



## A touch of the Med on the marshes...

After a cold, wet and windy March it was nice to see the sun and a bit of warmth over Easter. With a southerly breeze at last, the summer migrants started to appear and with them a hat-trick of European strays.

The first was an exotic orangey-pink [hoopoe](#) with pied wings and a big crest that spent a few hours on Easter Sunday wowing everyone. It had gone the following day but the very last visitors on the Bank Holiday Monday were treated to four minutes of high speed zooming by a dashing [alpine swift](#). This white bellied flying machine should have been down in the mountains of southern Europe and was part of a record breaking national influx at the time.

The best was yet to come when an extremely elegant [black-winged stilt](#) was discovered right outside the Purfleet visitor centre on the 8<sup>th</sup>. It tip-toed around all day on its ridiculously long bubblegum-pink legs catching worms, baby newts and dragonfly larvae!

And this was all in the first week in April! Who knows what the rest of the spring has in store for us?



Russ Sherriff



Tony Coombs

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.**

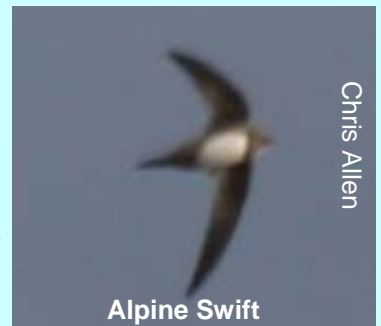
**What's been about: April** The first week of April was one to be remembered with **hoopoe** (4<sup>th</sup>), **alpine swift** (5<sup>th</sup>) and **black-winged stilt** (8<sup>th</sup>) stealing the show with an accompaniment of **garganey** and **ring ouzel** on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Three more **garganey** were seen from 24<sup>th</sup> and **ouzels** were also seen on 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> (three) and 20<sup>th</sup>. The common warblers were all seen including six reeling **grasshoppers** and a staggering 22 male **Cetti's warblers** suggesting that the cold winter was not as difficult for this resident species as we thought.



Barry Jackson

Hoopoe

There was a smattering of **wheatears** and **whinchats** were seen on 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> while both **redstart** species were recorded with **blacks** on 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and a fine male **common** on 23<sup>rd</sup>. A **nightingale** sang briefly on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> and the first swifts were around from 19<sup>th</sup>. A **serin** jingled westwards on 18<sup>th</sup> and another **alpine swift** was seen the same day along with the first **tree pipit** of the year.



Chris Allen

Alpine Swift



Bob Jenner

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Our pair of **marsh harriers** continued to be seen on and off and several others moved through along with many **buzzards**. Ten were seen on 21<sup>st</sup> alone! The first **hobby** arrived and a huge un-jessied female **saker falcon** was seen clutching a **black-headed gull** at great height on the 18<sup>th</sup> while a tiny (by comparison) male **peregrine** dive bombed it!

A female **goshawk** was seen on the 24<sup>th</sup> and a few **common terns** and several **Arctic** were noted in the last week. There was some evidence of wader passage with up to 11 **whimbrel** by the 25<sup>th</sup>, **spotted redshank** (24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>), odd single **greenshank** (including one that was killed by a **peregrine**), **bar-tailed godwit** (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>), seven spangled **ruff** (12<sup>th</sup>), **knot** (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) and **wood sandpiper** (22<sup>nd</sup>). Also on the move were four **scoter** and an unseasonal male **goosander** (11<sup>th</sup>). Nine species of **butterfly** were on the wing and our first **large red damselflies**, furry **bee-flies** and **glow-worm** larvae were reported. **Grass Snakes** have been regularly seen in the channel by the new Biffa funded Riverside Access Gate.



Les Harrison

Grasshopper Warbler

Don't forget to check out [www.rspb.org.uk/rainham](http://www.rspb.org.uk/rainham) or [www.elbf.co.uk](http://www.elbf.co.uk) for the latest reserve wildlife sightings and reserve news.

Sign up at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and search for 'RSPB Rainham Marshes'.



Julie Peeling

Young Glow-worm



Jack Hawkins

Hovering Bee-fly



Andy Tweed

Dosing Garganey

**Events:** Two new events for 2010 with the **Be A Better Photographer** guided walks on **Friday May 14** and **June 6** (1pm-4pm) and our **Insect Afternoon** walks on **Saturday May 22** and **June 19** (1pm-3.30pm). Booking is really essential as places are limited. **Dawn Chorus** walks will take place at 4am on **Sunday May 16** and **May 23** and **Thursday May 27** sees the start of a series of **Dusk Walks** (7pm-10pm).

## 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): **May:** Saturday 8 & Saturday 22 respectively **June:** Saturday 12 & Saturday 19 respectively

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

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