visit - you can't guarantee anything with wildlife - but you do now have a better chance than ever before of seeing the electric blue and orange of this enigmatic Rainham local.



Kingfisher—Les Harrison

Reserve Work:

October was a very dry month but water management work by our hard working wardens improved conditions on Purfleet Scrape and in front of the hide. This has led to more sightings of water rail and kingfisher and close up encounters with little grebes, teal and even our frog catching kestrel. Our volunteers have continued to work on the cattle pens (corrals) while contractors put in the treated wooden piles for the new Northern Trail boardwalk. However, this is just the start.

Over the next 12-18 months we will build two new birdwatching hides with views over the enhanced wetland habitat; start work on another elevated viewing platform in the woodland area and new seating and artwork will appear in a range of locations.



Purfleet Scrape—Howard Vaughan

Tree planting to mark seven years of support

A native field maple was planted last month by Doug Benjafield, Chairman of the Veolia ES Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust to mark seven years of their continuous support for Rainham Marshes. Over this time the Trust has contributed over £1 million, helping to purchase and manage the marsh, as well as contributing to our award winning facilities.

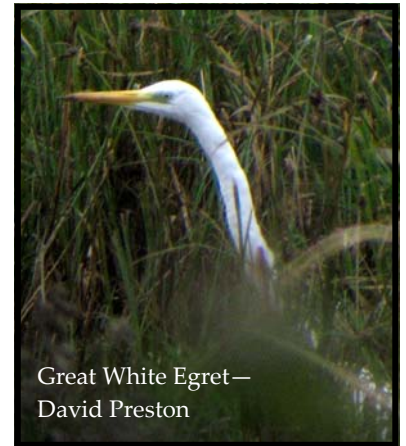


What's been about? Autumn really arrived in October with good numbers of wintering wildfowl coming in along with the visible passage of finches, buntings and larks. There were a few other treats to be found in the woodland including the **Blyth's reed warbler** (4th-6th) that eluded all but the most patient and the two sparkling **firecrests** that joined a **long-tailed tit** flock. Three **white-fronted geese**



Cattle Egret
Howard Vaughan

arrived on 26th and were very early for this species in the south-east. Five **marsh harriers** moved through which is unusual as they are not normally a bird seen on the reserve in October. Two **buzzards**, a **hen harrier** and three **peregrines** completed list of predators. The 16th saw the arrival of the second **cattle egret** for the year which proved very popular and stayed till 23rd. Amazingly, a **great white egret** was found on 19th and this stayed till 24th although for a huge



Great White Egret—
David Preston

white bird it was astonishingly elusive! With both **grey heron** and **little egret** also present it was quite an achievement to have four species of heron on the reserve at the same time and is testimony to the hard work



Turtle Dove — Chris Lawrence

that has gone into creating the optimum habitat for water loving birds. To round up the month nicely a **turtle dove** joined the local **collared dove** flock from 24th and although the name is familiar to everyone from the Christmas carol, most have never had the chance to see one. Consequently, the centre window was full of expectant faces whenever the doves chose to come to the feeders. The fact that it should be well on the way to Africa by now has not passed us by but perhaps it is going to see if it can find a friend and get to the

second day of Christmas! **Water voles** have still been active and **common darter** and **migrant hawk** **dragonflies** and **red admiral butterflies** were still on the wing into early November.

Recent & forth coming events: All the nest boxes sold out at our Feed the Birds Day and Trick or Tweet was an absolute scream. Now we are preparing for Christmas which includes the **Winter Dickensian Fayre** in Corringham library from 5pm till 9pm on November 22; the second **Gull Identification Day** on Saturday December 1; our **Meet Santa** weekend on December 15-16 and the **Christmas Ramble** on Saturday December 22.

Do not forget that an RSPB Membership makes an ideal present from as little as £2.67 a month and to visit our reserve shop for Christmas cards, paper and gifts.



The Halloween crew—Sharon Jones

What's On? Regular Events

Weekly: Wednesday : **Birdwatch** (9:30am start)
Thursday : **Healthy Living Walks** (12:15pm start)
Friday : **Beginners Birdwatch** (10am start)

Monthly: **Wardens Walk** (10am start) on the first Monday of each month and **Wildlife Explorer Group** and **Birdwatching Club Days** for kids on one Saturday per month.

For more information about the events, RSPB and WEX

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If you wish to join our e-news group to receive future Marsh Matters please email and let us know.