

Collared Pratincole at Rainham Marshes

2nd–5th July 2005

The Third Essex Record

by Paul Hawkins

I arrived on site at about 4pm and, after a chat with Julian, the Assistant Warden, I ambled on down the Haul Road, which runs alongside the Aveley Pools, when a bird caught my eye as it hawked above the scrape. Straight away I recognised it to be a pratincole of some sort! Raising my bins in disbelief, I confirmed I was in fact not imagining it. Having only seen Collared Pratincole before, I was pretty certain that this was the species but was not 100% due to the fact I only had binoculars with me at the time and needed closer examination. I raised the alarm by frantically waving back to Julian and began to phone local birders and permit holders. Ken Barrett and Steve Bacon arrived and with the aid of a scope and field guide we were able to identify this bird as an adult Collared Pratincole based on the mouse brown upperparts contrasting with darker flight feathers, shortish tail streamers, white outer primary shaft and, of course, chestnut underwing coverts. I phoned Howard Vaughan, who was away in Stockport, and he agreed to return and organise access for the following day. News of this bird was put out nationally and next morning several hundred birders were able to enjoy the bird as it hunted for insects close to the road. It stayed until 5th July.



Adrian Webb