

South Essex Reserves

1st July 2007

This is the sixth of a series of regular newsletters on progress at the RSPB's South Essex Reserve network.

Vange Marsh:

In the May newsletter it was a concern that the hot weather of April had lowered the water across the marshes considerably and there was worry that this could affect the breeding success of the wetland birds. This problem failed to materialise because of the high levels of wet weather during May and June. The main problem to occur on the marsh was the human disturbance created on the saline lagoon area by people with unauthorised access. It is unclear what affect this had on the birds. Nether-the-less many species did manage to breed in this area.

Breeding waterbirds on Vange Marsh have included, lapwing (2 pair), common tern (1 pair), redshank (1 pair), and shelduck (2 pair). The avocets reared five broods of young. Breeding passerines have included, reed warbler, Cetti's warbler, sedge warbler, common whitethroat, lesser whitethroat (2 pairs) and reed bunting (7 pairs). Other birding highlights on Vange marsh included a little gull on the 2nd of June, black tailed godwits (40 on the 7th of May), greenshank, little ringed plover, dunlin, green and common sandpiper and birds of prey such as sparrowhawk, hobby and peregrine falcon. The arrival of a Temminck's stint on the 16th of May-18th May was a pleasant surprise. Another Temminck's stint was also recorded on the 26th of May and it is felt because of the week gap between the sightings that this could have been a second bird.

Butterflies on the marsh have included small and large skipper, meadow browns, painted ladies, ringlets, and the locally scarce marbled white butterfly.

Work on Vange marsh this autumn will see the return of the diggers. This will be to maximise the ecological potential of the saline lagoon and some re-structuring of the lagoon islands will need to take place. Once the work is complete, some of the islands will be covered in a mixture of shingle and cockleshell others will be left with bare earth. This will create a greater diversity in nesting habitat.

Vange Wick Marsh:

Initial breeding bird surveys have shown that the increased water levels have benefited a number of wetland bird species. Moorhen and mallard have bred, but notably there were up to five breeding pairs of lapwing and two pairs of redshank.

Work will soon take place to install a pump near the reservoir. This will be used to allow greater control of the water levels on Vange Wick Marsh. Water will be pumped into and out of the reservoir when needed to create the ideal water levels for over wintering or nesting birds.

West Canvey Marsh:

There has been little change to the reserve itself but the Canvey public consultation has taken place to gain an insight into what the local residents want from the nature reserve. The results of the consultation will be released in the near future.

Bird monitoring has seen the discovery of one pair of breeding avocets on the northern section of the reserve. Other breeding birds recorded were redshank, shelduck, reed warbler (in high numbers), reed bunting, whitethroat, chaffinch, skylark and cuckoo.

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