



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

Issue 49
September 2011



Autumn is underway! All change please!

The autumn is time of change and Rainham Marshes becomes a key staging area for migrants as they move through and into the south-east. Not only are some of our summer visitors that have stayed to breed escaping southwards but others are arriving from the north on their journey to Africa and simply stop in for a refuel.

Cuckoos have had an excellent year with at least six young coming from the marsh and they have been seen begging for food from their still attentive **reed warbler** parents. **Willow warblers** on the other hand are now very scarce around here as a breeding bird so the small numbers that pass through our scrubby areas are probably from as far afield as Scotland.



Mark Hart

Yellow Wagtail

Yellow wagtails also do not breed on the marsh but do in the local farmland and are a feature of the autumn here with flocks sometimes in three figures risking their lives for a fly or two amongst the hooves of our

cattle! **Wheatears** and **whinchats** pass through from their upland breeding grounds while up above, **swallows** and **martins** head steadily south and we soon start to get other visitors that will linger for our winter rather departing to more southern warmer climes.

Skylarks, **reed buntings**, **meadow**, **rock** and **water pipits** all make the marsh their winter home and **wigeon** and **teal** numbers quickly rise as birds head west from the Baltic States and further east. **Lapwing** start to congregate as the last **terns** make their way towards the coast and before the end of September the first **redwings** may even have arrived from Scandinavia to feast on our berries. It is a time of change with something new to encounter every day and as the weeks progress the birds take on a more wintery feel with **fieldfares**, **starlings**, **woodpigeons**, **gulls** and even more **wildfowl** arriving. Why not be part of the action of come to the reserve to experience the majesty of migration?



Brenda Clayton

Juvenile Cuckoo



Brenda Clayton

Willow Warbler

Lots to do in September, October & November

For more information and to book please see contact details overleaf

- ◆ **Be A Better Photographer Walks:**
 - DSLR: Fri 7 Oct, Sat 26 Nov
 - Bridge/ Compact Digital: Sat 8 Oct, Fri 11 Nov
- ◆ **Gull ID Workshop:** Sat 19 Nov
- ◆ **Halloween Event:** Fri 28 Oct
- ◆ **Bat & Moth Nights:** Fri 16, 23 Sept
- ◆ **Off The Beaten Track:** Sun 9 Oct
- ◆ **Optics & Digi-scoping Day:** Fri 9 Nov
- ◆ **Military Walk:** Sat 12 Nov

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: The main event during August was in the last week when grotty weather and a vague easterly wind pushed some good birds up the Thames. **Terns** featured heavily with the 23rd being a big day when 329 **common**, 24 **Arctic**, five **little** and a single **black** were recorded but it



Dave McGough

Avocets

was the two **razorbills** and a **guillemot** that stole the day. Who would have thought we would get three auks in one day! Three days later on the 26th we witnessed another movement with 223 **common**, two **sandwich**, 20 **Arctic** and 17 **black terns** seen. However, it was two more species of tern that made it an astounding day with a juvenile **white-winged black** and then a summer plumaged **whiskered** passing through! These are both

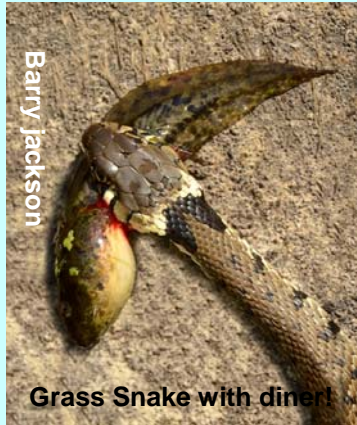
Mediterranean and Eastern European species and had obviously got caught up with the ongoing tern passage!

Earlier that morning when the weather had been at its worse we also seen over 500 **golden plover** and 32 **whimbrel** spiral out of the gloom! Wader passage was otherwise slow but there were some highlights including **wood sandpiper**, **spotted redshank**, ten **greenshank**, 14 **avocet**, **sanderling**, 13 **turnstone** and four **knot**.

Bearded tits raised another brood and a smattering of **whinchats**, **wheatears**, **yellow wagtails** and **two tree pipits** added

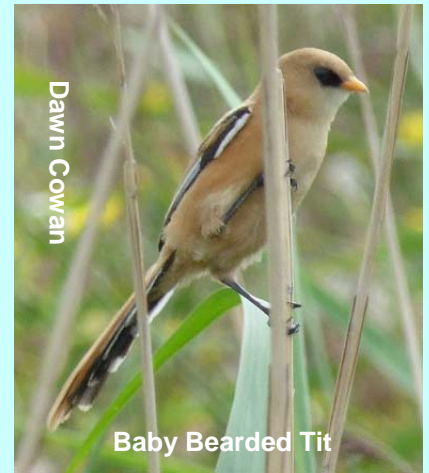
interest. **Marsh harriers** were seen on six dates with mostly juveniles going through while **hobbies** entertained. **Water rails** showed off their young on a daily basis!

Both **grey** and **common seals** and our first **harbour porpoises** of the year were seen and **grass snakes** were witnessed devouring froglets! Still lots of insects around including some goodies such as the scarce **Jersey tiger** moth and the even rarer **bryony ladybird** which is a new coloniser in this country. **Velvet ants** were unusually obvious and a couple of **painted ladies** were seen.



Barry Jackson

Grass Snake with dinner!



Dawn Cowan

Baby Bearded Tit



David Bradnum

Baby Water Rail



Howard Vaughan

A huge Queen Velvet Ant



Chris Lowe

A stripy Jersey Tiger

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



Mark Hart

Bryony Ladybird

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): **October Saturday 15 November Saturday 12**
For more information about the events and the RSPB Phone : 01708 899 840
Email : rainham.marshes@rspb.org.uk **Web :** www.rspb.org.uk/rainham