



Booming Frogs Aid Aquatic Snakes!



Andy Lawson

Rainham Marshes has always had [grass snakes](#) but until 2003 there were no [marsh frogs](#). How these non-native frogs got to the marshes is a mystery but they are here to stay and doing very well.

One of the big plus points of their success has been mirrored with our native [grass snakes](#) and the last two summers in particular have seen a dramatic increase in sightings.

They enjoy the marshes watery environs and can often be seen hunting the smaller frogs especially from the Marshland Discovery Zone and in the ditch near the Neolithic bog wood. Recently they have even been seen successfully catching and consuming [sticklebacks](#)!



The first strike is made on the hapless frog...

[Sula Riedlinger](#) captured these amazing images of an adult snake tackling a medium sized frog and followed it to its grizzly conclusion!

So keep your eyes open for the next few weeks as they try and fatten up for the onset of cooler autumnal nights and the chills of winter.

Hopefully next month there will be some breaking news on some new developments on the reserve so watch this space!



It is turned around and the snake distends its jaw to help it go down ...



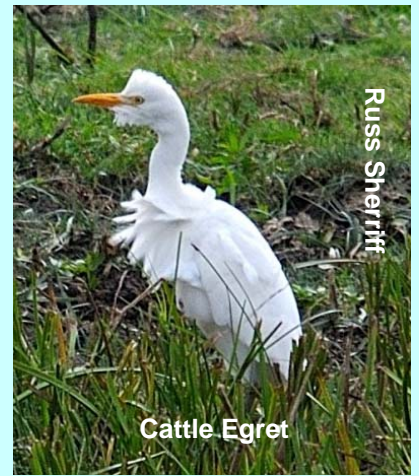
The snake rears it to keep the frog clear of the water...



And down it goes complete with some healthy greens...

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: August: Lots of waders were on the move south including three turnstones (7th), sanderling and three wood sandpipers (14th), 200 unseasonal redshank (23rd) greenshanks, whimbrels, four avocets and a couple of knot.



Russ Sheriff

Cattle Egret



James Lowen

White-winged Black Tern

Terns were evident on the Thames and there were several good 'tern days' with the 23rd being notable with 231 common and three Sandwich and the memorable 27th when over 300 common, nine Arctic, 16 Sandwich, three little and four black were recorded along with two little gulls, kittiwake and great skua! Yellow-legged gulls peaked at 40 and an Arctic skua (23rd) and black-necked grebe (28th) added to an excellent month of river watching.

A juvenile white-winged black tern spent the day on the pools on 17th and was a much hoped for new bird for the reserve. It almost became dinner for a peregrine! Marsh harriers were a regular sight with another colour-tagged Kentish bird dropping in and hobbies really came back into their own as the month wore on and the migrant hawk dragonfly population exploded. An early merlin was seen on 13th. A cattle egret graced us from 25th-27th and was only the third for the reserve. Teal and shoveler increased and two garganey arrived on 14th. Whinchats, wheatears, spotted flycatchers and yellow wagtails became daily from mid-month and a black redstart was seen on 21st. A pied flycatcher dropped in on 26th and a female serin on 7th surely hinted that our wintering birds are infact locals and not immigrants? An ortolan bunting was found on 31st two years and a day after the first site record and almost in the same place but like that one proved very elusive. A single goldcrest (18th) and tree pipits on 25th and 31st hinted at further movement.



Brenda Clayton

The now not so common Common Eel!

The bull grey seal made daily appearances and a huge eel was seen in the ditch by the Bus Stop viewing platform.

Don't forget to check out www.rspb.org.uk/rainham or www.elbf.co.uk for the latest reserve wildlife sightings and reserve news. Sign up at www.facebook.com and search for 'RSPB Rainham Marshes'.

Events: On Saturday September 11 we will be holding our final Insect Afternoon of the year from 1pm-4pm and there will be further Moth & Bat Nights on Friday 10, 17 & 24 of September at 7pm. We have a special guided walk with David Lindo, The Urban Birder on Sunday 19th at 11am. Our Autumn Wildlife Walk takes place on Sunday 26 at 1pm and the next Be A Better Photographer guided walks is on Friday October 8 (10am-1pm)

What's On? Regular Events:

Weekly: Wednesday: Birdwatch (9.30am start) Friday : Beginners Birdwatch (10am start)
Monthly: Wildlife Explorer Group (10.30am-12.30pm) and Kids Birdwatching Club (10.00am-12.30pm): September: both Saturday 11 October: Saturday 9 & Saturday 16 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



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