



Marsh Matters

The Newsletter of RSPB Rainham Marshes

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Bluethroat brings up the double-century!

Who would have thought ten years ago that this once neglected area of prime medieval grazing marsh would be able to attract not only thousands of visitors but also manage to draw in over 200 different species of bird in just one year!

Well, on October 16, we did just that when Les Harrison stumbled upon a **bluethroat** at the end of the northern trail. He even managed a photo before it dived into cover. This was the first **bluethroat** on the marshes since April 1994 and it attracted quite a crowd. It was very elusive and you had to be patient and lucky to catch a glimpse of its rusty tail patches as this relative of the nightingale and robin dashed between the stands of reeds and sedges.

And before you ask... It did not have a blue throat as it was one of this year's youngsters. However, it was heard quietly singing to itself thus allowing us to sex it as a male.

Whatever next?



Les Harrison

Bluethroat

Reserve news: It is all systems go for project work on the marshes with all the improvements highlighted last month in full swing.

By the time you read this the three sections of path that flooded last winter will have been raised, the new cordite loop path completed and work on the anti-predator fence and Purfleet Scrape Hide well under way.



Day one

Day four

Day five

Just compare the pictures above taken over the space of five days on the site of the new hide.

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: October: Things started well with our second **Manx shearwater** of the year on the 2nd-3rd. It did not look too healthy and probably succumbed to the marauding gulls. Three **bar-tailed godwits** were on the river in the first week and several small parties of **brent geese** were seen including 17 on 9th and ten on 10th while four **pink-footed geese** dropped in on 16th and three made it to month end. A **common scoter** drifted down river on 13th and our last **common tern** of the year was seen the same day. Gull watching began in earnest and a **glaucous gull** was a good start (5th) with two **Caspians** also recorded (28th). A **spoonbill** flew by on 24th and another **gannet** was seen on the 20th. The good raptor run continued with an **osprey** (4th), **honey buzzard** and male **Montagu's harrier** (7th), **red kite** (24th) and a male **hen harrier** on 11th and females on 24th and two on 29th. **Marsh harriers** have been seen most days with an immature male almost resident while there were several **merlin** sightings. A graceful **short-eared owl** was seen hunting the river wall on 26th.



Dave McGough

Tree Sparrow: probably from Croydon!

Finch passage increased and **siskins**, **lesser redpolls** and **bramblings** were all logged while a ringed **tree sparrow** graced our feeders from 14th-17th. A large, noisy female **bullfinch** was seen on 23rd and 26th and could well have been a Scandinavian bird. Both species of **redstart** were seen and **wheatears** persisted with a single as late as 27th and a **whinchat** was even seen on 30th when they should really have been off towards Africa. **Rock pipits** and a **water pipit** returned to the foreshore and a **red-throated pipit** flew over calling on 17th.

The 10th saw three **ring ouzels** on site and only the third **turtle dove** record of the year as well as our fourth sighting of raven for 2010. A few **goldcrests** started to dribble in and with them came a **firecrest** on 22nd. A **bluethroat** was found but remained elusive on 16th while two cute **penduline tits** popped in for three days from 21st. **Bearded tits** were almost a daily occurrence from the 17th with 20 being reported on two dates.



Andy Tweed

Common Seal loafing

Some **common darters** and **migrant hawkers** were still on the wing late in the month and a **common seal** was a new arrival and could be seen on the mud at low tide. 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'.



Les Harrison

Male Bearded Tit



Jonathan Lethbridge

Male Penduline Tit

Events: The last **Be A Better Photographer** guided walk for 2010 in December is fully booked but there will be a full programme in the new year for 2011. As we head into **November** our free **Gull ID workshops** start up with the first on **Saturday 13** and the next on **Saturday 11 December**. **Sunday 14** sees a **Remembrance Sunday Military Walk**. Oh and book early for **Meet Santa** on **December 18-19!**

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): **November:** both Saturday 13 **December:** both Saturday 11

For more information about the events, RSPB and Wildlife Explorer Group Phone : 01708 899 840

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