



South Essex Reserves Newsletter VII

17th September 2007

Species records

Over the past two months, there has been a continuation of the species monitoring programs. Following the report of a water vole on Vange Marsh a survey was carried out. The outcome of this survey was the discovery of a population of water voles. Field signs were initially found in the existing ditch system that runs east to west parallel to the water storage moat.

The moat was created last autumn and is used to store water to aid water control across the freshwater marsh area. Further observations have found that the water voles have now colonised the moat. These mammals are UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and it is felt that the stabilisation of the water levels in the ditch systems across Vange Marsh, along with habitat creation, has helped in their recovery.

Bird records include, 30 avocet with approximately 12 young on the 8th July; 2 hobby and 10 common tern on the 21st July; 9 green sandpiper, 6 common sandpiper and 2 snipe on the 1st August. Other birds seen on Vange Marsh include kingfisher, black-tailed godwit, greenshank and Mediterranean gull.

The summers butterfly surveys have been hampered by poor weather. This being said 20 different species of butterfly have been recorded on Vange Marsh since the end of May this year. The highest transect count of any one species was two hundred and one gatekeepers on the 1st of August. The number of marbled white butterflies reached a high of 17 on the 3rd of July.

Reserves habitat management

The cockleshells have arrived! One hundred and thirty tonnes of the material has been delivered to Vange Marsh. The shell was obtained from a sustainable source at Leigh-on-sea and will be used to cap the saline lagoon islands. This will improve the habitat for breeding bird species such as waders and terns.

Planning permission has been granted for a bridge that will link Vange Marsh to Wat Tyler Country Park. The path connecting the two sites will do so via the old county tip then across the bridge at Pitsea creek onto Vange Marsh. This will improve access to Vange Marsh and allow great views of the entire area from the top of the county tip.

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